

Relationship between families and kindergartens in Hungary in the 1950s

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Abstract: Partnership working and co-operation between parents and early education and care settings is a widely researched topic worldwide. However, little is known about how the relationship between families and kindergartens developed in the historically significant period of the 1950s in Hungary, which marks the beginnings of socialism and a period of rapid expansion of early childhood education and care. This study aims to explore how the expectations of raising 'socialist citizens' was incorporated into educational and policy documents and other written resources relating to kindergarten and family education. Purposive sampling selection identified 80 documents as data sources, which were subjected to qualitative content analysis. Intra-frame coding was done by hand using a combined inductive and deductive approach. Employing a constructivist theoretical lens, the analysis focused on both the manifest and latent content of the selected documents and resulted in seven main themes. The findings confirmed that the ideologically driven policy decisions not only influenced the relationship between families and kindergartens but also legitimised the efforts to build a socialist system of early education through organised collaboration and related propaganda work. This study is significant as it offers a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between kindergartens and families in the '50s and with that provides foundations for further analytical work of the socialist pedagogical past.

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Introduction

In the history of the soon-to-be 200-year-old Hungarian Kindergartens, expansion of early childhood education started in the 1950s. This was the time when political, economic, and social changes made more and more parents enrol their children in kindergartens (Vág, 1993).

The scope of this research is to assess whether the traditions related to the relationship between families and kindergartens in the '50s can be considered as the antecedent of early childhood education of today and whether the pedagogical past is still influencing attitudes in the present. One of the cornerstones of early childhood education is still the creation of the balance and collaboration between the two scenes of nurturing a child: the family and the kindergarten. The relationship between these two environments influence every family in Hungary because of early childhood education being compulsory from the age of three as laid down in the Act on National Public Education (2011).

The fledgling socialist system of the '50s started to collectivise and institutionalise the care of preschool age children in order to exert influence on future generations and bring them up according to the then new values and norms (Komlósi, 1977). This suggests that the communist leadership recognised that they could exert influence on the upbringing of 'socialist citizens' of the future through the family and the role kindergartens as an institution of early education and care fulfilled (Molnár et al., 2015; Szepi et al., 2018).

The focus of this study is on the nature of the relationship between families and kindergartens and the study aims to explore how the expectations of the socialist state was present in documents relating to

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kindergartens (e.g. regulations), in other written sources (such as early child education schoolbooks, professional association of kindergarten pedagogues, publications for parents), specifically, to explore the role of families and kindergartens as reflected in kindergarten policies of the day. The sources this study focuses on have not yet been analysed by researchers of the history of Hungarian kindergartens with the specific focus on the relationship between families and kindergartens. Hence, existing knowledge of how kindergartens operated in the '50s can be further differentiated.

Background to the Study

Writings on the Pedagogy of the 1950s

The second half of the 20th century is not 'ancient history' (Koselleck, 2003). There is a generation whose experiences go back to the 1950s' Hungary. However, they are underrepresented compared to younger generations. For these newer generations, the inhomogeneous period of the country's Sovietisation, the Stalinist dictatorship and socialism, when politics had a major influence on everyday life and culture, is history (Szabolcs, 2006). In most countries of the world, interest in research exploring the immediate and recent past is avid and growing. Fewer and fewer people have direct experience of this era (Romsics, 2008, cited by Kolosai, 2012).

Setting the time dimensions for this study was based on the analysis of events relating to kindergartens and prevailing concepts within kindergarten policies. The '50s cover the decade between 1948 and 1959, when kindergartens were placed under government control. Earlier childhood pedagogical traditions were discontinued, and an early childhood education based on the Soviet model was implemented (Kövér, 1987). This was a centrally governed, comprehensive and co-ordinated system of early education and care, design to echo the dictatorial and command-driven socialism, characterised by rigid hierarchies, conformity and uniformity (Silova et al., 2017). The 1959 end date was set by the significant milestone of the socialist kindergartens' 'heroic age' as this was the year when early childhood pedagogy became part of tertiary training. Work analysing the pedagogy of the '50s present varied interpretations of the past. On one hand this is due to the difference in the values, intentions and interpretation of past historians and pedagogy experts. On the other hand, this is due to the uncertainties in understanding the past (Golnhofer, 2006). Historical research of the recent past aptly demonstrates that the period in time that lasts until the present can be described by different coexisting histories and sometimes fundamentally different interpretations of the past (Szabolcs, 2006).

