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**The Students of the State Grammar School of Kaposvár  
(1870 - 1910)**

**Theses of the Doctoral Dissertation (PhD)**

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## **Introduction**

In my thesis the operation of one of the secondary grammar schools in Somogy county, in the county seat, is being analyzed during its four decades. I am trying to give an authentic picture of the chosen period not only in relation to the history of society and the education, but also by recalling the lives of the teachers and students of that time in a historico-sociological respect.

In the life of the mentioned school there was a milestone in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the idea of its closing down or turning it into another type of institute arose.

The fight of the different local interest groups had been created, and finally, the stronger side gained the victory. According to their wishes the form of the grammar school remained. The others were to put up with the new situation and for the lack of other learning alternative they had no other choice but to adapt to the circumstances which were not optimal for them at all.

In my thesis I turned to the Archives and used research work in the library on the local history. I endeavored to find the sources and furnish a basis for completing the historical research between the education and society with the materials of the grammar school of Kaposvár concerning the age of dualism.

## **Structure of the thesis**

In the first part of my thesis I am drawing up the theoretical framework in which my theme is embedded. After doing this, in connection with the historical events preceding, it comes to drawing up the problem itself and the hypotheses. In the fourth chapter I am presenting the methods applied during the analyses, while in the fifth the economic and social particularities of Somogy county and Kaposvár which made the school be established and operate.

The sixth chapter is about the life of the institute of that time highlighting the local characteristics. The next chapter deals with and analyzes the reports on the grammar school in the weekly 'Somogy' of that time while in the eighth we can learn about the school bulletins as the most important factor of the inside news of the school.

After that an analysis follows dealing with the social situation and performance of the students on the basis of registers. As part of the analysis I would also like to present the career of the students who already left school compared to the job of their father or guardian.

Further on, I compare the findings of the three analyses, then it comes to the review of the students who became well-known persons, outstanding figures in the life of the town. Finally, I am taking the fulfillment of the hypotheses into account.

## **Aim of the research**

The aim of the research was to discover the social background of the students in the most significant school of Kaposvár and Somogy county and the role of the school in their career in the period following the Compromise of 1867. In relation to this, I wanted to get an answer to the circle of questions whose aim was to find out whether the decision-making, the consequence of which this grammar school meant the only local secondary school facility for the youth of the town and the county, was correct. I also analyzed to what extent this school as the main local channel of social mobility was able to contribute to take advantage of the opportunities during the decades following the Compromise.

## **Applied methods**

Primary written sources, registers of that time, bulletins, keepsake albums, minute-books, the county's Lord Lieutenant's documents and letters as well as the records of the materials of the local press focusing on the life of the grammar school and its content analysis formed the basis of my research. Besides, by means of secondary sources, studying the special literature of the history of education and sociology and by the help of a comparative-analytical strategy I endeavored to find the connections.

To approach the life of the grammar school of that time my discovery work took priority since, in my view, accurate conclusions can be drawn from the data of the enrolled concerning the attitude to education of the inhabitants belonging to different layers of society and, in a consequence, the enforcement of mobility opportunities.

I discovered the material relating to Somogy county depending on documents of that time taken from the Archives and library as well as research work on local history. The information taken from the registers and the sources of the Archives of Somogy county were accurately completed with the information on bulletins in the Library of Somogy county and with the materials of the weekly 'Somogy' relating to the analyzed decades. In this press organ the teachers of the grammar school also published regularly at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so those problems, suggestions, debates flashed in their writings about which the public opinion showed great concern. The discovery of the material of the articles meant very important information, which enabled the school to get a more thorough insight into its life. Besides, such a concept was characteristic of the given period that the authors of the writings gave their opinion as their writings were the messages of that period at the same time. The materials dealing with the life of the only grammar school of the county seat and one of the most significant institutes in the county had a regular place among the actual news. The content analysis of the writings was a favorable possibility since the opinion and the possible

change in the judgement of the public were traceable during the decades in connection with the chosen topic, the life of the grammar school. Of course, we have to take it into consideration that materials of this kind satisfied mass- and layer needs, it could occur that certain news was exaggerated while other pieces of information were suppressed. News reports related to the operation of the school and students' life showed us the most important events of the studied 40 years (more exactly 41 school years), they helped us explore a very important phase in the institution's life – the significant period of dualism.

