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**The history of the Royal Catholic Teacher Training
Institute in Szeged between the two world wars**

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1. Objectives of the research

In my thesis I examine the changes in Hungarian teacher training between the two world wars, primarily its local dimensions, by exploring the operation of the Royal Catholic Teacher Training Institute in Szeged. In the course of the investigation, I did not aim at a mere description of events and data, i.e. an analytical, diachronic examination - although this has its justification in other respects - but at a synthesizing understanding based on comparisons. This required a kind of specific approach to the subject. In this type of research, this could be a local history, cultural history, sociology, etc. approach, the most important thing being that it should act as a coherent organising force in the selection and critique of sources. In the present research, the pedagogical vision and perspective constitute this organising force: by reviewing the history of an institution and limiting my exploratory investigations to a specific period, I am looking for the problem-historical node or nodes that are specific to educational research using historical tools.

In the course of my research, I have included historical aspects of professionalisation, in so far as I have also analysed the ideas and debates surrounding the tertiarisation of teacher education, and I have considered the subject of my research as a field for the acquisition of scientifically based teacher knowledge in support of professional self-definition. On the other hand, by drawing the specific profile of the institution, I also attempted to capture the school ethos and climate by bringing the world of teachers and students closer together.

The primary aim of the research is to present the history of the Royal Catholic Teachers' Training Institute of Szeged between the two world wars. A further aim is to explore the pedagogical activities of this period, to describe their contents and methods, to depict their driving forces, and to summarise the system of influences on teachers. It also aims to situate local processes in a national context: to examine how national educational policy or even pedagogical challenges have emerged in the institution, how local responses have been formulated and how local initiatives have fed back into the wider professional discourse. The study also examines how the transformation of the aims and tasks of teacher education in small steps was reflected in the vocational education in Szeged, how the ideal teacher was imagined, and how students and teachers perceived the profession.

2. Research methods and sources

In the context of educational history, we must be careful not to draw general conclusions from individual insights, but this should not prevent researchers from placing the results of regionally valid studies within the spectrum of broader approaches. Furthermore, it is an additional challenge to avoid the danger of presentism and the use of the past for the politics of memory, and therefore the boundaries of the link with the present need to be marked out (Somogyvári, 2024). In the course of this research, I have used a micro-historical approach. Microhistory refers to the intensive study of relatively well-defined small units (an event, a person, a family or a narrow community), where the researcher *examines his subject* not "*with a telescope but with a microscope*." (Szigártó, 2021, p. 336). Yet microhistory is more than just a micro-level study. The change of scale, i.e. the reduction of the scale of investigation, does not equate to the micro-level of the object under study; the emphasis is on the method: the intensive examination of the documentary material (Szigártó, 2003). Yet, deep-drilling research

is not a mere case study, but also seeks answers to general historical questions while taking into account the limitations.

The microhistorical approach is also useful because *it "portrays people from the past not as puppets of great historical forces at work in the depths, but as conscious agents."* (Szijártó, 2021, p. 337) In my research, I place particular emphasis on this. In examining an era of countless challenges for the teachers and students of the institution, I will observe how they developed unique responses, how they tried to adapt or even to cope as eccentrics in changing circumstances. This allows us to capture individual identities and local traditions. We ourselves agree with the cultural-historical approach that *"historiography must not ignore the way historical actors perceive the world [...] explanation and understanding must be sought together."* (Szijártó, 2021, p. 360). Of course, the approach is strongly embedded in cultural history, but it is not one of its orientations, but a specific approach because of its educational perspective. Micro-history can be understood as a sensibility, a well-defined form of attention, a way of dealing with historical objects, even as a kind of attitude (Simon, 2010). The works that are marked by this tendency see certain groups of local society from a micro-perspective, thus also presenting *a qualitatively* new picture of the period. Such analyses are not merely illustrative, but can be a means of interpretation on a par with, even complementary to, quantitative methods. They also provide the opportunity for new interpretations of the results of macro-analyses, for outright control, or possibly for refinement and modification (K. Horváth, 2010). Micro-history gives a new dimension to the historical process and is able to show acting individuals with their own goals and strategies, as well as their life-world. By the latter we mean a whole system of norms, values and symbols, which can be understood as a cultural entity. According to Richard von Dülmen, culture is also a set of social experiences, relations and practices. The former cannot be broken down into separate economic, political, cultural, etc., but together form the manifestations of everyday life. In addition to eating, dressing, housing, for example, the repertoire of roles played by the individual in social relationships constitutes this dynamic concept (Gyáni, 1997). My aim is therefore to present the succession of events, not only in a traditional, linear, historicist sense, but also - with a somewhat postmodern approach - by capturing past experiences and experiences, to inquire into the nature of local group identity, in our case the school profile. (Biró - Pap, 2007) In the course of the research I followed the traditional method of educational history: the selection and exploration of primary sources was carried out in the first phase of the research. In order to ensure an adequate level of internal source criticism for the interpretation, I also took into account the criteria of honesty and integrity. In the interpretation phase, I also used contemporary and later secondary sources, the literature base. This was followed by synthesis and historical exposition.