In the past decade or so, more and more researchers have tried to explore and describe this era and its the 'socialist pedagogy'. Examples of this are a series of the 'Library of Socialist Education' which promoted the development of a pedagogy based on the Soviet model (Szabolcs & Golnhofer, 2018) or the review of education policies which had an influence on lower primary teacher training (Donáth, 2008). The authors' analysis was based on the publicly available pedagogical and political discourses of the field. There were works of analysis that described the upbringing of children in the '50s including care and nurturing within kindergartens. There were pieces of writing that delved into the history of workplace kindergartens (Aczél, 2012), which were regarded as politico-sociological benefits, especially within state-owned companies of the socialist era. The history of European social policy is also discussed in the anthology of 'Children, Families, and States' (Hagemann et al., 2011).

Teaching and learning approaches were constrained by having to replicate the Soviet model, whereby earlier traditions were replaced by forced its pedagogical concepts as analysed in a former kindergarten publication, 'Organised Activities in the Kindergarten' (Pálfi, 2010).

The Presence of the Relationship Between Families and Kindergartens in the Discourse on Pedagogy

From the second half of the 20th century, an increased interest is noted in partnership working between parents and pedagogues, and the relationship between families and public education institutions (e.g. Bedmar & Palma, 2011; Bersan, 2021; Hryniewicz & Luff, 2021; Podráczy, 2012). The Hungarian specificities on the subject were covered by Sándor Komlósi (1981) and Sándor Füle (1989), the former focusing on nurturing within the family and the latter on the relationship between the two environments.

However, the publications of both authors concentrate on schools, and only touch on kindergartens. The various facets of the relationship between families and kindergartens also attracts analysis, specifically what influences parents when choosing a kindergarten. Research conducted in this area suggests that human factors, such as the kindergarten pedagogue as a person and pedagogue's loving, kind attitudes influence parental choice (Kim & Fram, 2009; Rose & Elicker, 2008; Teszenyi & Hevey, 2015; Török, 2004). The role of loving relationships and how families and society look at early childhood education and the partnership between early childhood educators and parents have also been examined (see Murray, et al., 2018; Varga, 2020).

In a seminal piece of writing, Tamás Kozma (1974) discusses research directions and possible approaches to examine the public relations of educational institutions, including their relationship with families, which he outlines as:

- An educational theory and sociological approach whereby education is defined in a broader sense, as a social process in which different groups collaborate in the processes of socialisation, one of the most important groups being family and educational institutions.
- A pedagogical approach found in educational theory coursebooks, widely known and accepted by pedagogues. In other words, nurturing takes place in different environments, e.g. family and kindergarten. Collaboration between these environments is desired and is led and managed by the kindergarten.
- An educational system management approach based on the general and local management of education and kindergarten system.

The study presented in this paper is also based on the above approaches. It also considers it fundamental that one of the most important responsibilities families and public education institutions (including kindergartens) undertake is the integration of each new generation into society (Háber & Sas, 1980). A key tenet of the era under investigation is the nurturing of the new 'type of socialist man' who accepts and strengthens the structure of the socialist society (Millei, 2011). The objective pursued by the 1950s' kindergartens was to co-ordinate the educational work in the family as well as in the kindergarten in order to successfully bring up children. With this in mind, the influence of kindergarten policy was extended significantly: regulations at different levels aimed to establish a systemic unity in the relationship between the two environments (family and kindergarten) (Kömlösi, 1965).

Methodological Background

This sub-section discusses the methodology employed in this study, including the theoretical framework, the sample and the analysis of the data.

The study adopted an educational history methodology (Kéri, 1997, 2001), specifically an early educational history methodology, which explores the development of kindergartens as educational institutions in Hungary (Báthory & Falus, 1997), and with this, setting its spatial dimensions. The focus is on its specificities and typical characteristics in the 1950s (temporal dimension), an era when political leadership claimed ownership of education both in the institutional and the private sector, which meant that the nurturing of young children both in kindergartens and within family was regarded as the prerogative of the state (Kozma, 2012).

In developing the historical synthesis, the objective was to construct historical realities of the relationship between families and socialist kindergartens along the constructivist epistemology, which recognises that there is more than one reality, hence individual realities also exist and they are constructed within a social context and time-bound (Denicolo et al., 2016). Working from this stance leads to a kind of subjective knowledge that is shared via language. The researcher is an active part of this process of subjective knowledge production by negotiating the multiple realities represented in the selected documentary sources (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Given, 2008; Searle, 1995). These interpretations were based on self-experience and is now ready to be tried by the scientific community.

