Ildikó Dergez

ROLE MODELS IN HUNGARIAN EDUCATIONAL DECREES BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS (1920-1938)

Abstract
The study presents the diverse types of role models that appeared in Hungarian educational decrees between 1920 and 1938. These documents can be found in the official educational journal of “Hivatalos Közlöny” (“Hungarian Gazette”), which functionated as the main form of communication between the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education and the educational branch. It is an essential fact that we do not only find historical examples but also literary and thematic examples of the period. Many of these role models were historic figures such as kings, princes, and other noble people. The next category consisted of famous figures of Hungarian and Latin literature like János Arany, Sándor Petőfi and Horatius. Nevertheless, there were role models outside this typical “historical” spectrum, like thematic days and memorials of fallen soldiers.

Keywords: interwar period; history of education; role model

Introduction
After the Treaty of Trianon (1920) leading politicians recognized that education was one of the means of breaking out of isolation. One disadvantage was that many excellent higher education institutions had been moved to the other side of the border by the peace treaty (Csicsay, 2002). The main task was to develop the education system to provide the country with as many ‘educated people’ as possible (Klebelsberg, 1928). Kuno Klebelsberg and Bálint Hóman, who each headed the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education for 9 years each (Klebelsberg: 1922–1931; Hóman: 1932–1938, 1939–1942), were the hallmarks of education in this era. The choice of the period (1920–1938) is marked by the year of the Peace of Trianon and the last year of peace (Ujváry, 2003).

The study examines the role models in the educational decrees issued during this period and presents a summary picture of the characters and events that were intended to present to pupils and their role in education. The study also reveals the intention of the regulations.

The cultural policy of the era under Kuno Klebelsberg and Bálint Hóman
As Kuno Klebelsberg explained: My cultural policy is built on two fundamental ideas. I shall endeavour to raise the intellectual level of the broad strata of the Hungarian nation... But we must also see to it that there are men, especially professionals, of an entirely European standard so that in all fields of activity we can rely on ... first-rate forces (1927. évi XIII. törvénycikk indokolása, n.d.).
Following this idea required several efforts. First, he made steps to eradicate illiteracy, as he founded or improved 3,500 people’s schools (Ormós, 1998). He advocated the teaching of modern foreign languages and initiated the opening of several civic schools. The main aim of the 1926 law on public schools was to develop elementary education and expand the school network, especially in the small villages and farms located there (Kósáry, 1995). In this area, illiteracy was also high at a national level. By 1930, thanks to the law on public schools, 90% of the population over the age of 6 could read and write. This reduced illiteracy to 10% (T. Kiss, 1998).

He made it a priority to restore the status of higher education and took major steps to this end (Ujváry, 2018). The first objective was to develop professionals, through higher education and academic workshops, who already have European-level knowledge in their fields and can compete internationally. The ministry had improved higher education, the quality of universities and public collections. Many Hungarian institutes abroad have been established and revitalised, particularly through scholarship programmes awarded by the National Scholarship Council to the right young student or teacher (Kósáry, 1995). Klebelsberg’s cultural policy was revived and built on existing foundations. One of the most important institutions was the Hungarian Academy of Rome (Romsics, 1982). He helped organizing three universities in Hungary and set up research institutes (Hungarian institutions) in the most important cultural centers abroad so that the Hungarian elite could keep pace with scientific progress. His vision was to revise the decision of Trianon with the weapon of cultural supremacy (Kékes, 1996, p. 254.).

The other adjective used to describe Klebelsberg’s cultural policy was the idea of so-called neo-nationalism. In an article, he argued that only the national feeling represented by Hungarian schools can create a real identity for students (Klebelsberg, 1928, p. 61). In his view, a certain kind of nationalism had existed in Europe before – in Greco-Roman culture – and a return to it was an acceptable step (Gyáni & Kövér, 2003).

Bálint Hóman was appointed head of the ministry in 1932 and he remained in charge, with some interruptions until 1942. Klebelsberg’s policy of ‘cultural supremacy’ also influenced his work (Hóman, 1942). He gave scholarships to talented but poor peasant boys to enable them to study according to their abilities as he believed that this was the way to ensure the survival of the country and the prosperity of the nation (Hóman, 1942, pp. 107–109.). During his ministry, the transmission of national ideology in the curriculum became increasingly important (Nagy, 2005). The law of the secondary school system was introduced in 1934 which aimed to reorganize education on a national-Christian basis (1934. évi XI. törvénycikk).

