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THESIS BOOKLET

A PEDAGOGICAL-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PURPOSE AND
FUNCTION SYSTEM OF HUNGARIAN FOLK PLAY AND ITS
CONTEMPORARY PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD LEARNING PROCESSES

DOCTORAL THESIS (Ph.D)

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I. MOTIVATION OF THE TOPIC SELECTION, BASIC OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY OF THE RESEARCH

Since ancient times, play and dance have been an integral part of humanity, of childhood and adulthood, but for little more than a century, they have been a part of education as we understand it today. They have been embedded primarily in the fields of physical education and music and singing in the past and continue to be embedded in today's world. The pedagogically oriented, scientific approach of folk play and folk dance is a gap-filler in any field. Consequently, it is a very high responsibility to process.

Even the ancient thinkers were already particularly concerned with the issues of children's play and dance. We can examine the concept and function of play from a number of philosophical, psychological and pedagogical perspectives. We find similarities in the voluntary participation, in the identification of an exhilarating experience, and in the fact that its existence is necessary and indispensable. (Justné, 1975) „*A child born into traditional peasant society was born into an order defined by natural and supernatural forces.*” (Page 37 Ratkó, 1996.) The Hungarian peasant society, the turn towards the traditional Hungarian culture, like in other European countries, has become significant since the end of the 19th century. At that time, a number of programmes were created throughout Europe, including Hungary, to convey specific cultural elements.

However, the natural living space has been replaced by the exhibition and the stage, and much less of the function has been preserved that would have provided the participants with their original purpose in the areas of play and dance, singing. While at the beginning the performers and mediators still had their own domain, soon the areas represented became formal productions. Nevertheless, there were initiatives and movements that tried to maintain the possibility of making available, sometimes re-educating, the traditional value and its personal experiences. Soon, both children's play and dance appeared in the educational sphere, from then on with this duality and constant questioning, seeking its balance and function, at times as a theatricality, at times as a pedagogical or political goal.

One of the most outstanding figures of 20th century Hungary, Zoltán Kodály, is the so-called perfect creator of this harmony. The ethnomusicologist, composer and teacher had a significant influence on the relationship between children's play and Hungarian culture and pedagogy as a whole, on the social perception of these fields and on the scientific approach to them. His work is of outstanding value and rightfully world-famous. The basic pillars of his concept include the incorporation of Hungarian folk songs into the curriculum, the connection between human

wholeness and Hungarian consciousness, the use of pure source, and the introduction of the concept of musical mother tongue. (Pethő, 2011) It is thanks to his personal and his students' dedicated work that the field he has been leading, the Hungarian folk game, is still an element and a tool of the Hungarian pedagogical processes, and is part of the core programmes of both kindergartens and schools, along with children's dance and singing.

Hungarian culture is a treasure of unparalleled value for our nation, an element of education in Hungary, and a tool of pedagogical processes. We must therefore place particular importance on the cultural-pedagogical capital that lies within it, which carries within itself uniqueness, modern pedagogical approaches, building on our own national identity, providing roots and a strong foundation, since "*our task is to implant and slowly develop the subconscious elements of Hungarianness in kindergarten... The first pillar of subconscious Hungarianness is language... the other is music.*" (Page 10 Kodály, 1941) Knowing our language and our history is an indispensable key to our existence. Nevertheless, beyond knowledge, our true identity and our value in the world can only be gained from knowledge of our culture, the transmission of which must be a priority for all areas of education.

II. LITERATURE BACKGROUND RELATED TO THE SUBJECT OF THE DISSERTATION

Compared to the results of the primary literature explorations, the actual research provided me with considerably more primary sources than I had expected. Their presence, however, varies from chapter to chapter and subtopic to subtopic. I have relied almost exclusively on secondary sources for my exploration of the child world of traditional peasant culture. Primarily on summary works that elaborated on the particularities of a social milieu, a landscape, a settlement, and organized and systematized them as a research, a summary collection. [e.g. *Bagu* (2007), *Bartók és Kodály* (1951), *Csete* (1993), *Dömötör* (1990), *Együd* (1985), *Fügedi* (1988, 1995), *Gazda* (1980, 2017), *Gönczi* (1937) *Gönyei* (1958), *Hutter* (2013), *Justné* (1975), *Kiss* (2000), *Kresz* (1942), *Lajos* (1940), *Lázár* (2002), *Martin* (1995), *Novák* (2000), *Szabó* (1986, 1995)] In further diachronic research, I have examined a significant proportion of primary sources, with a particular focus on exploring the processes of education and training within institutional settings. These included a wide range of guides, manuals, instructions, curricula, collections, lectures and minutes. [pl. *Bardóczi* (1928), *Györgyfalvay* (1962), *Györgyfalvay és Osskó* (1961), *Kiss és Péterfy és Pósa és Tihanyi* (1893), *Magyary és Szentpál* (1955)]

