

The topic of girls' education in Hungary in the late 1800s, based on the example of a School Magazine

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Abstract

In Hungary, scientific research on the world of children and the image of children has only started in the last few decades. This exploration can be organically linked to the research on the history of childhood by Béla Pukánszky, Éva Szabolcs and their colleagues, and to the work on women's history by Katalin Kéri. The present research seeks to answer the question of how and in what ways the image of children and their world appears in the issues of the (Nép) Iskolai Szemle¹, an educational gazette, published in Csurgó² between 1881 and 1896. The subject is interdisciplinary, it is part of education studies and pedagogy history, touching historiography. The historical approaches of the research are: local history, press history, school history, women's history, childhood history. The focus of this study is on the education and upbringing of girls and women. The complete research on children will not be presented here, only the part of the research on girls. The research method is an analytical, processing, subject-specific content analysis with background research in press history. The Iskolai Szemle³ on the education and upbringing of women and girls has published nearly two dozen articles on the subject in its 10 years of publication time. From the early 1890s, a veritable 'battle' was waged in the pages of the journal for and against the bourgeois girls' schools. By the end of the decade, the debate was settled: education and 'domesticity' were not mutually exclusive concepts in the education of women. The results of the articles under study cannot be generalized in terms of national relevance, but an analysis of the implicit content of the texts reveals a broad outline of the principles of women's education in a Hungarian journal of the dualism era.

Keywords: dualism; image of children; education of girls; image of women

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1 Népiskolai Szemle=National School Review

2 Csurgó is a settlement in Somogy district, approx. 15 km from the Croatian border. Commercial and educational center. It already had its own reformed high school and teacher training institute.

3 Iskolai Szemle=School Review

1. Introduction

The (Nép) Iskolai Szemle, an educational journal, can be a unique resource for historians of education. In its 16 years of publication, with its nearly 250 issues, hundreds of educational, teaching and other publications (book reviews, literary commemorations, teacher appointments, school history events, teacher association activities, classified ads, scientific supplements), it provides a trustworthy reflection of the education system and people's education in Somogy countryside during the dualism period. The research on this topic is relevant and timeous, because the Popular School and School Review has never before been subjected to content analysis. Dr. Béla Molnár, assistant professor at the University of Western Hungary, has been researching the history of the journal for the past few years, published papers (e.g. Molnár, 2014) and presented his work at several conferences (e.g. the "Science Living with Us" conference in 2013). The present research is a continuation of the work on the history of the press that he had started.

2. Basic research questions

Three main questions have guided the research. Firstly, the educational situation in Csongrád between 1880 and 1900, then the image of children, the treatment of children and its principles, and finally the upbringing of girl children. The first two are not discussed in detail here, only the third one.

- What are the ideas and ideals about the education and schooling of the girl child?
- What was the position of the authors who published in the journal on the controversial issue of girls' education?
- Were there differences in expectations and principles about the education of girls and boys? If so, what differences?

3. Presentation of the Népiskolai Szemle and the Iskolai Szemle

After 1868 the number of pedagogical journals in Hungary began to increase rapidly. As in other counties, the need for a journal on education soon arose in Somogy (Horváth, 1885:6).

"At the beginning of the 1880s, in order to meet the growing demands in the field of education, especially to maintain the vitality of the association's work, the Iskolai Szemle was established in our region on 10 May 1881, as a result of the editorial and publishing venture of the association's president." (Horváth, 1885:7). After its publication, the journal quickly gained popularity, and was published monthly except for the two summer months. Buoyed by its success, the year 1886 brought changes for the paper. The Teachers' Union felt that the readership of the Review should be broadened, not only to include teachers of the folk, but also teachers of other types of schools (Koltai, 1939:54). For these reasons, the

Népiskolai Szemle was given a new name, with expanded and rethought content, and from 1886 it was published under the name Iskolai Szemle.



Cover page of the magazine

From 1886 onwards, the official journal of the “Somogy megyei Tanítóegylet” became the Iskolai Szemle. After the involvement of János Pethes, who came to Csongó from Budapest as a teacher of education in 1885 at his own request, the outstanding works of great pedagogical personalities were often translated by local teachers (Kelemen, 1986:152). The expanded editorial staff soon put the journal at the service of secondary education, in addition to people’s education, and its supplements were mostly intended for teachers working at this level. However, readers did not always appreciate them, as they added considerably to the cost of publication. At the same time, personal quarrels became increasingly frequent in the columns of the Szemle (e.g. Gyula Bárány, 1887:14 and R. E., 1888:15, a discussion on the schooling of girls). For these reasons, the paper entered a serious crisis from the ninth year onwards. In 1896 everything collapsed and the publication ceased.