The research will explore and process primary sources that are essentially unpublished. The lion's share of the documents originates from the Hungarian National Archives in the Csongrád-Csanád County Archives. Among the large number of documents relating to the teacher training school, a wide variety of source material is available for the period under study: school promotion diaries, church and school visitation records, reports and correspondence from the school inspector, minutes of regular monthly and methodical faculty meetings, official and private letters, statements, blueprints, etc. The material of the Szeged-Csanád Diocesan Archives is also rich in relevant documents, and the bishop's transcripts and letters, as well as the complete archives of the director of the institute, Vendel Becker, were valuable sources for research. The unpublished manuscript of the theologian József Vass also proved extremely useful. A considerable amount of information was provided by the yearly Notices, and the contents of the publications published between 1920 and 1938 were also examined in detail.

Another important source was the institute's student newspaper, the Hungarian Teacher Candidates' Journal. The study was carried out using traditional text analysis and computer-

assisted content analysis with MaxQda2020. The methodological diversity thus developed may be the guarantee that the traditional, still indispensable narrative text analysis will be supplemented by approaches that "capture and interpret contextually representable events, images, situations, in relation to which specific statements can be made, and then, on the basis of further investigation, general statements can be made. They can also be used to uncover hidden and situational elements, to gain insights into the way people's everyday worlds work, and to understand the causal relationships that are involved, visible or hidden, in the construction of human reality." (Sántha, 2013, p.11) Computer-assisted content analysis is a qualitative method that allows us to understand social groups, situations, interactions, roles, events, based on situational and detailed data. Following the qualitative paradigm, I have tried to follow the path of coding and qualitative analysis, or coding and quantitative, descriptive statistical analysis, in order to ensure reliability and validity. (Sántha, 2022) To enhance the latter, I have implemented triangulation in a specific way: by using multiple data sources and methods. In addition to the press, a variety of archival sources, and the performance of a statistical analysis in addition to the content analysis, the narrative text analysis ensures the coherence of the different methods and perspectives.

3. Summary of the main findings of the research

3.1. History of the Institute 1844-1938

The need to organise training in Szeged originated in church circles, with the support of the archpriests, in cooperation with the state and the city. The opening ceremony of the Szeged training school took place in October 1844. The number of students at the institute was 33 at the beginning. In 1845 the teachers went on a study trip to Bavaria. The training school started with high hopes, but at the same time difficulties soon became apparent, especially financially. The institution was depopulated during the War of Independence and struggled to survive during the years of authoritarian rule. Despite the difficulties, the quality of education did not decline, for example, the highly respected educationalist Ágost Lubrich and Ignác Bárány, who introduced the new reading teaching methodology, worked at the institution. The school, now organised into a three-year course, was badly damaged by the great flood of 1879. With the help of municipal and diocesan funds, the institute was reorganised and in 1883 became the first Catholic teacher training college in the country to offer four years of study and its own training school. By this time, one of the school's main thrusts, education for practical life, had become well established. From the outset, great care was taken in this area and it continued to play an important role in training throughout the Institute's existence. New content was also introduced in the newly established tank farm. In 1894 the Institute moved to a new building and in 1897 a thorough and detailed set of Rules of Procedure, adapted to the public conventions of the time, was published in a form that was available to all, printed in the Bulletin. By the end of the 19th century, the number of students at the institute ranged between 70 and 90, most of them Roman Catholic, from Szeged or the Szeged area, and a larger number of them were the children of Hungarian or German-speaking farmers, industrialists and teachers. The active participation of the teachers in public life and their professional activity was already proven during the 19th century, but the regular publication of the notices made the pedagogical personality and the