Educational history research is deductive and analytical as it analyses the experiences of sources from various disciplines, it interprets and describes ideas and phenomena using a cyclical process (Szabolcs, 1996). Interpreting sources of education history requires the researcher to have a vivid imagination, artistic perception and creativity (Kéri, 2001), therefore, historical narration cannot completely eliminate the researcher's subjectivity. This is in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research where the emphasis is on the exploration and the uncovering of the phenomenon under investigation (Szabolcs, 2001). Although, there are a growing number of studies employing educational history methodology in Hungary, it is still in its infancy, therefore this paper also offers a methodological contribution.

Documentary Sources – Establishing the Sample

Establishing the study sample was informed by a structured set of criteria (topic, geography and time) which included several dimensions (Molnár-Kovács, 2015, 2019). They have circumscribed the primary and secondary sources of the research. Identifying and explaining the so-called source dimensions helped group together all written sources relevant to the topic of investigation (relationship between parents and kindergartens) used in this study:

- *kindergarten policy dimension*: in the 1950s, the state's growing influence on public education institutions, through regulations, was documented. This is why decrees and coursebooks on early childhood education were be looked at, with the later ones having been published by the National Textbook Publisher, governed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education (Kóger, 2019).
- *press dimension*: the products of the Hungarian press included various publications: the practice-focused magazine that provided practice guidance for kindergarten pedagogues (Children's Care and Education – Kindergarten Care and Education [Gyermeknevelés - Óvodai nevelés]) as well as unrelated press read by parents (newspapers at the top of press hierarchy, their regional counterparts, other weekly prints, magazines). These non-professional press products of the 50s were also selected as they were the focal point of the discourse forming the opinion of the majority of the public, and they also provided an impression of the public's opinion (Lukacs, 2004). Involving such press products in educational history research is usually linked to the works of Kéri (2009) (Baska, 2018). The constitution of the People's Republic of Hungary guaranteed the freedom of press during socialism. However, the multidimensional control mechanism of the governing party never provided the circumstances for the freedom of press. Press products became the tools of state authority. Newspapers could not survive as collective agitators to publish content without approval by someone at the highest level (Somogyvári, 2018).

Although the number of sources available was high, they were all 'unilateral', which explained why there was, in actual fact, a lack of sources that could be identified for selection. The sources only present the official, often propagandistic rules and criteria. Therefore, the corrupting influences of the party's ideology, reflected in the language used, had to be taken into consideration. The style of these texts suggests complete control (Jessen, 1997 cited by Apor, 2008; Judt, 1997 cited by Apor, 2008). Considered with this caveat, these sources were still utilised to reconstruct the past of kindergarten.

Across the two dimensions explained above, the search for literature revealed a high number of documents, from which the text corpus was selected. Time-related selection criteria reduced the sources to those kindergarten regulatory documents and practice guides (laying down the expectations by the state) that were from between 1948 and 1959. Included in the text corpus from this period were the issues of the practice-based magazines, Children's Care and Education and its successor from 1953, Kindergarten Care and Education, which were both designed to reach a kindergarten pedagogue audience, as well as newspapers and weekly prints (N=80) read by parents to keep them up to date. The former were drawn from the files of the National Educational Library and Museum, the latter from Arcanum Digitheca. Research data was drawn these by targeted, selective sampling based on their titles as related to the topic.

As for non-professional newspapers, the selection was initially made using the keyword 'kindergarten' ('óvoda'), then the text corpus was narrowed down for research based on the content relating to the topic of the study.

