

Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Humanities
Doctoral School of History
Modern and Contemporary Hungarian History Program

Vesztróczy Zsolt

The question of mother tongue and teaching language in the Slovak school network in Upper-Hungary. Chapters from the history of the nationality school policy at the age of dualism.

Doctoral theses

Supervisor: László Szarka

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The research of the topic

The question of education occupies a prominent issue among the Slovak minority grievances at the age of dualism. The Slovak-language school system, which had already existed at the beginning of the dualism, eroded to a very considerable extent by the end of this period. This was partly due to the different educational laws on the one hand, which included the duality of the modernization and the magyarization, and on the other hand the Hungarian political practice too, which promoted the magyarization. In my thesis I would like to show the destruction of the Slovak-language school system as a result of the Hungarian school policy and the Slovak reaction to them.

The question of the Hungarian school policy and the degradation of the Slovak-language school network are frequently cited themes by both the Slovak and the Hungarian historical scientists. This topic is dealt with almost without exception in every synthesis and monograph on the history of education and nationalities, but unfortunately these works have serious limitations.

The lack of the decent knowledge of Slovak and Hungarian languages is a general problem on both sides. The most important problems from the Slovak point of view are the disregarding of the nationality rights provided by the nationality act, the closing of three Slovak secondary grammar schools, the results of the Apponyi's school laws and generally the progressive magyarization of the school network. Besides it is not emphasized that there were serious results on the field of modernisation and a modern educational system was built up at the appropriate level of the times. On the Hungarian side modernization is stressed, while the magyarization school policy remains only a factual list. These two factors: namely the relationship of the modernization and the magyarization, the dominance of one or the other factor are not given the proper emphasis. This problem is usually mentioned only in connection with the Apponyi's school laws, although this ambivalence was the cardinal question of the complete era, particularly in case of public education.

The research of this topic is hampered by a very serious shortcoming. During the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the building of the National Archives was hit by a Soviet bomb and in the fire one of the most important group source: the files of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education were destroyed. Although there still remained some very important fragments of sources, for example the documents of Gyula Wlassics, but the rest of the ministerial materials itself does not provide sufficient guidelines for research on this issue. This can be replaced by various statistics, ministerial reports, the reports of the administrative committees, the writings and statements of the ministerial clerks, parliamentary papers, the press, the annals of educational associations, as well as various departmental archives of ministerial origin or educational materials.

The structure of the dissertation

The thesis is structurally divided into six main chapters. With the exception of the second these parts consist of two major chronological units. The first part reviews the historical background of the topic from Joseph II's death to the Compromise, while the second from the Compromise till the end of the period, the end of the First World War.

The Slovak national movement and its margins

The first part of the introductory chapter deals with the history of the Slovak national movement and the second part shows the political parties and trends at the time of dualism. Its program was essentially to reach an Upper-Hungarian Slovakian district, the "Okolie" after the Compromise. By the turn of the century a serious turn took place due to the Hungarian nationality policy, and the implementation of nationality act got priority.

The second part presents the opportunities of lobbying in the Slovak school system in this era. By the opportunities of the nationality act this became possible in social, religious and political fields but the usual daily routine contradicted to it. There were some Slovak attempts to co-operate with the various Hungarian parties, but the associations were not successful neither with the government nor with the opposition. The only real opportunity for them in this area was the Hungarian government's initiatives. However in the dualistic era it happened only twice, during the government of Menyhért Lónyay and István Tisza, but later their fall balked these attempts.

Kindergarten education

After József Eötvös's unsuccessful attempt in 1870 the issue of kindergartens was regulated in 1891 during the ministry of Albin Csáky. The Act 1891 XV was the developed version of Eötvös's earlier bill, which regulated the conditions of the foundation of kindergartens, the teaching in the kindergartens and the conditions of training of kindergarten teachers. The teaching of Hungarian language became part of the training in the kindergartens, but this was only one segment of the pre-school programs.

However the Slovakian villages in many places in the region were unable to establish kindergartens due to their poverty, so they expected that from the state. In the 1890-s the main principle for establishment of the state nurseries was that the settlements, churches and association would not be unable to do this. After the turn of the century the main aspect was that there should be a Hungarian-language elementary school in the village, which deepens the command of the language acquired in the kindergarten.