wide-ranging activities of the teachers widely known and visible, as they reported on their activities as composers, textbook writers, sports organisers, etc. Following the example of the teachers and, of course, on the basis of rigorous pedagogical and vocational considerations, they also developed opportunities for students to pursue their own education. The turn of the century was undoubtedly the period of the emergence and flourishing of associations. The growth in the number of students provided the necessary basis for the expansion of the associations, with the number of teacher candidates exceeding 150 in this school year. In the school year 1906-1907 the institute was enlarged and a gymnasium was built. From 1909, teachers became eligible for a state salary supplement. The already wide-ranging activities were further extended when the Institute took on an increasingly extensive role in cantor training. In addition to the church music activities, the cooperation with the Szeged branch of the Children's Study Society was another new feature: students took part in study walks, excursions and attended meetings. The first economic vocational training institution in Szeged, the Department of Economics, was also a new initiative of the Teachers' Training College, established by the Ministry of Agriculture in connection with the Teachers' Training College. In September 1913, the Economic Repeating School was opened with 37 students. The outbreak of the First World War also opened a new chapter in the history of the Institute. Life at the school was in turmoil, and descriptions show that the school tried to maintain a well-established daily routine, but in many cases this was not possible. The war took its toll on the Institute's financial and human resources, and by 1918 it was facing really serious difficulties. The period of recovery after the World War did not start smoothly, and although in 1923 the Institute was finally able to move from Boldogasszony Avenue to the new building at Temesvári Boulevard 38, the years of transition until then had tested the whole of Hungarian society, including the Szeged Teachers' Training College, with serious challenges. The events of Trianon meant that many of the expelled teachers from the state school in Timisoara were temporarily or permanently placed in Szeged, and turnover was particularly high during this period. The move to the new building complex, which was successfully completed after many difficulties, marked the beginning of a new era. *"The number of excellent teachers had increased to 18-20. The training was significantly modernised, the areas of extra-curricular education and training were expanded year by year, the institute was equipped with new books, journals and teaching aids, the cantor training was modernised, and there was an excellent boarding school. There is no doubt that the Szeged Kir. Kath. It is undeniable that the Szeged Catholic Teachers' Training Institute reached its heyday under the direction of Dr. Vendel Becker."* (Csillik - Gácsér, 1994, 24). The training period was increased to five years, and in 1923 the Youth Red Cross Institute started its activities. In the following year, the Csajághy Sándor Csajághy Scout Troop No. 555 was founded, and in March 1925 the Youth Association was founded (*Értesítő*, 1925). The journal, which started as a Szeged initiative, was entirely written and edited by students. The journal quickly became popular among young people and expanded its reach nationwide. By the end of the decade, the Institute's activities had further expanded as it took an increasingly active role in the development and expansion of levente education and extracurricular folk education, as well as vocational education in economics. Pastoral and further training courses were provided for graduate teachers. A strong emphasis continued to be placed on the harmonisation of theory and practice, alongside education in a world view. In 1929, a new organisation, the Foederatio Americana Szegediensis XLV. Corporatio, started its activities (*Bulletin*, 1930). On behalf of the Szeged Inspectorate of Education, members of the teaching staff regularly visited elementary schools in Szeged and the surrounding area, and gave lectures on pedagogical expertise. After the teacher training institute was moved to Szeged, the institute also became a training centre, and the pedagogical-methodological knowledge of the teachers became even more valuable. In 1937, the newly built music pavilion was opened to the students, and the following year a reading room was built for them. The Ministry of Religion and Public