Analytical Framework

Content analysis was carried out, which focused both on the manifest and latent meanings conveyed in the selected texts. Content structuring served as the central objective of the qualitative data analysis (Kuckartz, 2012, 2019; Mayring, 2019, Sántha, 2021, 2022; Schreier, 2014). The process started with familiarisation, followed by the identification of main and sub-themes (Kuckartz, 2012). In order to avoid data loss, inductive and deductive coding approaches were combined, and all text segments were processed. The first step was to use a priori coding as a coding type related to theory-driven logic (Sántha, 2015, 2022). The main categories to code the data corpus were created before the analysis. By theoretical consideration, they were created based on the expectations ['Az óvoda feladata a szülők felé' - 'Duties of Kindergartens for Parents'] of the first regulatory document describing the relationship between families and kindergartens in the '50s ['Rendtartás az óvodák számára' - 'Kindergarten rules and regulations' (1951)]. The manifest tasks expressed in this document were considered as the main content units entered into the coding list in advance. Hence the initial coding structure follows a deductive coding logic. The goal was to find concepts that described how kindergarten politics of the time defined the roles of the two educational environments of the future socialist citizens in early childhood education. Subcategories linked to the main categories were created when the document was divided into further subunits. The texts were further coded using data-driven inductive logic. Further levelling was possible in some subcategories as the subcodes had new subcodes within them.

In order to achieve reliability, intra frame coding was used. This meant that the texts were coded twice by the researcher manually using a colour-based visual aid (Maietta, 2008) with a ten-day gap using the same coding system. Then results were compared (Dafinoiu & Lungu, 2003; Sántha, 2015, 2021, 2022). Rather than aiming to achieve inter-coder reliability, this analytical approach aligned the study with its subjective epistemological design. Differences and similarities as the coding task was repeated afforded the rethinking and fine-tuning of categories, hence providing conceptual congruence for the analysis (Hennink et al., 2020).

Table 1. Coding frame

Super themes	Themes	Sub-themes
collaboration between parents and kindergarten: parts of texts and statements that cover activities related to improve the operation of kindergartens and children's education	collaboration framework (its indications)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-Teacher Association • other mass-organisations (e.g. MNDSZ (Democratic Association of Hungarian Women))
	helping kindergartens (indications of financial or affirmative contribution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting bodies • competition movements • charity work • afternoon work • evening shows
confidential relationship: text parts and statements related to building a relationship with parents based on trust	occasions for networking (individual and group occasions to network)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parent-teacher conference • personal conversation
aligned education: text parts and statements related to the creation of unified education within kindergartens and families (based on socialist pedagogy)	pedagogical control/propaganda (indications of convincing or 'indoctrinating' parents)	
	forums of pedagogical information (its indications)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School of Parents, parents' conferences, • parents' visit to kindergarten, ceremonies (introduction to the rules and

		practices of early childhood education),
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Parent Corner' - noticeboard • media: newspapers, radio
family-related circumstances: text parts and statements related to the living conditions, profession of the parents of children in kindergarten, and the quality of family education	ways of getting to know the families (indication of family visits)	
care for parents: text parts and statements related to advice and help from the kindergarten pedagogue to parents		
enlightenment (propaganda): text parts related to the kindergarten pedagogue's awareness (political, cultural, economic) that is used to convey the (political) message of the state to the parents influencing their opinions	the kindergarten pedagogue as social worker (indications of motivating to participate in relevant activities required by politics (e.g. buying bonds to fulfill the five-year plan, participating in the elections))	
leading by example: text parts and statements related to how the kindergarten pedagogue should set a standard both as a pedagogue and as a member of society	self-instruction (eliminating imperfections)	

Analysing content is a two-step process in which the steps are not completely separated. Categorisation and coding are followed by interpretation and explanation, i.e. data set into context and conclusions drawn (Szabolcs, 2001)

Apart from the manifest messages, attempts were made to explore latent meaning, which suggest underlying messages. This can be the basis of a classification in a conceptual framework (Babbie, 1996). The coding of these was not straightforward as they were not phrased transparently and directly but indirectly and insinuatingly (Podráczky, 2007). Written documents giving an account of the 1950s had to be managed carefully, requiring special attention as their value as a source was assessed. Those wanting to know about the pedagogy of the era must face the fact that most documents at the researchers' disposal were created from the political authority's perspective. This fact imposes limitations on the results (Golnhofer, 2006).

Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

The era under investigation was characterised by the ambition to homogenise and totally centralise all areas of life which led to 'Sovietisation' (Kozma, 2012). This resulted in new principles and objectives for the relationship between families and kindergartens. Expectations and messages to be conveyed were set by politics and education/kindergarten policies, forcing both parents and early childhood educators to accept and accommodate them.