In many cases the kindergartens, which were maintained by cultural associations, compensated the lack of educational institutions. In 1892 these associations meant 22 percent of the kindergartens in the region. The most important from them was the Upper Hungarian Cultural Association, which held up about 60 kindergartens between 1885 and 1918. These kindergartens were entirely Hungarian and their education was based on the curriculum of the state nursery schools. The maintenance and operation of kindergartens meant so serious financial burden on the Association that after 1894 they tried to stifle the establishments of nurseries and tried to receive state grant or to achieve the nationalization of the kindergartens at the ministry. During the World War, the Association initiated the establishment of the so-called war nurseries with free childcare. 250 such institutions were established in the territory of 9 municipalities, which worked under the same principle as the kindergartens of the associations.

Although the language of teaching was Hungarian in the kindergartens of the associations, it had no serious results either in the knowledge of Hungarian, or in the assimilation of Slovak children. The phrases, rhymes and songs learned there meant "only" language preparation, which later eased the Hungarian language education in elementary schools.

Elementary schools

The Nationality and Education Act in 1868 meant the legal basis for the public education, which also gave good opportunities to establish schools, provided mother-tongue education in the multinational areas, too and Hungarian language was not a compulsory subject. In 1860-s, the maintainers of the schools were almost exclusively churches, but their schools had serious problems. In fact these often were overcrowded schools in bad condition with one teacher and low quality of teaching, which did not correspond to the modern needs of modern civil education. This gap could be eliminated only with the help of the state, which meant the nationalization of church schools and the change of the language of the teaching. So in case of non-Hungarian-language elementary schools the modernization and magyarization often coincided. However church schools meant the last bastions of ethnic language training during this period, and this duality endangered the existence of these institutions.

In 1870-s a movement started on the part of the counties and the professional organizations in order to introduce Hungarian language as a compulsory subject in every school. This effort became successful in 1879, when the Government bowed before their ambition due to the political situation in Hungary. Then three years were given to the teachers, who did not have the adequate knowledge of Hungarian language, to acquire it but the statistics show that this issue was not successful.

The failure of this law prompted the Hungarian political life further actions, but the government and the counties had other solution to this. In 1893 the government tried to issue a law, which gave supplement to salary to teachers in church schools, but this meant significant reduction of the church autonomy in personnel and disciplinary matters.

The counties, however, saw the solution in the nationalization of church schools and they made two attempts to it between 1894 and 1896. The Government rejected this initiation for political and principal reasons, but it did not reject the gradual nationalization of schools. During the program "1000 elementary schools" the most important issue during the installation was to provide a school to villages, which did not have any. At the same time it was also an important aspect to establish a state kindergarten there, as well. However, the counties considered the installation of state schools to be a good antidote against the ideology of the Czechoslovak mutuality.

The idea of nationalization of church schools was promoted by the various participants of Hungarian public life. Although the various governments passed a number of regulations, but they only urged greater state control. In 1907 the Apponyi's school acts meant real change, which were based on the Albert Berzeviczy's bill about elementary schools. This meant the drastic reduction of Slovak and usually the nationality schools, but at the same time it had great achievements in the modernization of education.

The Apponyi's school acts were partially corrected during the second premiership of István Tisza. The teaching of the mother tongue was allowed on elective basis in elementary schools, but this process was interrupted due to his fall.

The result of the magyarization in the nationality schools can be regarded as a failure. The ethnic rates did not change due to it and most of the Slovak did not learned Hungarian at all. The contemporary statistics illustrated this situation well showing that much greater percent of the region's population could read and write than could speak Hungarian.

Intermediate education

This section of the dissertation is about the schools of intermediate level. Two types of schools are mentioned here: secondary grammar and teacher – training schools. In the former case the legal basis for this kind of the education was the Nationality and Secondary Grammar School Act. So this meant great opportunities for establishing schools and ordered the state to provide the opportunity of mother-tongue education in the multinational areas too. Even the Nationality Act did not care about the modernisation of teaching in secondary grammar schools, so all these question were regulated by the 1883 Trefort's Act XXX later. This act regularized teacher training, the school leaving exams and the controlling of the schools, maximized the number of classes and provided the opportunity to issue multilingual certificates on demand.

There were two new elements in the Act, on the one hand Hungarian language was introduced as a compulsory subject and on the other hand the question of promoting non-state secondary schools. According to the latter one, if the maintainer cannot provide the costs of operating and maintaining the institution, the state supplies the shortfall, but it means that state curriculum should be used. During the preparation of the bill the relation of the State and the Church came to the front from the educational point of view. In this question the government represented the liberal standpoint and did not want to nationalize the secondary grammar schools ruled by the churches. But it was emphasized mainly due to the Slovak example that the church autonomy could not mean protection of the anti-state nationality matters.