Education, in accordance with the proposal of the diocesan authorities, also organised a third training school in connection with the institute (these were designated A, B and C). As part of the further development of economic education, a post of economics teacher was created. 1938 marked the beginning of a new era in the training school. The reform of secondary education also brought about a major change in teacher training, and the institute opened under a new name. It was then known as the Szeged Royal Catholic Lyceum and Teacher Training Institute and became a four-year secondary school with a baccalaureate, on which a two-year higher teacher training academy was built. In reality, however, the training did not go at all according to plan, with the events of the World War intervening. By this time, the institution was clearly overshadowed by the events of the following years: the destruction of the war did not spare the institute, the buildings were damaged and many of the students died. In 1945, Becker was forced to retire and Miklós Katona took over the management of the institution. In the following years the school moved several times and was nationalised in 1948. After a series of reorganisations, it became a university school in 1958, when it was merged with the teacher training college, and was finally closed down in 1963.

3.2. Teachers at the Institute

The maintenance of the school sought to ensure that each subject was taught by teachers with the appropriate specialism, with a wide range of hours per week, from 4 to 20, depending on status and subject. Teachers in the training schools were also considered to be core members of the teaching staff. According to the data published in the Notices, there were occasional changes in the teaching staff, with relative stability being ensured by the small size of the body, its family nature (about 12-14 people were employed in the long term) and the headmaster. There were also relatively frequent changes in the number of temporary teachers, mainly in the skills, art and music subjects. During the period under review, nine members of the teaching staff held doctorates and most were qualified teachers at teacher training colleges, while some were civil school teachers or secondary school teachers, and some teachers of economics were generally graduates of business academies. In general, there was a good collegial atmosphere in the institute, and they were able to work together harmoniously on a day-to-day basis. In general, the teaching staff was outwardly cohesive, prepared and effective in responding to challenges, and tended to be more cooperative towards each other, managing to form a community. They regularly attended each other's classes, visited the training school and took part in in-service training. In their day-to-day contacts, they had a well-established schedule for discussing issues. They held regular monthly meetings and also held systematic meetings to discuss pedagogical issues of concern to them. The future of the teaching profession and the possibility of higher education were also discussed on several occasions. The work of the director, Vendel Becker, is outstanding in this respect. The members of the teaching staff were active in public life, actively representing the Institute and the world of teacher training in many areas.

3.3. Students of the institute

During its 104 years of existence, the institute trained some 2,350 certified teachers, 548 of whom obtained their diplomas in the period under study (1920-1938). The number of students per year varied between 53 (1921-1922) and 213 (1932-1933). The data on the Institute's students in the years covered by the Notices are based on the rolls and summary statistical tables. The proportion of those leaving without qualifications was low, thanks to, among other things, a careful selection procedure. The vast majority of the trainees, more than 90%, were Roman Catholics. Reformed represented 2-3% and Evangelicals 1-2%. In addition, there were some Greek Catholic, Greek Oriental, Israelite and Unitarian students. The proportion of native Hungarian speakers was over 90% in all grades, with the exception of German speakers, who accounted for 3-4%. There were also a small number of Serbian, Slovak, Romanian, Bulgarian, Ruthenian and Czech speakers. The school's enrolment area was quite wide, with pupils from around 78% of the country's counties before 1920 and from all counties after 1920. Most of them came from Szeged, of course, but a large number of students also came from Csongrád, Csanád, Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun, Torontál and Békés counties (*Csilik - Gácsér*, 1994). Most of them were the children of industrialists or transport and trade workers for the majority of the years. They were followed in number by the children of intellectual parents, who may have been pastors, teachers, lawyers, doctors, civil servants or other intellectuals. The children of those in other occupations were in similar numbers. We have included children of law enforcement and military occupations, children of private households and children of pensioners. In the second half of the period under review, the latter category tended to be the most numerous within the other group. In almost all years, children of agricultural workers were the least numerous. The behaviour and diligence of the pupils was monitored and problems were discussed at teacher meetings. In addition to the compulsory lessons, it was an integral part of the students' daily agenda to participate in fundraising activities, proposals, self-education, competitions, etc. The training supported a wide range of self-development opportunities, helping to enhance students' self-awareness, shape their skills and deepen their knowledge. A variety of forums were provided for this purpose, so that each student could take advantage of the opportunities that suited his/her personality and interests (Congregation of Mary, Self-education Circle, Foederatio Emericana Szegediensis, Csajághy Sándor Scout Troop, Helping Association, Youth Red Cross, Tomori Sports Circle, Choir). Care was also taken to ensure that participants were active in thinking, working together, performing, etc, so that they could form a real community.