During the content analysis study (this means we draw conclusions with methodical, objective and repeatable method on the basis of data correlation /interdependence and the nature of information which can be inferred from the message editing), I processed all news and articles (regardless of their length) in connection with the scrutinized school in all issues of the weekly paper which appeared btw 1870 and 1910 and I have found 684 writings. We categorised the content of them for in favour of the analysis. Two codifiers, independent of each other, categorized these articles, we classified the processed topics into one or other of the 36 categories not as a mechanistic step but as a methodological one, accompanied with interpretation. The final structure was established according to the same interpretations.

After having filed all the data referring to the school's life in order to establish the system, I continued dividing the categories into being positive - negative, according to the tone of the given article. From this point of view it was possible to conclude the genuine evaluation and concept how the period secondary grammar school was judged. The establishment of the category system was carried out on the basis of the following points:

- When setting up the categories the grammar school's image can be understood with the gathering and classification of information related to the activities and function
- registration of the opinions about the students' financial background and meeting the academical requirement is also an essential criterion
- it is necessary to separate informative data in the system and those ones which reflect opinions.

Further categories would have made it technically impossible to accomplish the procedure. This way quantitative figures showed the tendency how the school was judged, which became understood with the help of qualitative analysis.

With processing the articles not only did I intend to explore the judging of the school but also whether there were writings in connection with the students' social status as well as how students with different social background and abilities managed to meet the school's requirement. The fact that several nameregisters, school reports were destroyed, made the

revelation of additional sources more difficult – and thus narrowed their number – furthermore the registry was sometimes insufficient. Source criticism had special significance during the research. To ensure this, the three source groups were separated, and I strove many times for checking genuineness and reliability of the data. In connection with genuineness it is necessary to remark that although registry of namebook was done by class- teachers, during registration students did not only took official documents but they were also accompanied by father, mother, guardian or perhaps one of their representatives to the school's management. This fact strengthens the reliability of the compiled database. Source criticism aims at verifying that, in most cases the exact circumstances of leaving school are not mentioned, neither are the causes of arriving later, nor are the further plans of the suspended students.

To justify or reject my hypotheses related to students' composition, I studied the data of registered students at the school in the period after the Compromise of 1867 – on the basis of several variables. My research scrutinised the national features of the students' names, their birthplaces (which country), their living place in the year of registration, the fathers' (guardians') professions, which congregation the students belonged to, exemption from tuition fee and their academical performance within several correlations. While gathering material I also had to take into account how retraceable and accessible the sources were. When determining the period I primarily considered the features of history and educational history, the changes of periodicity as well as the possibilities provided by the sources, I marked the studied time period in a broader sense at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the turn of the century – more precisely in the period between 1870 and 1910.

In accordance, as the basis of the analysis, I gathered 3761 secondary grammar school students' data in Kaposvár – these documents are retraceable according to nameregisters between 1870 and 1910 (the annual book of 1881 was not preserved). I couldn't undertake the entire analysis of the sources, as a consequence, I was to restrict my examination to materials referring to the four decades of the secondary grammar school, these documents can be found in the Archives as well as Manuscripts of Kaposvár and in the County Library. Processing materials from later decades can be the subject of related research. The elements of database, which was established with the help of nameregisters, can be listed into 5 categories. 1 Personal particulars and data in connection with family background: name, congregational belonging, exemption from tuition fee, fathers' (guardians') professions and variables derived from them (broader – narrower categorization of the professions, fathers' presumed qualification, employer sphere). 2 Data referring to settlements, counties (birthplaces, living places) 3 Data related to dates (year of birth, registration year) 4 Data concerning studies

(year of a possible leaving, the average of grades, the fact of getting a final certificate) 5 Status following studies (students' later jobs, living places) The numbers of independent variables per student is 16.