The contents of analysed texts from the various sources were used corroboratively as they substantiated one another. Press products reflected the decisions on kindergarten policies and informed the interested parties about them. These put the emphasis on how the Soviet model was an example to follow and the need to implement it. The unique tone of these texts provides today's reader with a taste of the era's atmosphere which has now been quite forgotten. Apart from this, euphemistic phraseology (sugar-coating hard facts) was also present when it came to the kindergarten pedagogues' 'personal' experiences and newspaper articles on children. The official socialist communication would often not supply information, rather ideologically phrase certain values for the future society (Jensen, 1997, cited by Apor, 2008). Children were the antitype of the imagined collective future therefore they played a major role in the politics of socialist states (Apor, 2008).

The image of kindergartens published in the press, in the main, was to encourage parents' acceptance of their children's institutional care and education, hence driving them to join the workforce. Kindergartens

were described as 'fairy gardens' for children and were supposed to be the children's second home whilst the parents were at work, since '*Our country cares for the hopes of the future with solicitude, so they do not lack anything. Their destiny is to have a happy childhood, so that they can grow into happy workers.*' (Lóke, 1952, p.4.) Meals were provided for children, which was great help for parents as reported by an 'independent' national newspaper: '*The table is always laid in kindergartens, thanks to democracy.*' (Independent Newspaper, 1948, p.7.) Occasionally, the reality, i.e. the imperfections, problems of meals and equipment were also published in the papers.

Parent-Kindergarten Relationship

Through the expansion of kindergarten education and care, an increasing number of parents became consumers of the kindergarten. The state aimed to influence the relationship between the family and the institutions through legislation that reflected its main aims. Kindergarten pedagogues' training provided preparation for the implementation of these legislations as the theoretical underpinning for practice was laid out in text books censored by the state. The 'age old' topic of parent-pedagogue relationship also appeared in journals and practice-oriented professional publications, always reflective of the changes and directions of early childhood policies in its themes and content.

Published in 1951, 'Kindergarten rules and regulations' ['Rendtartás az óvodák számára'] controlled the relationship between families and kindergartens for the first time. Among the tasks outlined, which define the main categories of this data analysis, the most important one in the sources detailing the official expectations was the need for collaboration between the two nurturing environments. As a consequence, emphasis is also put on the need for the co-ordinated upbringing of children and, as a basis for this, on the effort to form close relationships. To achieve this, it was crucial to be familiar with the families' living conditions which was strongly related to caring about parents. However, according to the analysis, this task is emphasised less compared to the other ones mentioned earlier. The need for propaganda was constantly present, although in the articles analysed it was only enhanced following the socialisation and the Early Childhood Education Act 1953. In the chosen text corpus, the least preferred area was the kindergarten pedagogues' leading by example. Within this, the importance of self-instruction is only mentioned occasionally.

Opportunities for Co-operation between Parents and Kindergartens

Upon entering the new decade, the '50s, focus shifted onto the parent-teacher association (PTA) as following the socialisation of educational institutions, the relationship between families and kindergartens was organised by regulations. Between 1948 and 1950, three decrees were issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education in relation to the foundation and operation of the mass-organisation aiming to bring parents (and pedagogues) together. The 1975 book, (Parents and Educators) [Szülők és nevelők] by Révai, Gál & Majzik presents the history of the PTA, and evaluates it from a socialist perspective. As the organisational framework of collaboration between parents and kindergartens, the duties of the PTA were closely related to certain concepts of the coding frame above, such as helping kindergartens and alignment of upbringing within the forums of pedagogical enlightenment. As propaganda for parents to become active members of this organisation, the professional journal of kindergarten pedagogues, still called Child Education [Gyermeknevelés] at the time, started a new column called Parent-Teacher Association in 1949 to host news related to the work of the organisation. The PTA had its own journals too (e.g. (Parents' Journal [Szülők Lapja], Family and School [Család és Iskola]), although these did not reach the parents involved, and they were not read by many people either. The organisation brought to life to strengthen the relationship between families and kindergartens was mentioned in the articles throughout the decade in relation to making contributions but these themselves were greatly influenced by the political objectives. Sometimes emphasis was on helping kindergartens financially or with charity work, sometimes on propaganda for parents.

The main forum of the PTA was the parent-teacher consultation. As per the expectations of the day, kindergarten pedagogues were charged with building close relationship with parents. Therefore parent-teacher consultations were intertwined with PTA meetings. Their times and agendas were set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education [‘Rendtartás az óvodák számára’ - ‘Kindergarten rules and regulations’ (1951)].

