

Thematic Article

The Concept and Practice of Family Life Education

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Abstract

This theoretical article outlines the development of family life education in Hungary. In the early 20th century, as a result of civic initiatives, this specific educational area as an independent professional and scientific field was organized in the United States and Western Europe. In Hungary, however, much like other Central and Eastern European states, institutional education became available much later. A government decree issued in the early seventies draws attention to the fact that "the biological, health, ethical, moral knowledge necessary for harmonious, desirable human relations is not sufficiently widespread among the general public, especially among young people, to create a well-balanced family life and to achieve a broad range of modern family planning. Therefore, measures should be taken to prepare for family life in all forms of public education and in the dissemination of information to the general public" (Mihalec et al 2011, 90) Komlósi points out, however, that despite the first governmental initiative on family life education, for decades there has been no significant change in practice. (Komlósi 1995) " In Hungarian secondary education, the pedagogical knowledge that can be chosen as subject matter for graduation examinations in pedagogical vocational secondary schools includes a growing proportion of topics related to education for family life.

Keywords: family life education, pre-marriage education, National Core Curriculum

Changed family roles and activities

Global changes in family settings, rooted in societal, economical, and political shifts are also influencing the family life in the region of Central Europe (Fingerman, Huo and Birditt 2020). The culture of intimate relationships and family connections are significantly transformed (Uhlendorff, Rupp and Euteneuer 2011). Examining gender roles, Pongrácz (2001) draws attention to the contradiction in Hungarian society. There is tension between "psychic attitudes" and "rationality beliefs", that is, it is considered appropriate and ideal for women to both perform activities only related to their household work, and also for women to have paid employment. For example, a study among pregnant mothers found that family members generally seemed to be supportive of developing work-related skills, and the education of women in childbearing was also abundantly rewarded. (Engler 2011)

Despite worsening demographic statistics, Hungarian society remains family-centered, with research showing that people have a positive perception of marriage and a high propensity to have children (e.g. - Tóth 1997, Somlai and Tóth 2002, Pongrácz and Spéder 2002, Spéder 2011). According to a study among university students, nearly 90% of the 1,500 students surveyed are planning to get married and most of the group is thinking of bearing at least two children. (Engler 2017). Among those already living in a family unit, Kopp et al. (2010) also showed the positive health effects of a balanced family life, as fathers who maintain good relationships with their children are four times more likely to reach their 69th birthday. Similar findings were published by Kim and McKenry (2001) in a USA-based research study. Work-life balance is also more likely to be achieved in families where members support and assist each other in their careers and parenting roles. (Engler 2017)

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The importance and benefit of a healthy family life is unquestionable, some don't or can't follow the conventional relational examples: statistics of divorce and unconventional family forms are on the rise (Nagy, 2001; Cseh-Szombathy, 1991, 2001 and 2003; Esping-Andersen, 1999 and 2016). This means that the patterns of relationships and behaviors may not be naturally "inherited" from a conventional family setting; so formal or non-formal preparation for family life can be a great help in developing quality family relationships. In this paper we briefly review where the practical implementation of family life education in Hungary comes from.

Formal appearance of family life education in Hungary

After the nineties, at the instigation of ecclesiastical, educational and civil movements, the organization of family life education began. The experience of coursework, training and awareness programs with the involvement of qualified professionals has created new demands for the inclusion of family life education in public education. This Social Initiative set the Population Roundtable as a goal for itself by setting up working groups to develop training materials. As a result of this process, CSÉN (what does CSÉN stand for?) has since been included in the National Core Curriculum.

The National Core Curriculum, adopted and enacted in 2012, highlights different development areas and educational goals that integrate traditional values with the answers to questions and solutions to problems that arise in our socio-economic processes, integrated into the fields of education and subjects. Educational goals that permeate the whole pedagogical process are reflected in subject content, methodological elements, in-classroom (contact) classes, extracurricular school activities, and the development of a local curriculum also offers the opportunity to include them as independent subjects. Areas of improvement and educational goals include: moral education; national self-awareness, patriotic education; education for citizenship and democracy; developing self-knowledge and social culture; physical and mental health education; responsibility for others, volunteering; sustainability, environmental awareness; career guidance; economic and financial education; media awareness education; teaching the methodology of learning.

Among the areas of development we have focused on family life education, the various elements of which have long been an integral part of the education and training activities at each level of education. The emergence of the National Core Curriculum and the Framework Curriculum as a single, unified area confirms that the health of one of the smallest - but most important - units of the nation requires a great deal of attention on the part of society and the individual.