On one hand my method of analysis regarding students' data was statistical (with the help of SPSS 13.0 statistical programme) and on the other hand content analysis of the written documents (journal articles), with them I strove for finding out how justified the maintenance of the school was in Kaposvár, how the students' composition altered, the efficiency of schooling and the effect it had on mobilization.

### **The data base, hypotheses and results of the work**

On the basis of the analysis of the three studied scope (articles of the period, secondary grammar school reports and namebooks) I managed to collect those features which proved the hypothesis that – being aware of the social and cultural components – instead of the secondary grammar school, a secondary school of sciences, a mixed school may have been more suitable for the schooling of students nearby as well as justified that finishing studies at grammar school caused quite a big burden to the representatives of certain social groups. The same two main problems could be experienced on each scope.

Concerning financial background news reports which appeared in 'Somogy' weekly paper made it seen that schooling could mean serious problem for a lot of families and to ease this, appeals were continually read asking privileged inhabitants to take part in charity organisations where they could make offers and collect clothes for students in need. The results of collections and donations were published by name regularly, the given sums of money were listed and they thanked for the donations. Teachers and students organised cultural events in order to raise fund for students. News reports revealed that tuition fee liability could be a severe influential factor in grammar school studies and it made schooling more difficult. Also the establishment of the Support Institution happened to subsidize underprivileged students. Records of the report books also backed up similar problems. e.g. the work of the Support Association charities, the list of names of support students, datas of exemption of tuition fee, situation of Youth Help Organisation, the fact of the 'Republic', all indicate that students were in need of support.

The mentioned situation was also confirmed by the datas of name register, the presumable composition of parents' jobs and financial background, the significant number of students entitled for being free from tuition fee and the high rate of drop-outs.

Complying with the requirements of the expectations of the grammar school the hardship of meeting the school requirements, strictness of teachers' staff, the educational system overloading students, the exam system that could be fulfilled with difficulties, unclear, not acquirable school books, frequently failed exams, all were indicated by the publications about them.

In the report books we could follow the marks of all students, and the results concerning school leaving exams, from which it turned out how many students could not meet the requirements of tasks or expectations. That is why they had to repeat the school year or failed and dropped out.

The high number of dropped-outs and failed students became clear from the name register on the basis of weak marks and performance.

After working up and analysing the database to prove or support my hypothesis can be summed up the following way.

- 1 According to my assumption the original function of the grammar school (preparation for further education, which served the education of those being in a higher level of society) and the social background of students showed a very high level divergence.- The hypothesis was proved, because the students of the school came, first of all from middle class and lower-middle class children, which did not correspond with the original aims of the school founders.
- 2 As it was expected the process of the recruitment basis of the grammar school was affected by the social background of students, the financial situation.- The father's/ guardian's profession, financial condition were influencing facts concerning the success of students' studies. The more preferable background, the cultural capital of intellectual workers' families proved an advantage in the process of getting forward to higher years. Besides this we could give an evidence of the fact that the children from higher social class took more favourable position in society after finishing their studies. On the other hand it could not be shown that the wealthier a child was the higher performance or success he had.
- 3 Presumably in getting the school leaving certificate the advantage of vertical integrational mobility appeared, that is the children of parents with university or college degree could reach the final year in a higher proportion( because the elite groups considered education as the upkeep of their group's status dominance.)- Intellectual workers first of all in the

case of teachers' sons the families' cultural capital played a favourable role, the higher education of parents really had an advantage on finishing the grammar school.