Parent-pedagogue consultations were the prime forms of parents going into the institutions. These gave them an opportunity to have a look at the life of their child’s kindergarten. In fact, one of the kindergarten pedagogues’ tasks was to set an example of nurturing children according to the socialist values. Parents would also have a chance to visit kindergartens during ceremonies and parents’ evenings. Parents were advised of these via newspapers.

PTA took part in the propaganda/educational work for parents in several ways, such as family visits, afternoon work, organising ceremonies, competition movements (e.g. Let’s build and beautify our kindergartens (Gernyó, 1952), social cooperation/help for kindergartens (Cultural Gazette, 1958)). Newspapers regularly delivered reports on these and other PTA events (e.g. dances, afternoon shows) in the ‘50s. It was probably the PTA’s mandatory status and its role to influence the masses which caused revulsion in parents. This is something that can still be experienced today. Decades after the PTA was dismissed, it is still difficult to get parents to play an active part in any parent organisation’s ‘committee’ in kindergartens. However, they are still happy to participate in organising afternoon work or community events related to festivities and feast-days.

Getting to Know the Families – Propaganda Work: A co-ordinated Approach to Children’s Upbringing

The 1950 party decision, which is considered the criticism of educational affairs, mentions the kindergarten aspect of combatting dropout several times. Family visits, the main forum of getting to know families, was also used to encourage children attending kindergarten (and, as mentioned earlier, to ideologically influence parents). This was continuously present in the 50s. First and foremost, their objective was to dispel misconceptions about kindergartens that stopped children attending in rural areas even in 1959. Even newspapers drew society’s attention to this: *‘Another, even more dangerous barrier of women’s infringement is obscurantism. The old and ordinary does not let women go and explore the new.’* (Free People, 1951, p.1.) *‘Women belong in the house.’* (Sági, 1955, p. 2.) Family visits are still part of early childhood education today. The primary emphasis is on getting to know the family before children start kindergarten, just like it was done in the ‘50s. Kindergarten pedagogues are still very much expected to organise it with care so that parents do not consider it a burden and they do not feel that it is an unpleasant obligation.

One of the most important organisations of pedagogical propaganda work to align family and kindergarten education was Parents’ School. The party referred to it as a tried and tested tool to educate parents, however, in reality, it had to be constantly promoted. One of the reasons why, was that there had been no similar, organised collaboration before. Pedagogical enlightenment was launched in the 1948-1949 school year as a trial but the next year attendance was made mandatory. The fact that instead of pedagogy, its main focus was on ideological education, i.e. political education of the masses based on the Soviet model, did not make it popular (Komlósi, 1965). Kindergarten trade press hardly ever mentioned it, however, the presence of propaganda for Parents’ School in papers for parents was strong until 1952. Following that year it was put to an end but the forum aimed at politically enlightening parents was later ‘reborn’ in a different context.

In 1954 a party decision was announced on the situation and tasks of public education affairs, highlighting its imperfections too. Focus was given to the alignment of family and kindergarten education, the cooperative upbringing using modern Marxist methods (Free People, 1954, p. 2.). This was assisted by Soviet literature which meant that following the Soviet model was still a priority. During the decade, issues of Óvodai Nevelés (Kindergarten Education) showed several examples of the alignment of education. Non-professional papers also started columns on educational counselling. Relationships were built between kindergarten pedagogues and an increasing number of parents. The party leadership was striving for keeping these relationships under its control and influence in order to form and reform family and

educational values to serve socialism. It is for that reason that the methodology books for colleges teaching kindergarten pedagogues, in line with official party communication, encouraged future kindergarten pedagogues not to just work with children but also do political enlightening work for parents related to the objectives and methods of socialist upbringing and affairs of cultural politics. They were supposed to become real social workers, loyal assistants and tireless colleagues of the party government, strengthening socialism.

Approaching the end of the 50s, publishing the manual called *Educational Work in Kindergartens* [Nevelőmunka az óvodában] in 1957 was a significant milestone. This manual gave detailed instructions, unifying and systematising the work of Hungarian kindergartens, ensuring for them to become the scene of socialist upbringing. It provided thorough, accurately calculated parameters for the education of children to unquestioningly follow, eliminating the need to think about the questions of education (Szerepi et al., 2018). Similarly, to rules and regulations, there is a subchapter in the manual on the relationship between families and kindergartens. It emphasises the unity of the two educational spaces and the importance of one learning from the other. This means that kindergarten pedagogues had to learn a lot from parents, however, where there was a need, they also had to educate the parents. The leading role in this relationship is that of the kindergartens. Pedagogues had to convince parents to help their work. Built on its history, the relationship between parents and pedagogues was further shaped in the 'heroic age' of socialist kindergartens, based on the Soviet model but adjusted to local circumstances (see Füle, 1988).