Within the framework curriculum, broken down by school type and pedagogical phase, we find developmental goals divided up by age, for example, first to fourth grade students getting to know family holidays and related habits. They learn tasks related to family roles (mother, father, and child) and strive to carry out these tasks on a daily basis. "Students in grades nine through twelve are consciously preparing for a joyful, responsible relationship and family life. He / she is able to organize independent living and self-care. He / she is able to organize and rank his / her needs consciously and learn the basic techniques of saving. He / she knows how to use family planning methods, their benefits and risks, can search for information and use it in their decisions."⁴

This curriculum focuses on the topic of family life education also in the pedagogical elective, which takes place in pedagogical secondary school classes. The predecessor of the training was the re-introduction of a secondary school aimed at specializing students in kindergarten training, established in 1976. Its re-introduction was in answer to the need for teachers in the kindergarten network that was to be established. This was followed by the re-organization of secondary school teachers into a vocational secondary school, where at the end of the four-year course it was possible to take a non-compulsory baccalaureate examination in addition to general subjects. Following the 2016 VET conversion, all students in vocational secondary school classes are required to complete a vocational baccalaureate course (e.g. - pedagogy). From 2006 on, it was possible to take the advanced exam.

In the following, we present the Hungarian secondary and tertiary pedagogy matriculation exams and the detailed examination requirements based on the way in which family and family education topics appear in them.

In a content analysis, we searched for keywords related to family life in tasks of different types and lengths. During the research we used the following terms as keywords: family, family life, atmosphere, family upbringing.

⁴ Appendix Nr.6. in the 51/2012. (XII. 21.) Decree of the Human Resource Ministry https://kerettanterv.oh.gov.hu/06_melleklet_9-12_szki/index_szakkozep.html (: 09.24.2020.)

In addition to the quantitative characteristics (frequency of occurrence), the qualitative side was given a prominent role: the task context of the searched terms and the context as a whole. In the course of the research, we examined the task sets of the intermediate and advanced level matriculation examinations in pedagogical vocational training. In Hungary, one could take a pedagogical advanced or intermediate level final exam at the end of pedagogical vocational training or later within an individual application. In the latter case, most choose this option, where the admission requirement in pedagogical higher education institutions is the presentation of some high-level final exam marks.

In the examined high school pedagogy graduation examinations between 2005 and 2016, the number of assignments related to family education styles and atmosphere is extremely high. The authors of the pedagogy baccalaureate series aim not only at the textual part but also at the test questions and the multiple-choice questions that they learnt related to this topic. Of the various types of parenting, neglected parenting is also an area to be processed. Another important topic is the relationship between family and educational institutions, its principles and forms of resolution, as well as conflicts, differences of opinion and role conflicts among parents and educators.

As of 2016, the emergence of a reformed vocational education and training system providing a baccalaureate and a profession has once again set the preparation of baccalaureate examinations as its task. As part of the vocational training program introduced in September 2016, the teaching of vocational subjects begins in the ninth grade of the pedagogical departments. Renewed training also means the reformation of professional baccalaureate tasks at both the intermediate and advanced levels. Following the introduction of pedagogical vocational secondary school education, the question of family life is again presented in countless forms during maturity, from true-false statements and relational analysis to elaborate assignments. However, while Béla Kozéki's analysis of the arenas of family education has been much more prominent in the tasks so far, mother-child relationship, family socialization functions, personal or status-oriented family education have been the most important tasks of the last two years, the topic of disadvantage coming to the forefront.

Of the high school oral pedagogy maturity exam requirements, we highlight two detailed exam requirements, the 2008 and 2017 oral maturity exam requirements. In the basic education or pedagogy oral examination, the aim is to solve a practice-oriented problem or situation at the intermediate level. This part of the exam is also included in the 2017 oral examination requirements. In the 2008 exam description, the advanced oral task is similar to the intermediate level, practice exercise, but the document emphasizes: "The purpose of the oral exam is to take innovative intentions and new approaches of teaching practice into account. Thus, the examination focuses on the practical approach to the topics and the application of the acquired knowledge."

The Detailed Examination Requirement for Family Education, issued in 2008, mentions the detailed competency requirements across a variety of curriculum areas, as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Detailed Examination Requirements in Hungary from 2008 May-June exam period

Topic	Competency – intermediate level	Competency - advanced level
Pedagogy: Pedagogical psychology	Interpret the family as the primary medium of socialization data	N/A
Social Psychology: Scenes of socialization	Describe the family structure, function, types, and form of parenting through examples. Evaluate the role of the family in personality development data Analyse the impact of different family education influences on personality development Describe the relationship between family and institutional education and the possibility of cooperation	Analyse the impact of the family's social, and intellectual status on the child's personality development using examples. Introduce and analyse any family roles, patterns of behaviour that can cause educational problems. Explain the cause / effect relationship.
Senior and old age	Relationship between the family and the elderly The role of the family in socialization The relationship between family atmosphere and parenting styles Faults and unfavourable effects of family education	Today's social impact on the elderly and interpreting its consequences The role of the family in socialization The impact of family education and the child
Family education	Basic concepts of family education Relationship between family and institutional education Family concept, structure, function, types Changed family roles in the family and its effects	exploring the relationship between personality development by illustrating examples
Developmental Psychology: The new-born and infancy	Rate the prominent role of the mother-child relationship in infancy. Importance of the mother-child relationship	N/A

Source: Detailed Requirements for Basic Education Graduate Examination, Exam Description. 27 May 2008 <http://mszt.iif.hu/documents/erettségiR/oktatasi/> Last visit: 04/04/2019 own edit Dora Nemeth.