The practice of the Hungarian school policy however showed a rather large gap in comparison to the Nationality Act, which by the end of the era almost resulted in the complete cessation of the existing Slovak secondary school network which existed in 1867. The contemporary Hungarian school policy considered the secondary grammar schools as an important tool of the magyarization and civic education. This aimed the development of intellectuals joining the organic Hungarian culture. It would have been a link between non-Hungarian masses and the state thus ensuring their loyalty. The situation worsened, as from 1870-s thanks to Béla Grünwald an opinion anchored claiming that the existence of a Slovak secondary grammar school is impossible, because pan-Slavic agitators are trained there instead of teaching.

The Slovak national movement did not start from scratch in terms of institutions. At the beginning of the era, there were three secondary grammar schools with clearly Slovakian, two with mixed teaching language and some others, where Slovak was used as a helping language. There was the cultural society, *Matica slovenská* too, which also provided educational scholarship for Slovak students. The Slovak educational efforts intended to preserve and develop these institutions and on the other hand struggled to establish new institutions on the basis of the Nationality Act.

In appearance of the Nationality Act first the representatives of the „New Slovak School” initiated the establishment of state secondary grammar schools with Slovak teaching language at the Minister of Religion and Education. It did not seem to be a hopeless thing, because the Andrassy and Lónyay-governments were receptive. József Eötvös was given a petition by them first, but without success. In 1872, the representative of this political trend proposed the same thing at the government and their initiation was supported by the Prime Minister, Menyhért Lónyay and also by Ferenc Deák himself. Kajuch's initiative due to the contemporary management became a regional initiative, but Lónyay's fall caused the failure of this action. The closure of three Slovak secondary grammar schools and *Matica slovenská* made this political trend impossible.

In 1874-75 the three Slovak-language secondary grammar schools were terminated by Trefort due to the initiation of Zvolen county and other counties. The boards of enquiry and Gömör county demanded the establishment of new Slovak state secondary grammar schools, but their request was refused. There were also big changes in the secondary grammar school in Besztercebánya by the initiation of Béla Grünwald and János Klamarik. The Slovak director, who

was the representative of the Slovak national movement was relieved and the curriculum and the staff were changed by the minister of Religion and Education in 1867. Slovak language, as a helping language or optional subject was almost completely cut down.

The Slovak National Party had many attempts to establish secondary grammar schools after 1875, but these intentions were always blocked by the Lutheran church leadership and the government. In 1910s during the Lukács's government some petitions were given to the government, which seemed to be lenient, but it brought no result. In 1916, István Tisza submitted a bill to provide opportunities for teaching the nationality languages in the secondary grammar schools, but this attempt was not successful during the war.

Despite of this there were still two possibilities for the Slovak to learn in mother tongue. One of them meant the students' associations, which had great traditions. Unfortunately the leadership of contemporary schools often hysterically reacted to them and this often resulted in banning these associations or expelling the participating students. The other alternative was the Slovak students' peregrination to the Czech secondary grammar schools, which phenomena escalated after 1875. The Slovak students were promoted with fellowships by the Czechs, moreover there were attempts to set up Slovak language schools in the Moravian border region. The education in the Czech schools also meant that these students returned to Hungary after leaving school as representatives of the ideology of the Czech-Slovak mutuality. Those Slovak politicians, such as Milan Hodža or Pavel Blaho, who favoured the Slovak students' peregrination, were also the representatives of this ideology. However the low number of the Slovak students studying in the Czech schools showed that these could not substitute the lack of Slovak institutions in Hungary

The only teacher-training school of the dualistic era was in Nagyróce, which was closed in 1874. After this they could not establish other new training-schools. Teaching in the Catholic training-schools in Szepesváralja was in Slovak, but after 1879 this language became one of the subjects, and it remained so until the end of this era. István Tisza planned to open 8 training-schools with Slovak language, but his failure caused the abortion of this plan.

Higher education

The Nationality Act also meant legal basis for higher education. This ordained the government to establish the Slovak language and literature department, but this ordainment was not realized until the end of this era. In the 1870s Slovak language was used as a teaching language in the Evangelical seminaries in Pozsony and Eperjes, but it ceased to exist by the middle of the decade. Further experiments to use Slovak language in higher education were unsuccessful, although at the time of István Tisza there was an attempt to establish the Slovak Department.

Despite of the absence of these institutions, principally there was a possibility for the Slovak to learn in mother tongue, but the participants were punished with the expulsion from the schools. The other option meant the Slovak students' peregrination to Vienna or Prague, but the extremely low number of Slovak students studying there means this could not make up for the lack of Slovak institutions in Hungary. The participants of these peregrination often became the representatives of the ideology of the Czech-Slovak mutuality.