I have used mostly secondary sources to examine the social, cultural and educational background to these findings. [e. g. *Dobszay* (1984), *Falvay* (1977, 1990), *Forrai* (1951a, 1951b, 1975), *Halmos* (2006, 2012), *Kaposi* (1963, 1965, 1975, 1981), *Keszler* (1965, 1997), *Kodály* (1939, 1943, 1945, 1958), *Mészáros* (1982, 1988, 1996), *Németh* (1994, 2012, 2013), *Osskó* (1960), *Pethő* (2012), *Pukánszky* (2001, 2005), *Vásárhelyi* (1972, 1974), *Vitányi* (1964, 1981)]

I have had difficulty in arriving at a roughly equal level of depth in the different chapters and sub-chapters across the two major historical periods, and I have also tried to take a highly critical approach to the communication approaches expected of the post-World War II political system. In several cases, the transcripts and presentations provided contradictory information, and in these cases, further literature exploration was necessary.

The ongoing literature search has revealed a number of new perspectives on dealing with the topic of this dissertation. I have been able to access content that has provided new interpretations and at the same time new directions in defining pedagogical nodes. The value of this literature is invaluable for the treatment of the topic.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH, SUBJECTS TO INSPECT

I have divided the research into five sections by grouping the questions, which also organises the objectives in this way. This periodization already shows the historical timeline by looking at the pedagogical nodes of each period. Consequently, the objectives have similar motivations, yet each section has its own specific orientation.

Questions about the world of folk play and children's dance in traditional peasant culture:

- What pedagogical purpose and function areas emerged in the play world of traditional peasant culture?
- How did dance appear in the children's world of traditional peasant culture?

In order to properly situate folk play and children's dance in contemporary pedagogical processes, it is necessary to know the period in which they were present in their natural forms and media in children's everyday lives. It is important to examine what purposes and functions we expect to discover in terms of our present-day pedagogical knowledge. The aim of this chapter is therefore to explore the specificity of the traditional children's world with regard to play and dance, which will serve as a starting point for this research.

Questions about the role of pedagogical nodes from the turn of the century to liberation:

- What events and programmes accompanied the transformation and disintegration of peasant culture in the last decade of the 19th century and the early 20th century?
- What movements have emerged since the turn of the century that have included children's dance and folk play among their aims?
- Can life reform and reform pedagogy be linked to the world of children's dance and traditional folk play, and if so, in what context is it implemented?
- What educational and cultural policy approaches and influences emerged from the turn of the century to the Second World War, which gave space to the issues of children's dance and folk play?

The second part looks at the junctures in the history of pedagogy from the turn of the century to the Second World War. The aim is to explore and present the surfaces and arenas of folk play and folk dance within and outside institutions during this period. Furthermore, it will explore programmes and movements that have influenced the process of institutionalisation of folk play and children's dance, its departure from its traditional medium and its continuing existence.

Questions about the impact of Zoltán Kodály's work:

- In Zoltán Kodály's work, what are the purposes and functions of folk games, folk songs and folk dance?
- What is the conceptual basis for the inclusion of folk games in pedagogical processes, and what role does it play in the musical education toolkit?
- What initiatives and movements, both within and outside the institution, have been made possible by the work of Zoltán Kodály?

The work of Zoltán Kodály is of such significance for the combined appearance of Hungarian culture and pedagogy that I feel the need to dedicate a separate chapter to his work, in which his concept is presented specifically from the direction of pedagogical approaches to the fields of play, dance, song and national education, the recollection of which can give new impulses and direction to the pedagogical issues of our time.

The institutionalization of Hungarian folk play, children's dance, its appearance outside the institutions, its professional history, questions concerning pedagogical historical junctions between 1945 and 1996:

- What were settings for the world of children's dance and folk play inside and outside institutions?

- How did folk play and children's dance appear in the programmes of public education institutions, in the programmes of kindergarten education published in 1971 and 1989 and in the subsequent period, up to 1996, and in the public education laws for primary schools up to 1995, when the first NAT (National Core Curriculum) was published?
- How was the training of professionals for folk play and folk dance education implemented?
- In what ways did children's dance and folk play appear during the Dance House Movement, and what were the effects of the emergence of the movement?