It can be clearly seen that the examination requirements of 2008, at both the middle and advanced levels, analyze the impact of family and family education on several topics. The proportion of competences related to familiarization with family education is particularly high, which may be justified by the highly practice-oriented nature of middle-level oral exams, and it can be assumed that middle-level oral items may contain family-related situational tasks.

At the advanced level, students are also expected to synthesize the knowledge they have learned so far and to draw higher-level conclusions, thereby justifying that at the intermediate level, multiple competencies are required in a broader context.

A non-formal version of family life education: denominational pre-marriage education in Hungary

Though a formal certificate of family life education is available in the maturity exam system, such topics as “conducting a healthy and satisfying relationship” or “parenting capacities” improved through learning channels are popular in a much wider range. This learning pool - subdivided by educational market and mental hygiene services – is shared among business entrepreneurs, civil activity groups and even churches. Moreover, though still in its early bird stage, municipalities also step into the family life educational market.

. In the 1920's, premarital education, or relationship and marriage education based on its contemporary name, became an institutionalized subject. Marriage is no longer a necessity of economic survival, but a quest

of emotions and life-actualization on the intellectual level of a democratizing, feminist, urbanizing, industrialized society (Perel 2007 and Ponzetti 2016). In this liberal spiritual space, churches no longer dominated, thus college students asked their professors to talk about the question. This form of education would evolve over the next 100 years or so, with a significant portion of the U.S. adult education industry providing pre- and post-marital training, and personal coaching, both in-person, in print and virtually.

Today relationship and marriage education is defined as the preparation of couples to establish and maintain lifelong, satisfying, and healthy relationships. It is possible for the educational process to be personalized in form, though the basic content of topics need be followed. This content includes patterns and values from the family of origin, roles and resources, money and time management, future planning, conflict management and communication, sexuality and intimacy, and much more (Furtis and Adler-Baeder 2013).

However, this contemporary definition and theoretical framework was not readily available at the time when foundational marriage education vanished from the world of universities, and developed into a non-formal obligation in the Catholic Church. Church weddings were a compulsory educational issue from the time of the sexual revolution and student rebellions of the 1960s (Ponzetti 2016). Although, marital counselling has already appeared among pastoral topics before (see eg Schütz 1937 or Tóth 1938). The initiatives coinciding with the time of the 2nd Vatican Council passed through to Hungary relatively quickly, a volume, regarding pastoral questions based on marriage education topics and methodology, being published in 1972. (Lengyel 1972).

The book is interesting because it discusses marriage preparation from aspects of a religious-theological and canonic law-related, educational-didactic, liturgical and organizational nature. The author outlines a series of conversations with brides containing questions that reflect on conscience, called “the conscience-mirror”, which were translated from French and are still applicable today. (Lebret and Sauvet 1962, cited by Judge in Lengyel 1972).

The purpose of the volume is to “heal the wounds sustained by and guide them through the reefs of today's marriages.” However, he only contributes to these goals by citing artistic literature and philosophical texts that have been “canonized” in ecclesiastical terms, and by compiling volumes written by “sitting” or active members of the Pastoral Committee. So, while raising individual topics, publishing synopsis-fresh documents in Hungarian, and having reciprocal discussion of spousal loyalty and developmental learning is prospective, the volume contains no writings, good practices, experiences, questions either from couples, non-theologians and psychologists, or from sociologists and adult education teachers. Until recent years, this clerical approach has also been characteristic of priestly education, (Horváth-Szabó et al. 2015).

Although formal education channels (e.g. - training of clergy) have not been opened to lay (Christian) representatives of these disciplines not even to engaged couples, these volunteers have taken part in the marriage prep for the past few decades. In forms of civic participation, married couples invited by priests from local (parish) communities could participate in preparatory discussions. As marriage education currently does not have a commonly shared national educational framework, it is always up to the community leader – that is, up to the cleric - to design the topic and didactics (Horváth-Szabó et al 2015). So, it is up to the spiritual leader to decide how much space is given the couple in the preparation, and there are many variations on this scale. Initially, the cleric entrusted the couple with a talk or a front-lecture, which, if they were scientifically or educationally trained, gradually took on more responsibility.