Together, the two cultural ministers of the period contributed to the European standard of Hungarian cultural policy. Despite the unfavourable post-war circumstances, Klebelsberg set the cultural sphere on a course that did not lose momentum under Hóman. The difference between the two is most noticeable in their connection to European culture. Klebelsberg’s primary aim was to learn about European processes, to which he devoted the resources of his ministry. Hóman’s policy was more inward-looking and aimed to strengthen the ‘national Christian’ ideology. This did not mean, however, closing in, but could be interpreted as a reaction to external ideological threats (T. Kiss, 1999).
**State role models in the educational regulations of the era**

In addition to the concept of cultural supremacy, patriotism and national education were also emphasized in contemporary education. The foundation for this idea was laid by a 1920 decree which specified how the celebrations were to be used. The most important is the joint involvement of teachers, as this is the only way to give them a chance to deal with the challenges posed by history (war, defeat, the Treaty of Trianon). The decree states that the students are the key to the future and survival of the nation. It therefore calls on teachers and educators to nurture students’ patriotic feelings and strengthen their character development (Klebelsberg, 1928, p. 61). Another guarantee for solving the spiritual crisis was seen in the strengthening of the rural population, which could be a guarantee of national revival (154.490/1920 VKM. rendelet).

In the management of a ministry, the various pieces of legislation have a vital role to play. These provided both a framework and a reference point for the system headed by the Minister of Religion and Education. Laws took first place in the legislative hierarchy, followed by regulations. The central decrees issued by the Minister were intended to ensure the implementation of a specific task and were binding on the persons concerned.

Subsequently, the government used the regulations as a means of assigning the work of teachers. Many of them contained teaching plans and further training courses to make up for the omissions caused by the war. It gives detailed instructions for the subjects of Hungarian literature, the history of Hungary, civil rights and duties, and educational knowledge. The supplement to the decree specifies exactly what kind of students the teacher should educate to become useful citizens of the Hungarian nation. In the subject of Hungarian literature, it mentions as the most important the study of the products of the Hungarian folk spirit (211,081/1919 VKM. rendelet). Great emphasis was placed on the cultivation of national - especially local traditions, and on the study of tales and legends.

The study of the Hymn and the Szózat, the poems of Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Sándor Kisfaludy and Mihály Tompa, the writings of József Eötvös and István Széchenyi, the novels of Mór Jókai and Géza Gárdonyi play a prominent role in the study of literature, which is essential for basic literary education in Hungary.

In the field of Hungarian history, the decree set out precise objectives. The aim is to understand and learn from the social, economic, and political conditions of the time. The study of historical periods can make students realize that the Hungarian nation was able to rise from even the most desperate situations and start anew (211,081/1919 VKM. rendelet). In this context, the Tatar invasion, the reign of Béla IV, the Battle of Mohács (1526), the heroic struggle of the Hungarians against the Turks, the Rákóczi War of Independence (1703–1711), the reign of Maria Theresa and Joseph II were given special attention. A major focus was on the nationality issues of the dualism era, which many saw as a precursor to the Trianon Peace Treaty. The country’s involvement in the First World War is also covered to provide examples for the student. The young people were given a significant role to play and were seen as the hope for the future of Hungary (211,081/1919 VKM. rendelet).

The subject Rights and Duties of Citizens aimed to educate students to become informed citizens. The subject "Education" included lessons in moral education. The decrees
Role models in Hungarian educational decrees between the two world wars (1920-1938)

set out in bullet points their expectations of teachers so that the nation might develop. In the case of secondary schools, the emphasis was on general literacy, a love of the humanities and the real sciences, and the acquisition of a sense of national identity (32.400/1936. V. 1 VKM. rendelet).

The shaping of students’ character was not left to the classroom alone. Therefore, various so-called thematic days were organized to make students feel that they belonged to the nation as a community. They were no longer passive participants, but active agents. They also introduced the students to the past, culture, and greats of the Hungarian nation, as the guidelines of the regulations stated.

In 1928, Kuno Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Education, also published a circular on the 10th anniversary of the end of the war. In this document, the Minister reiterated to teachers what they should pay attention to in the education and training of students. In his opinion, nationalism has been weakened by the international currents of wartime, even though the former is not contrary to the progress of universal humanity (Körlevél, 1928).

National holidays proved to be the most important nation-building and role-modelling events. The students and the population here often celebrated or commemorated important historical events together. During the period, the most important national holidays were 15 March, 6 October and the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Mohács (29 August 1926), and in many cases the day of the Treaty of Trianon.

The celebration of 15 March was the subject of three different decrees during the period. These specified the purpose and the way in which the celebrations were to take place. The decrees made it compulsory for all schools under the authority of the Minister of Religion and Public Education to prepare the celebrations. They also ordered that the national flag be displayed on buildings to express patriotic sentiments. He pointed out that these celebrations should serve as an example not only for the students at the schools but for the whole nation. The decree pointed out that the celebrations should not only be an example for students in the schools but for the whole nation. In this way, students’ and the public’s national feelings and consciousness can be strengthened (27,919/1922 VKM. rendelet). In terms of speeches, the regulations were not specific, but rather set out guidelines for institutions. The aim was to convey a hopeful vision that the nation would emerge from adversity despite horrific events.

On the contrary, the 6 October celebration is to be presented to students as a day of mourning, according to the regulation. The exalted atmosphere of the celebration should honor the sacrifice and heroism of the 13 Martyrs of Arad so that they can serve as an example to the youth (9964. V. / 1923 VKM. rendelet).