4. The image of woman and girls' education in the dualist press

As in Europe, the second half of the 18th century saw an increase in interest in women's education, their schooling and their place in society. An increasing number of articles and translations by foreign authors appeared in journals, gazettes and advisory books. The authors of these articles on girls' education and schooling often had radically different views on a particular issue, as will be seen in later chapters of this study. The majority of authors considered that, as far as education was concerned, it was only appropriate to teach certain subjects for women, and higher education was generally rejected (Pukánszky, 2013). From the early decades of the 1800s, a lively debate was also launched in the Hungarian press (*Magyar Háziasszony*⁴, *Magyar Nők Lapja*⁵): some advocated home education, others called for the establishment of housewives' schools and many called for the establishment of schools teaching in the mother tongue. Some authors saw a woman's higher intellectual education as desirable if she was to be a worthy companion for her husband, but there were others who believed that it would do no good. Women's role, according to the latter, were that of a homemaker and a mother. One of the prominent figures in this debate was the mother of Teréz Karacs - later the founder of the Institute - Éva Takács, who called for the establishment of women's educators with a national spirit in larger towns (Németh – Pukánszky, 2004:378).

Women's issues have not only appeared in the columns of newspapers, but also in essays, educational books and counselling manuals. In 1841 András Fáy published his book "*Nőnevelés és nőnevelő-intézetek hazánkban*"⁶, which caused quite a storm, in which the author explained in a captivating style that he saw the education of girls in properly organised women's educational institutions. According to Fáy, inadequate education does more harm than good to women. Another famous pioneer in the development of women's education was Countess Teréz Brunszvík, who became famous in the history of Hungarian education for founding institutions for the education of young children. Her manuscript, entitled *Nőnevelés és nőképzés*⁷ (1962), has survived and shows arguments against some of András Fáy's theses. According to it, girls do need to acquire a higher education, they are not just born to darn stockings. At the end of the 19th century, with the development of girls' education, women were allowed to go to university, which led to their increasing participation and recognition in a growing number of academic fields (Pukánszky, 2013).

4 Hungarian Housewife, popular women's magazine in Hungary

5 Hungarian Women's Journal, popular Hungarian women's magazine

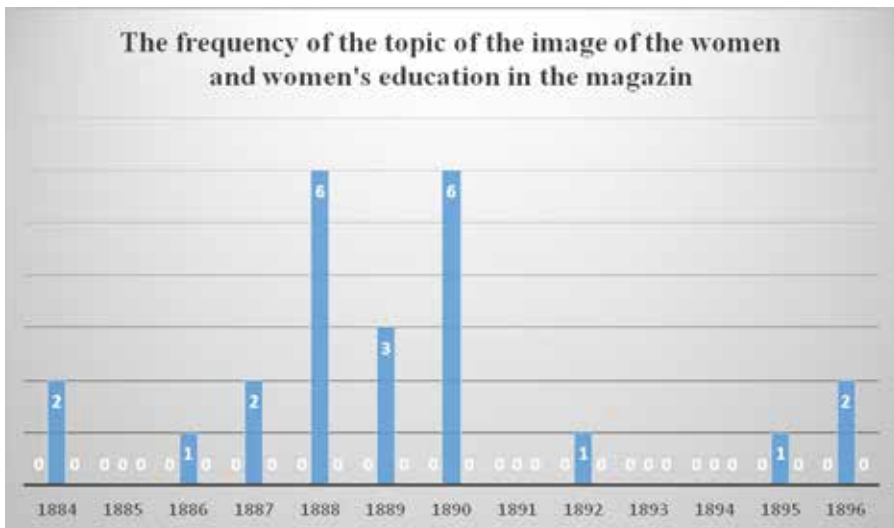
6 „Womens education and women's educational institutes in our country”

7 „Womens educational and training”

5. Women's and girls' education in the (vernacular) school system

In the 16 years of the journal's publication, the topics related to women and girls' education were published several times (at least three times):

- the physical characteristics of women, differences and similarities with men, with special reference to the brain,
- schooling, the role and tasks of the family and the folk school in the education of girls,
- qualities of a good housewife and wife,
- the conditions of female happiness,
- the morals and behavior of women.



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In this chapter, the women's life and the education of the girl child are presented through a few studies. Personal interest was the primary criterion for selection.