3.4. The Journal of Hungarian Teacher Candidates

The subject of the analysis was the institute's student magazine, the Hungarian Teacher Candidates' Journal. The journal was published between 1926 and 1938, before that, until 1928, under the title Szegedi Tanítójelöltek Lapja. In a short period of time, the originally self-educational publication became a student magazine with a national scope and a readership of several thousand people. It has continued to evolve in terms of both scope and quality, and has attracted such widespread interest in more than a decade of existence. It was a newspaper founded, written, edited and run exclusively by students, and therefore, in addition to typical adolescent problems, it had a vision and a kind of pedagogical inspiration typical of the age-appropriate, typical adolescent problems of the only teacher trainees involved in their professional training. We investigated which contents and aspects of the professional

socialisation of trainee teachers, as prospective members of their professional group, were considered worthy of public discussion, which foci they thematised their profession and their preparation for it along, and which self-reflective dimensions they included. The exploration of the pedagogical mindset and the resulting processes of professional identity formation was made possible by a theory-driven, but also inductive, intracoding process that took into account the characteristics of the text. For six topics, additional subcodes were defined. The detailed analysis confirmed a kind of pathfinding, a slow change of profile, which consists in the fact that, after the initial hesitancy and the multitude of "school" thematic variations (most common topics: humour, science, education, advertising), more specific, more thoughtful and serious subjects were discussed in the pages of the magazine. Articles with the codes "child", "soul", "religion", "pedagogy" were predominant, while there was an even distribution of articles on "Hungarianism" and "vocation" in the grades studied. Furthermore, the word frequency analyses confirmed that the most pronounced pregnant, value-laden concepts (*Hungarian, holy, beautiful, woman, child, life, God*, etc.) were present in large numbers. The diverse writings are organised along two thematic foci: themes related to the centres of gravity of the self and the *world* are the guides for strategies of self-interpretation.

3.5. Content and methods of teaching

Although the Szeged institute was a denominational training school, it was taught according to the state curriculum, as ordered by the Catholic authorities. They took a constructive approach to the regulations, provided that they fully complied with them, but they tried to shape the local curriculum in their own image and to tailor it as much as possible to the needs of the students. They favoured Catholic textbooks specifically designed for teacher training colleges (mainly those of the Szent István Society), but they did not exclude other works used in secondary schools, and they also wrote practical notes which later became nationally used. The organisation of vocational training in economics was a major step forward, and Vendel Becker outlined a complete reform programme for this when he presented the planned college of vocational training. Another important initiative in Szeged was the first extracurricular course in ethno-cultural education in the country, which was launched in 1931. The instructors of the institute worked out the content to be taught in the most practical and realistic way possible, in cooperation with practitioners. They kept abreast of current events and challenges, followed the national scientific and professional discourse and played an active role in shaping it, while seeking to make use of the results and knowledge acquired, first and foremost locally. They participated frequently in training courses and constantly improved their methodological culture. They have developed detailed, coordinated local curricula and updated lesson plans.