Parallel to this developmental process, in a kind of organic development spiral, there has been a series of scholarly publications in the field of family life education, drawing on civilian work experience. See the works of Ágnes Habobágyiné Szabó or Katalin Horváth-Szabó. Finally, by the 2000s, there were workshops with clerical leadership, but, in fact, had layman (i.e. - non-clerical) backgrounds that supported the development of family education, including marriage, through things like educational and professional training, research and communications. Today, in this organic development, forms of operation have emerged in which the leadership of a larger church community is already completely civic, that is to say, it is the lay's responsibility to prepare the soon-to-be-wed couple, possibly with the presence of or brief presentation by the clergy.

One feature of a parish process, for example, is that the entry threshold is kept low - the duration of attendance is limited to just one and a half days, and one evening - so people who are not planning a church wedding will also come to the training. Although they are not bound by the “educational obligation”, the advertised topics and methods of pre-marital training are found interesting and important, and so they sign up for the training offered.

This is a significant milestone: it points to the general, centuries-old characteristic that the (Catholic) Church has been an educational innovator, enabling and increasing access to various knowledge bases. Admittedly, in the first phase of the process, this access was limited to (prospective) members of the clergy, but

it gradually opened up to laypeople as well. In the 19th century, education was also made available to women through church channels (e.g. - School Sisters of Notre Dame), to promote social inclusion and advancement.

Thus, in Hungary, compulsory premarital classes in the Catholic Church have given a start to the development of marriage preparation as a special area of education for family life. Now, there has been a shift from historical clerical traditions to new training methods and topics, and because of the internal need for advanced methods and content delivery, a "Fellow Teacher Training" program has been established (Horváth-Szabó 2015).

The essence of the training program is that it is open to all, to laypeople and clerics alike. It focuses on the topics and methods of engagement education and provides participants with hands-on experience through small group training, thus developing the potential for self-knowledge and reflection in addition to the educational base. The training takes 39 hours, compressed into three blocks of connecting Fridays and Saturdays. Topics include: knowledge of andragogy and adult education, the importance of self-knowledge and companionship, basics of marriage, roles and resources, moral and family planning, and course organization knowledge and experience. The long-term benefit of training is a shared virtual forum where fellow instructors from different parts of the country can consult one another.

From this point on, the next level of development can already be seen: the establishment of a national minimum (Horváth-Szabó et al. 2015). The training framework is necessary because it is in this context that the level of thematic and methodological competence in training can be measured. There already is an example of a common national minimum in the United States, where the need for quality assurance for a number of market players has forced the development of a consensual framework (Futris and Adler-Baeder 2013). Obviously, the overseas pattern can only be indicative, since consensus between locally involved participants is needed to form a national minimum, even if the overall experience of marriage in Northwest-Western cultures is similar.

This chapter is to share all the relevant data and analysis. Please spot those, that connect most profoundly to the questions of your research. Use wisely the attention and time of the reader: tables and graphs are more efficient to cover the results than longer sections of text. Please make sure that the explanation is not simply a repetition of what is shown: your text must give an additional value to your tables and graphs.

Conclusions

The family is the primary medium of socialization. Socialization, in general terms, means the integration of the individual into society, the acquisition of the values and norms necessary for the exercise of community life and effective participation in the life of society. Environmental factors surrounding the child are the first source of social skills. In a family with a solid background, there is a chance of raising up stronger, more physically and mentally balanced people. "In a stable and secure family atmosphere, the personality can be protected from the stresses of life acting as a resource for his mental health and for his self-actualization" (Bagdy 1994: 14).

The quality of family life is therefore crucial for all partakers. In the case of children, it has an impact on mental and emotional intelligence, academic performance and social relationships. In the case of adults, it helps them aptly fill their family roles, aids in finding gainful employment; develops their social capital, improves health and promotes a stable lifestyle. For this reason, it is not indifferent to the individual, or to the collective, helping partners, parents and grandparents become members of society too. The natural pattern provided for this (that is, the coexistence of several generations) is already functional in a small number of cases. The role and responsibility of formal education and training in this is constantly growing. Graduate education, for example, is a visual example of how a formal, informal education can become an integration platform for science and church, clerics and laypeople, volunteers, and professional trainers.

In the field of pedagogical intermediate vocational training, the primary task is to emphasize the diversity of family life and the importance of the effects on the child in the family. An extremely important area of current secondary pedagogical vocational training, which provides a family pedagogical assistant qualification, is the promotion of sensitivity to the significance of family life and the strengthening of a family-centered approach in the training of students. Parallel to this gradually elaborated professional training, the non-formal field of family life education also experiences development. The obligatory preparation of the Catholic Church is changing in its methods and topics, while the field is enriched with civil, business, and municipal services.

Collaboration at the social level in defining family life can determine the efficiency, quality, health, and last but not least, the reproductive capacity of a nation.

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