In 1806, Ratio Educationis II was already emphatically calling for the establishment of girls' schools, since at the beginning of the century girls were not yet attending school to any great extent, and there was little difference between the education of girls and boys in villages. In 1845, a decree was issued with the title "*Magyarország elemi tanodáinak szabályzata*", which clarified the principles of separate religious education described in Ratio Educationis II. The higher the social class of the girl child was, the more subjects she was taught. It is interesting to note that even József Eötvös' first draft law on public education made a distinction between the sexes in terms of compulsory education. For boys, the age range was between 6-12 years, for girls it was narrower, between 6-10 years. The real milestone came with the 1868 Education of the People Act, which no longer differen-

tiated between boys and girls in terms of compulsory schooling and the content of education, although it did call for education in separate classrooms where possible (Pukánszky – Nóbik, 2013).

Between 1884 and 1890, 12 studies on women's rights and women's education were published in the *School Review*, indicating that the topic was considered important by both editors and readers. In 1884, the Jewish writer and newspaper editor Bernát Krausz, who for many years was also president of the Hungarian Association in Berlin, wrote for the first time in the gazette about the perception of women and their rights. According to him, people could be divided into two large camps: one, made up largely of women, following the French model of women demanding equality; the other, made up of misogynists, bachelors and mouth-breathers, underhinted with Chinese women. A woman should never contradict her husband, because once she is married, she ceases to exist. It is a woman's vocation and job to be a mother only, because God has ordained it. Daughters must learn at school that they will one day be members of society and must provide for their own subsistence alongside their husbands (Krausz, 1884:43).

With somewhat similar ideas, but of a different type, Gyula Bárány, teacher and editor of the *Szemle*, wrote a substantial five-page study on the subject, which was published in the August 4, 1887 issue of the *Szemle*. According to him, little girls should be educated to be women, housewives, mothers, and their beautiful and good qualities should be emphasized. All girls should be taught to unfold their feminine charms, so that they may be able to please and make their husbands happy, and to – as their main vocation – care about their children. Therefore, a good example must always be set for the little girl in the family. At the same time, girls should be educated to be good housewives (Bárány, 1887:14). The civil school is the school which can greatly promote this education of the girl, because it has provided more than elementary education, and because here the middle-class daughter has acquired the knowledge necessary for her daily life. Bárány proposed that all girls of some ability should be enrolled in a civil school for girls (*ibid.*).

In response to Gyula Bárány's letter, a few months later, a series of articles on women's education and literacy appeared, almost in every third issue of the gazette from 1888 onwards. In the October 1888 issue, an unknown author wrote about the education of Hungarian women in great detail, which was a complete contradiction to Bárány's ideal of a civil girls' school. According to the author, the Hungarian woman is different from the majority of European women because she does not fight for equality, high quality knowledge and education. The Hungarian woman has never aspired to more than being a mother and a housewife. Their best role models were their grandmothers, who often had to migrate between countries and still acquired the most appropriate cultural background, even though girls' schools had not even existed. According to the author, since the opening of girls' schools and convents, the world has seemed to have been thrown off its natural course. Girls are taught foreign customs and morals in these institutions, which are unworthy of Hungarian women. The measure should not be the education of boys, and girls should be educated only in the family, not in school. *"In the girls' schools, pupils of different education, habits and nationalities flock together, and under*

their inconsiderate guidance, the well-known one-sided corporativism of our girls, which has hitherto been manifested in the preservation of the old good habits and morals, is gradually being broken down." (R.E., 1888:15)⁸.

The essay caused such a stir with its accusations that the paper even published a reply to it in the second issue of October, without naming the author. It was a devastating criticism of girls' education that could not be ignored. According to the 1885 census, only about half of the girls enrolled in a civil school for girls, the other half did not continue their education. It was therefore impossible to speak of mass girls' education. Secondly, when educating a girl, every family must have bore in mind that life may bring a woman to widowhood and her children to semi-orphanhood. A woman can only support her children if she is educated and can take up a respectable, well-paid job. But it is not certain that every girl will marry at some point. The "gibberish spirit" doctrine is also not correct according to the author. It is true that German is taught in the civil girls' school, but only in the upper classes for three hours a week, which can hardly be enough to make Hungarian girls German-minded. It is therefore pointless to accuse the girls' schools of not being Hungarian enough. The accusation that girls' schools do not teach, but only lecture, should not be levelled at the schools, but at the teacher who does so. This was present not only in the girls' schools but also in the boys' schools. And as for the accusations against the curriculum, the author's opinion was that it is precisely designed for girls, so that they learn the smallest tricks of folding and unfolding (Author unknown, 1888:259).