The last historical period before the present is the period between 1945 and 1996. The aim of this chapter is to present the professional history of folk dance education, to explore the different pedagogical settings, the current pedagogical aims and functions, by examining the settings inside and outside the institution, as in the second part.

Questions on contemporary training, core programme, practice:

- In what way are folk play and children's dance presented in the current (in force in 2022) National Core Programme for Kindergarten Education?
- Are children's dance and folk play included in the training of kindergarten teachers, and if so, in what way?
- Does folk play appear in the free play activities of the kindergarten?
- In what areas of activity is folk play included in the life of a kindergarten?

The ultimate aim of the research is to confirm or refute the hypothesized position by contrasting the results of the kindergarten teacher training - core programme - practice. The aim here is therefore to present the areas of the core programme, the content of the training, the practical implementation and finally to highlight the supposed dissonance.

Hypothesis:

The main line of the research is the pedagogical exploration of a specific field, the pedagogical history of the teaching of folk play and children's dance, where the directions formulated in the research questions are brought to the front. The hypothesis formulated, however, is a phenomenon focusing on a contemporary problem, awaiting confirmation or refutation, and is forward-looking in both training and practice directions. However, to see the thesis in its entirety, in all its complexity, it is necessary to be familiar with all the historical specificities that are discussed in the paper. This is how the hypothesis itself gains validity:

The content, purpose and scope of functions of Hungarian folk play and children's dance, as defined in training, practice and core programmes, are not consistent. Teacher training

does not provide the content defined in the core programmes, and practice is contrary to the general pedagogical and methodological approach of the core programmes.

IV. COURSE AND METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

The structure of the dissertation was determined at the beginning of the research, based on the search for and the processing of different nodes in the history of pedagogy, which I carried out by a diachronic and systematic examination of the topic. As a result, I chose documentary and content analysis as the primary research methods, supplemented by a questionnaire research. In terms of the type of research methodology, most of it is based on the principle of qualitative methodology, whereby the interpretation is often holistic, value-oriented and referring to social construction. The presence of this topic in my everyday practical and theoretical work is woven into the processing of the researched phenomena. This is done through documentary and content analysis of primary and secondary sources.

The research as a whole is based on questions from the group of types of qualitative methodologies that can be classified as pedagogical ethnography, which offers alternatives that describe, interpret and explain phenomena. Its results can also function as guides and can be used by participants in the pedagogical arena. (*Szabolcs, 2001*)

However, in the questions that formed the hypothesis and those that were based on historical data, I have chosen the quantitative approach, based on objective results and providing statistical values. The methods used in this research were documentary analysis and questionnaire.

V. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

I encountered new stimuli in each of the research topics. I found sources, events and contexts that partly confirmed and supported the picture that had emerged from my previous research, but also revealed many new perspectives on the history of education, institutional integration and the world of folk games and folk dance outside institutions. The lack of research into the pedagogical aspects of these areas has often been a source of difficulty, given the magnitude, timeliness and necessity of the subject, as I have often been overcome by the despair of how much more research would be needed to complete the task I have undertaken, in order to gain

a comprehensive overview of the entire history of this field, which I have now tried to keep on a historical plane, with a firm line of approach.

In the first part, I came to the image of children in traditional peasant culture, on the one hand, and the purpose, function, form and mode of expression of folk games and folk dance in the lives of children, on the other hand, by exploring two themes. In connection with this theme, I examined the scientific approaches and typological systems of the primary processing of folk play and dances. In the course of the processing, a system of purposes and functions emerged, which, according to my preliminary assumptions, were also realised in a complex way, according to emotional, intellectual, social and motor competences, in accordance with age-specific characteristics, and complemented by a supportive, educational and knowledge-transferring attitude in the lives of children. Its primary form is free play, functional play - for functional development, for entertainment and for role playing according to social order, which is most clearly reflected for us in the process of education in dance and habits. The characteristics of folk play in traditional peasant culture can be compared with the objectives set out in the core kindergarten programme. However, its age and gender specific features are not, or only partially, identical to current practice. The dance worlds of children and adults are not separated in terms of content, but a process of acquiring dance competence, dance movement skills and the style and form specific to the landscape, is implemented along the lines of age-specific characteristics. As a result, the term children's dance, which is still used in educational processes, is not consistent with the phenomenon of education for dance in traditional peasant culture.