3.6. Practical training

The practical training covered all four years of the institute, with students visiting the training school to observe. This did not mean passive observation, they kept the children busy, taking measurements and carrying out simple experiments. The trainee teachers' practice was built up along a suitable framework, keeping in mind the principle of gradualism. The thesis also examined how the selection of trainee teachers was carried out, with the emphasis being placed on pedagogical individuality in addition to professional knowledge. The students of the teacher

training institute took a teacher training examination following the observation and practice teaching sessions. Prior to that, they had taken annual class examinations, so that they could report on their progress year by year. In the final qualification examinations, they first took written examinations in education, Hungarian language and literature, followed by oral examinations in May and June. The transfer of the teacher training institute to Szeged was a major change and a professional step forward for the institute. The Catholic Institute became a training institute. In cooperation with the Szeged institutions, the Apponyi College provided theoretical and practical training for teacher candidates. The first class in Szeged started in the autumn of 1929. The teacher training institute regulated the practical education under its own authority. The students were also required to attend special theoretical courses on practical education. Practical education included attendance at lessons, meetings with the head teacher, teaching, participation in the school administration, and collective meetings once a week. Both the first and second year students were required to teach 20 hours per week, part of which had to be spent at the teacher training college and part at its practice school (Kiss, 2010). The teachers at the college considered the candidates to have "*demonstrated a serious educational attitude and conscientious work.*" (Tóth, 1996, p. 116).

3.7. Material conditions of education

At the beginning of the period under review, no suitable building was available. By 1923, a new building had been constructed in the neighbourhood of the New Szeged Grove, so that the Institute could continue its activities in modern conditions. Here, four separate pavilion-like buildings were erected in a spacious courtyard, housing gymnasiums, classrooms, boarding workrooms and dormitories. These rooms were already fully adapted to the purpose of teacher training. The courtyard was landscaped, a well was drilled, a swimming pool and a rock garden were installed, and a playground and running track were provided. Closely linked to the institute was the boarding school, which accommodated around 110 students. The boarding school was run by the director of the institute. The food and kitchen were run by the poor school sisters, named after Our Lady. The management of the institute also tried to provide the necessary facilities by constantly adding to the stock of the various kitchens. The equipment of the science, physics, music, drawing and needlework, economics and physical education rooms was gradually built up from various sources (bishop's grants, private donations), and the range of available equipment was extended year by year. The institute also had several libraries: separate collections for teachers, pedagogy and natural history, but also natural history and art collections. The training school had its own library, and the associations operating within the Institute also managed small library collections. The explicit aim was to develop both professional and public knowledge through the regular study of books and periodicals. The specialised libraries stocked not only books but also periodicals, which were frequently consulted by both teachers and students. At the end of the regular monthly meetings, teachers reported on what they had read and discussed topical issues.

4. Summary

Thinking about what it means to be a teacher, about what it means to be a teacher, is almost as old as the profession itself, but it is also a profession that needs to be redefined. Redefining the profession, examining its components in depth and reconstructing it in a changed context is a current task. Historical research, precisely because it is able to show the layering and multifaceted nature of the profession and to present it as a continuum, can provide effective assistance in this process. Research on small communities requires an examination of the networks of social relations and contexts of action, while keeping in mind the economic, social and political, or even cultural conditions with which they manifest and have an impact, or even against them. In my investigations, I have tried to apply the aspects of the above-mentioned system of effects in my exploration of the contemporary functioning of the Szeged Teachers' Training College. The contemporary image of the teaching profession not only varied between extreme positions in society, but even among the professional public. Is the Hungarian teacher suitable for the task of cultural mediation and education? The question has been asked in many different ways, with teachers in lower secondary schools being given a myriad of titles, from 'the nation's day labourer' to 'apostolic'. The founding of the Szeged Institute in 1844 was a milestone in the history of education, not only in Szeged but in the whole country. The school became an intellectual institution that was organically linked, first and foremost, with the institutions and professionals of the region, but from its earliest years it was also involved in the professional and public discourse at national level. Following in the footsteps of Ignác Bárány and Ágost Lubrich, and later Sándor Bálint and Vendel Becker, the school was able to maintain a professional standard that enabled it to play an active role in shaping pedagogical expertise in the face of changing circumstances and difficulties. They have successfully contributed to shaping the intellectual image of the city, and the Institute has been open and cooperative from its earliest days: from the very beginning, it has been involved in study trips abroad and has expressed its desire to share knowledge as widely as possible. The teachers' active, creative public and professional activities were wide-ranging, inspiring them in many areas, from textbook writing to political engagement, cultural organisation and academic activity. In their constant search for contacts with the university, teacher training colleges, schools of practice, church and public institutions, private foundations and other training institutions, they have created a spiritually lively and cooperative environment, not without fruitful debate. Although teacher training was variable at first, it has clearly risen in the present era, reaching a higher level with the award of the teacher training college qualification. Teachers regularly attended training courses and conferences, and sought to improve the scientific basis of their practice. They had strong views on the current content and organisation of teacher education and shared them in several national forums, as well as in their regular meetings and writings