The proper upbringing and education of girls may serve as a good basis for the future happiness of women. "*A nevelés mely tényezői biztosítják leginkább a nők boldogságát?*"⁹ is a question asked by an unknown author in the January 10, 1889 issue of the paper. He declines to take a position in the debate that has begun, but the role of the family over that of the school is indisputable. It is not the school's task to create a healthy female character, but that of the family. The role of the mother is indisputable, it is her example which is engraved in the soul of the daughter and which gives her character later on. School teaches: knowledge, character, systems, and checks the purity of existing moral principles. To educate women academically is to deprive them of their womanhood and to disrupt family life. A woman must always remain a woman! Middle-class unfortunate women, as they always have been and always will be, are unlikely to be helped by schooling or emancipation of women. Women's education must have two foundations: religious fervour and a love of work. Religion is the guardian of morality, the ward of all despair. And work saves a woman from all the wild adventures and fantasies which might lead her astray (I. R. 1889:1)¹⁰.

Gyula Andorka, district judge of Csurgo, writer and poet, was also keen to share his opinions and views on the education of girls, for example in the issue of the

8 R.E. - unknown author who published his work entitled „Nőnevelésünk” under this name

9 Which factors of education do most ensure women's happiness?

10 I.R. - unknown author published under this name under the title „*A nevelés mely tényezői biztosítják leginkább a nő boldogságát?*”.

gazette of 25 March 1899. As in the previous article reviewed, this notice was also on the front page of the paper, again showing the priority that was given to it in the eyes of the editors and the association. In terms of its scope, there are only two sides to the story, but its position in favour of women's education is clear and reasonable. According to Andorka, it should be the aim of every society to educate its female children according to integrated, sensible pedagogical principles (Andorka, 1899:2). It would therefore be advisable, he suggests, to establish women's schools in small villages instead of in large cities (ibid.).

However, the debate did not end with Gyula Andorka's article. Gábor Réthi, a folk teacher and prose writer, was the next spokesman on the subject, whose article on women's education appeared in the 25 January 1890 issue of the newspaper. According to Réthi, the nation's consciousness had not yet fully awakened, which was especially true of the female sex, and it was therefore important to help it with writings of this and similar nature. Most parents and women are wrong in believing that great culture, glamour and appearance are the things that lead to a nobler soul. True culture, according to Réthi, is not to be sought in these things, but in the noble simplicity of the soul and in national consciousness (Réthi, 1890:2).

“Woman is a comforting, smiling genius - she participates in the great noble struggle of man, she comforts him when in life, amidst its thousand and thousand struggles, she lightens the wine path with her smile of sorrow, disperses the clouds of sorrow and bitterness” (Horváth, 1890:16). It seems that the debate on the question of the education of women and girls has not yet died down, as the essay continues in the next two issues. As in the previous articles, the author summarises the tasks of a Hungarian woman and the sense of identity she should have. The many opinions published so far are, in his opinion, almost incomprehensible: some want women to be independent, others consider keeping the household in order the most important task, but none of them provide the basis, the culture of the soul. Let there be room for theory and practice, and let us never judge women. It is true that women need to be educated, that they need to be trained, that they need to be skilful, that they need to be strengthened physically and mentally. What is interesting, he adds, is society's attitude and criticism, and instead of that money should be spent on educating Hungarian girls. It is also disappointing, he believes, that girls are almost completely excluded from higher education, and have no chance of acquiring a high level of academic qualifications. The girls' schools are not integrated; the church, the state and the municipalities are free to set up institutions, but there is little sign of uniformity. It would be important to determine how long a girl should be outside of her family, at what age she should leave her mother and when she should return to her mother. In every village where the number of inhabitants requires it, a civil school for girls should be established, not forgetting women, Horváth suggests (Horváth, 1890:17).

6. Conclusion

The School Review on the education and upbringing of women and girls has published nearly two dozen articles on the subject in the 16 years of its publication. Since the early 1880s, a veritable 'battle' has been waged in the pages of the journal for and against the civil girls' schools. By the end of the decade, the debate was settled and it was decided that the existence and operation of a civil school for girls was necessary and useful. Literacy and domesticity are not mutually exclusive concepts in the education of women. The School Review is an unrivalled source on the politics of education in Hungary after the Reunification, all issues of which can be found in the Csurgó Municipal Library, and a digitised version is available on the library's website.

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