In the period between the turn of the century and the Second World War, in the turbulent historical situation of Hungary, as a result of social changes and reactions, and thanks to the outstanding research and pedagogical work of Áron Kiss, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, folk games, folk songs, folk music and folk dance made significant advances both within and outside the institutions. This was successfully underpinned by a nationalist political spirit, which supported and encouraged the widespread emergence of Hungarian culture. The world of folk games, nursery rhymes, folk songs and folk dance found a place in the curricula and instructions, manuals of the period. The results of primary research confirm that elements of traditional children's culture are present in the kindergarten and school curricula, in the subjects of physical education and music, and in mother tongue education. The content of the documents examined and the source material published on them show that already at the turn of the century

there was a significant blending of the original texts and melodies of folk games and children's songs with written texts and melodies. This phenomenon is still noticeable today.

The reform pedagogical and life reform efforts in terms of the principles of the individual, the child-centred and art pedagogical approach, the closeness to nature, physical education, community space, identity can be demonstrated in the domains of traditional communities, methods of knowledge transfer, and lifestyle characteristics.

The most significant initiatives outside the institution, based on the content of traditional Hungarian culture, are the Regöscserkészlet as a youth movement, the Gyöngyösbokréta as a traditionalist adult programme and the "Nagykarácsony éccakája" as a children's programme based on traditional customs, which gave birth to the children's and adult dance movement that is still going on today.

In parallel with the European social phenomena, Zoltán Kodály is an outstanding personality in the scientific and pedagogical development of traditional Hungarian culture, mainly within the institution, but also outside it, and his defining concept is the Kodály approach. In his work, folk games, nursery rhymes, children's songs, folk songs, national movement, dance appear as the basis of musical education and human development, and in general as a tool for the overall national-social goal. His school model with singing-music specialization provided a framework for the pedagogical use of these elements, and it was the first time that folk dance as a separate subject could be taught in this form. He gave folk dance a prominent place and role in the world of kindergarten, defining its use as the exclusive starting point. The methods and results of his scientific work have become the cornerstones of dance research, in the creation of which he played a significant role.

In the post-World War II period, there is an explosion in the number of both adult and children's folk dance groups. The problem of finding a purpose and a function, which had already been apparent in the first half of the century, became more and more acute, and the lack of qualified teachers became a major concern in all pedagogical domains. The political-social context is also pushing both the playing and the dance fields further and further away from the roots of the movement, through theatrical-artistic expectations. As a result of the research, we can consider as a significant node the increasingly widespread appearance of the concept of Zoltán Kodály and Katalin Forrai in the institutional framework, the folk dance education in singing and music schools, the experiments that examined the elements of subject integration from a pedagogical approach, with methods appropriate to the time, at a scientific level, and the

literature on the content and methods of folk dance education. In response to the increased demand and research in the field of dance studies, the training of professionals in the field of folk play and folk dance education has been developed, from a few weeks' training to a professional teacher qualification at college level.

The children's dance movement that flourished outside the institution, gained space in youth ensembles, pioneer groups and ensembles, and school clubs. The greatest impact of the dance movement on both children and adults was the emergence and development of the Dance House Movement, whose experiential approach helped to reconnect with the objectives and functions of traditional peasant culture.

In the final, fifth part, I will summarise the historical findings so far through a questionnaire survey in an attempt to confirm or refute the claims made in the research questions and hypothesis, and to provide feedback on current practice and problem areas, in line with my commitment to the dissertation's aims. As a result, it can be seen that children's dance, which is part of the core programme of kindergarten, was only included in the studies of 24% of the respondents in the sample, and that the free play experience in traditional peasant culture, which is also highlighted in the Kodály concept, is only included in a small percentage of kindergarten teachers who have not completed additional training in the field of folk play and folk dance methodology. This confirms the claim that the core programme, training and practice are not consistent in terms of content, purpose and function.

VI. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE RESEARCH

In the introductory part, I already stated that any kind of pedagogical research on folk dance and folk games fills a gap. This statement has been reinforced in me. As a consequence, I always felt a sense of lack during the processing of a part of the research, since there are so many perspectives in this field, the exploration of which is essential in order to further build the possibilities of pedagogical integration of Hungarian culture in the future.

I sincerely hope that the historical summary that has now been produced can be a starting point for further research and a useful building block for teacher training. The next comprehensive research I would like to undertake is an integral part of this work. During the exploration of the

literature, I was confronted with a very rich material in the methodological field as well as in the historical field. By blending these two approaches, the research will form a whole.

also consider it important to explore in more depth the functioning of the workshops, trade unions and company groups that were formed after 1948, whose presence had a significant impact on the children's dance movement within the institutional framework.

Finally, in addition to the complex pedagogical-historical study, I see the need for a research that approaches the emergence of elements of Hungarian culture in today's pedagogical practice as an impact study and, as a result, possibly focuses on their effects on the development of skills, abilities and personality.