Latent Meaning from the Themes of the Analysis

Parents and Kindergartens Working Together

The emphasis here is on improving the operation of kindergartens. The text analysed touched upon whatever kindergarten pedagogues needed to provide for the children and ensure their needs for activities were met. Imperfections were published as cartoons or humorous stories in satirical magazines or disguised as 'readers' letters'. These mainly made fun of the bureaucracy of the socialist administration. The analysed text corpus had a latent content claiming that although the socialist planned economy's three-year plan, later five-year plan, had generously envisaged the expansion of kindergarten network, its conditions were not ensured. Rooms in kindergartens could not keep up with the increasing demand caused by the demographic fluctuation and the labour exchange measures of the era.

The social demand for kindergartens depended on several factors. Decrees influencing the possibility of having children and, as a result, kindergarten affairs were adopted starting in 1948. That year the parliament accepted law Article 43 on the equality of rights of women terminating women's disadvantages. Technically, this gave women the opportunity to work in any profession. This was confirmed by the Constitution of the People's Republic of Hungary which ensured the conditions of equal opportunities. The system of mother and child-welfare institutions served this purpose. The most popular explanation of the need for more kindergarten places was a decree by the cabinet of the People's Republic of Hungary on the increase of the number of women in the workforce. Researcher M. Schadt, expert on the '50s, gives detailed account of the hidden objectives of slogans promoting the equality of women coming from the official ideology (2003).

The number of children attending kindergartens was constant until 1955. Then, between 1956 and 1958, it increased significantly. According to the party leadership, population growth meant the legitimisation of the system. Therefore, encouraging people to have children was a priority within the objectives. Mother and baby-welfare measures put into effect starting in 1953, drastically limiting the opportunity for abortions, and propaganda resulted in the birth rate reaching its highest of the second half of the 20th century in 1954. This was outstandingly high within Europe too. The extent of social demands related to kindergarten services did not become overstretched, however the demographic peak of the Ratkó era (baby boom) reached the kindergartens. Population growth became a burden for the performance of the institutional system of kindergartens. Although planned estimates constantly exceeded earlier decisions, the reality and failures could not completely be swept under the rug (Aczél, 2012; Kéri, 2003; Léderer, 1991; Schadt, 2003).

The competing movements of socialism were disguised as offerings for the greater good. In reality, they forced parents to support the building and equipment of kindergartens, something the state was supposed to take care of. *'Everyone who loves their country and its people has to do everything to the best of their knowledge to build socialism and help our country prosper.'* (Róka, 1949a, p. 2.)

Close Relationships – Insights into the Lives of Families – Kindergarten Pedagogues as Educators of the Nation

Close relationship between pedagogues and parents in the '50s was not only important from the aspect of educating children. Earning the trust of parents was almost an expectation held by the state's leadership whilst building a system in which attempts were made to even tightly control the thoughts of citizens. The possible latent objective of getting to know the circumstances and living conditions of families is also strongly related to this. Family visits or guided dialogues unveiled parts of private matters, e.g. housing conditions or religious affairs. This was usually carried out, especially at the beginning of the 1950s, using the so-called home agitation which provided a much more effective opportunity for personal persuasion. All this was done in order to politically enlighten, mobilise, and ideologically educate population outside the party. Social workers carried out their job of political enlightenment door-to-door through entering private spaces outside state control and mining information. Their 'responsibilities' also included political education, agitation, mobilisation, control and familiarising themselves with how communities lived, although the level of importance of each of these was different. The system considered kindergarten pedagogues as social workers who were to lead by example in accordance with the values set by the state authority. *'The work of kindergarten pedagogues in villages, who are constantly in connection with the working peasants because of family visits, related to enlightenment and persuasion can be very serious and valuable.'* (Róka, 1949b, p. 4.). During these visits homes became public spaces as citizens were required to make statements in front of a party representative. In spite of this, sometimes statements would not meet the expectations of the party. In certain cases, solidarity with the community and their problems overcame the ideology (Huhák, 2020).