The effectiveness of the teaching staff is attested to by the thousands of Szeged graduates: most of them came from the Southern Great Plain region, were Hungarian native speakers and Catholic, but the students of the institute showed a more detailed picture of their social background, language and religion. According to the students' recollections, not only did their professional preparation take place during their student years, but they also underwent an attitude-forming process that later shaped their approach to their vocation and to the world. The varied association life and extra-curricular activities contributed to this, as did their participation in the production of the unique Hungarian Journal of Teacher Candidates.

The content of the curriculum has changed frequently over the years, and the school has taken a constructive approach to the regulations: it has tried to shape the local curriculum in its

own image, not only to the profile of the teacher, but more to the needs of the local economy and society, and to a greater extent to the needs of the students. The focus was on the formation of the educator's professional personality, and the content and methodology of the individual subjects were also geared to this. The content and methods formed an organic tapestry of the process of shaping the attitudes and character of the teacher, which was seen as the essence of vocational education. The content taught was not unique in that it was based on nationally prescribed and used curricula and textbooks, but it was particularly effective in responding rapidly and intensively to local needs (introduction of specialised economic education, publication of the first and for many years unique management manual for economic education, and the first independent development and authorisation of an extracurricular course in popular education). The Institute's methodological culture was rich and characterised by a kind of deliberate progress. They did not discard the 'tried and tested', but were open to new ideas and were not afraid to use forward-looking methods (action, films, etc.). As the methodological meeting heard, they were particularly proactive in their approach to educational practices based on new scientific findings.

Practical training was at the forefront of the institute's education, which they tried to polish and make more efficient every year, increasing the professional demand of the visits and classroom meetings. The relocation of the Apponyi College to Szeged not only represented a new challenge, but also a potential for professional development, which they tried to exploit.

The expansion of school spaces and facilities is clearly evident in the period under review, with the delivery of the new building complex in particular representing a major step forward. Although the building was designed to meet the needs of the time, the fact that it is still a secondary school today, after appropriate modernisation, is proof of the thoughtfulness of its construction. The provision of classrooms and libraries has always been a challenge during the period under study, but efforts have been made to be practical, to display and provide students with the equipment they will need for their future careers as teachers.

The Catholic spirit and national commitment of the institute is clearly evident, although cooperation with the ecclesiastical authorities and the state was not always smooth. Where disputes and frictions arose, the leaders and teachers of the Institute sought to represent their interests on a professional basis, with the educational aims and the students' interests in mind, and did not show any religious or political bias in their thinking and actions, even in times of conflict (e.g. during the Soviet Republic). In most cases, the Church and the government appreciated the work being done here, and on more than one occasion they joined forces to save an institution on the brink of closure for one reason or another (e.g. educational policy decisions, floods, war, etc.). The 'professional ethos' of the institution, its pedagogical values, its sense of vocation, its respect for tradition and its constant desire to be modern, were the combination that ensured its viability. In addition to its primarily local-regional scope, the professional activity, pedagogical knowledge formation and the regular sharing and discussion of the related results and opinions in several forums should be highlighted, which contributed to the contemporary search for a new path for the entire teaching profession, to the reflection on the profession and to a broader rethinking of professional self-definition.

5. Literature

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