- 4 It is assumed that more students dropped out coming from lower-class families, fewer of them could finish their studies (their family background, cultural capital support their study results).-The hypothesis was not proved,the cause of the high percentage of their dropout was not their poorer school performance or their families' financial situation, a lot of them were prepared to fulfill shorter educational term.
- 5 It is supposed that connection can be shown between the distance of a student's home from school and the success in their studies from the starting point that the support and help of families, establishing more favourable circumstances could mean bigger chance to obtain better results.- The closeness to school really had an effect on the chances in their studies regarding local students and those from Somogy enforcing its prior effect in enrollment, but the significance of them was not decisive in getting to the final year.
- 6 The exemption of tuition fee of students' in need had a motivating effect, could result in a higher extent to their effort in their studies, this way higher percentage of their presence among the students' getting their final certificate.- The assumption was not proved. The fact of exemption of tuition fee did not mean increased effort from the side of affected students finishing their grammar school studies.
- 7 Probably connection between the social background and school achievement concerning their future mobility can be shown. We suppose children of higher stratum reached further educational institutions in a higher rate, and took a more favourable social status after finishing their studies. – Grammar school became the generating fact of a social mobility, besides the high social layer of the traditional landowner / honorific Christian members it started groups descended from Jewish groups from lower-middle class. Leaving the members of the lower-middle class meant the possibility of main opportunity of mobility and the chance to get into the groups of civil servants and intellectual workers.

### **Summary**

The statements mentioned above let me come to the conclusion that part of the students really as a 'must' enrolled to the grammar school, as not their families' financial background nor their primary school grounding, skills, abilities and future plans would not have given the reason to continue their studies in this type of school. Because of the high number of drop-outs it is evident that first of all not grammar school education meant the real solution for the children of lower social class.However the decision of that time that voted for grammar school proved extremely advantageous social stratum. The social integrating function of the

elite forming institution established a favourable position for all groups of society approaching the middle class.

It can be proved that those students who could not finish the grammar school for certain reasons became 'losers' to some extent. However, those who completed all the classes became winners even if they had to overcome a lot of difficulties. The bad financial conditions might have been compensated with their good school achievement, which could mean to them exemption from tuition fees and give chance to finish school.

The teachers did not make exceptions with anyone and no provable data can be found to state that the children of the 'elite' performed better than those of the lower classes.

This is how it could happen that the presence of the grammar school in the county seat drew the attention of those to the opportunity of learning who had not thought of it earlier. Children of day laborers and tradesmen also had the opportunity to finish the grammar school. They might not have got to a grammar school of a county which was farther from their place if a secondary school of sciences or a mixed school had created in the market town in 1850.

Due to this turn of events, to be 'elite' gave the upward striving classes an enormous opportunity to be more successful in their lives, take final examinations at the end of their studies and choose a higher qualified profession. The secondary school law of 1883 was accepted at the same time as the qualification of the civil servants. In a consequence, the demand for the graduate increased both on the private farms and in the public sector. For the lower clerical jobs the completion of the fourth class of the grammar school was prescribed while for a higher position a higher level was required. Those who had taken the difficulties, time, and costs and had put in energy could established their future whether they completed four or six classes or got to the final examinations. In addition, apart from the qualification, the intellectual capital, the opportunity of socialization could play a significant role in the later lives of the students. This was the benefit of that capital which the students could acquire among their classmates during the school years. It can be instructive that those parents who had tried to raise the money for the education of their children, had encouraged them to be hardworking, had devoted time and energy to their children's progress recovered the expenses in the long run whether they belonged to the upper or the lower classes.

The events and experience of the past can certify that it is worth studying and struggling for knowledge. In Kaposvár, due to the turn of circumstances, in the secondary education the germs of the mass education were accomplished despite the planned elite education. A lot of students had the chance to study and many of them took advantage of this offered opportunity. Besides the above-mentioned facts another lesson can be drawn from the facts

revealed by the research on the history of education. These facts drew the decision-makers' attention to their responsibility, the consequences of their decisions and to the possibility when a decision can change the lives of hundreds of children.