Co-ordinated Upbringing of Children – Propaganda Work

The state expectations of families and kindergartens working together as pedagogues educated families almost directly led to the latent content of the texts which was to align family and kindergarten education in order to stop 'double (contradictory) education' from happening. These related to education influencing attitudes, the differences in parents' educational strategies and the values they passed on and nurturing across the two spaces contradicting one another. This is what is meant by the concept of double education still today (Fenyő, 2017). According to this concept, the socialist society set the same educational objectives for parents, and schools and kindergartens. It was a shared responsibility to nurture children according to the communist educational principles both in the family and at school/kindergarten. The goal was to bring up a brave, self-conscious, cultured generation who would believe in materialism, would be loyal to their socialist homeland, and ready to make sacrifices for the people. This upbringing could only be fruitful if the educational work of families and that of schools/kindergartens were aligned. Therefore, according to the official intentions, kindergarten and school pedagogues teaching to the socialist-communist educational principles were a dominant factor in education. Families were different in nature, and could only be controlled and influenced to a certain extent, therefore were only considered a secondary factor (Donáth, 2000, 2008).

A way to reach this goal was propaganda work also expected from kindergarten pedagogues. This was the ideological indoctrination of society through parents, disguised as pedagogical enlightenment. A forced growth in several areas of life was typical of the era between 1948 and 1956. This was generated by the radically centralised planned economy, taken from the Soviet economic model. Life conditions in the countryside were greatly influenced by the change of ownership in agriculture and forced collectivisation launched several times. Those in towns were influenced by the intensified industrialisation (Tomka, 2011). Collectivisation was achieved by the mandatory appropriation of goods. The safest way to stay away from continuous inspections, penalties and despoliation was to enter a sovkhos (collective farm) (Romsics, 2010).

Extensive propaganda would encourage people to do so. These latent contents infiltrated into educational work as part of the official approach of the party leadership. Their real presence could be determined in analysed sources, hence the acknowledgement of how unilateral the sources were.

The analysis both the manifest and latent content leads to the conclusion that the forms of developing relationship between families and kindergartens were tools of the socialist system to legitimate itself. This was why state authorities were trying to make the relationship of the two educational environments aligned using mass-organisations. The party leadership was trying to expand the educational influence of kindergartens, which affected parents through their children. The tool to implement this expansion was propaganda although conditions of extensive kindergarten network expansion were not available.

Conclusion

The sources written at the time show the requirement of enforcing the new, binding, socialist values set by state leadership. These values were different to the previous traditions of kindergarten pedagogy, and appeared to leave those traditions behind. Given the unilateral nature of the sources, all this study was meant to do was to analyse the official expectations of the period's state authority. The party leadership of the era had the ministry supervising kindergartens, schoolbook publishing and the press under strict control. As a consequence, the sources used in this study were supposed to convey state expectations and nothing else. This set certain limits on the research.

Kindergarten policies were an attempt to influence the private matter of how families were bringing their children up with the objective of legitimating the prevailing social structure. To achieve this, the relationship and its various manifestations between families and kindergartens were utilised. Kindergartens of the '50s were influenced by policies and legislation infused by political ideologies (e.g. fight against 'double education' in order to accept socialist values and norms). Although their content and role have significantly changed by today, they (can) still have negative connotations for parents which is a sign of the prevailing influence of the socialist pedagogical past. The sources analysed spoke of the importance of parents' visit to kindergartens; however, this was not the kind of openness we know today, nevertheless, it still created an opportunity for parents to gain an insight to how kindergartens worked. There is still a demand for this today. Kindergarten pedagogues of the '50s were a tool for the state authority used in the process of manipulated socialisation. This is why, kindergarten pedagogues were expected to take the lead in co-ordinating the two nurturing environments. Kindergarten pedagogues of today are still expected to be active, assertive and creative in their relationship with families in order for the relationship to be fruitful. This is presumably why the relationship between kindergartens and families is an ever-emerging topic of discussion between experts and researchers of educational sciences and across European models of early education.

As the findings suggest, the expectations of raising 'socialist citizens' was incorporated into educational and policy documents as well as non-professional publications relating to kindergartens and family education in the 1950s. This study offers a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between kindergartens and families in the '50s and with that provides foundations for further analytical work of the socialist pedagogical past. Examining where the emphasis lay in kindergarten pedagogue training coursebooks from after 1959 would offer further possibilities for research.

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