Different from this was a commemorative ceremony that became topical at the time. The year 1926 was the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Mohács, which was commemorated at the national level. The Minister ordered schools to hold the celebration on the day before the Christmas holidays. The day-long commemorations were, to begin with a church service and then included the National Anthem, the Szózat and the Hungarian Creed as compulsory elements. In addition to this, the collection for a votive church to commemorate the anniversary was extended to schools (2432/1926 VKM. rendelet). To
commemorate the anniversary, a book entitled Memorial Book of Mohács was published, which was aimed at students and school libraries (994/1926. III.b./1926 VKM. rendelet).

The largest group of role models featured in the decrees were historical figures. In total, six such figures can be found in the decrees, such as István Széchenyi, Ferenc József, Ferenc Rákóczi II, Prince Saint Imre, István Báthory and János Irinyi.

Count István Széchenyi was a unique example in the political thinking between the two world wars. He contributed to the establishment of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1825. The purpose of the commemoration was thus twofold: to cherish the memory of the politician and to celebrate the love of science (83.160/1925 VI. VKM. rendelet). The commemorative ceremony allowed secondary educational institutions to collect donations for the Academy, which they could use to continue to maintain it and cherish Széchenyi’s works and legacy (87.246/1925. VI. VKM. rendelet).

The commemoration of Franz Joseph I of Austria (or Ferenc József in Hungarian) had a slightly different political aspect. On the 10th anniversary of his death a mourning ceremony was held on 21st November 1926 (Sunday) in the schools. The decree also specified the theme of the speeches to be delivered at the ceremony, according to which the commemoration had to praise the period of Franz Joseph’s reign after 1867, especially his active participation in the peaceful development of Hungary (83.501/1926 VKM. rendelet). The authorities warned everyone to refrain from making political references in their speeches and statements and to ensure that the ceremony took place in an appropriate framework.

Two celebrations were dedicated to Ferenc Rákóczi II during the period. One of them was held in 1926 on the 250th anniversary of his birth (17.283/1926. VIII/a. VKM. rendelet), and the other in 1935 on the 200th anniversary of his death (1961/1935. VKM. rendelet).

The year 1930 was one of the most significant to the Catholic students in the period. At this time, they celebrated the 900th anniversary of the death of Prince Imre. His life was intended to be an example of the obedient Hungarian Christian child, according to the decree. His outstanding personality still combined all the virtues that a young noble man should have in any period (500-7/1930 VKM. rendelet). The celebrations were to take place in the month of May, with no special day set aside for the celebration. In addition, several publications were published in honor of Prince Imre this year (820-05-162/1930 VKM. rendelet).

The jubilees of István Báthory (1533-1586), Prince of Transylvania (1571-1586) and King of Poland (1575-1586) were also given great emphasis during the period. In many ways, his person was an example to the Hungarian people. He was the cornerstone of Hungarian-Polish friendship and solidarity since he was the one who united the two nations. The role of Transylvania has always had a special place in Hungarian historical thinking, and its prince occupied a special position. For schools, the first celebration of Báthory was the 400th anniversary of his birth in 1933. The Minister then ordered a ceremony to be held in the institutions belonging to Báthory, the Transylvanian prince and Polish king.

151
Role models in Hungarian educational decrees between the two world wars (1920-1938)

(30.093/1933 Va-1). Three years later – in 1936 – another decree was issued in connection with the person of Báthory, namely on the 350th anniversary of his election as Prince of Transylvania (4341-1936 VKM. rendelet).

Besides the traditional historical characters (e.g. rulers, generals), there is also a special character. János Irinyi's (1817-1895) research in natural sciences was notable for the invention of the noiseless and explosion-free match (6268/1936 VKM. rendelet).

The educational regulations of the period sought to set four literary figures as examples for Hungarian students. These included Sándor Petőfi, Imre Madách, Mór Jókai and János Arany. In addition to them, one more person was included in the state's memory (and role models), namely Horace, the embodiment of Latin literacy.

The 100th anniversary of Petőfi's birth was due in 1923, the celebration of which was already provided for in a decree of 1922. The commemoration was compulsory in all schools and had to start the week before Christmas. At that time, the life and works of Petőfi were presented to the pupils in lessons. On the second Sunday after the Christmas break, the Petőfi celebrations took place, the program of which was also laid down in detail. In addition to the central events, the 15 March celebrations also featured Petőfi as a prominent figure. According to the decision-makers, Petőfi's personality could be used to reinforce a sense of community, belonging and hope in the students and the audience (151.999/1922 VI. VKM. rendelet). Later that year, another decree was issued offering a new volume of Sándor Petőfi's works to school libraries (85.505/1923. VIII. a. VKM. rendelet).

The 100th anniversary of Imre Madách's birth was also due in 1923. The decree decided that the author should be commemorated, preferably in secondary educational establishments. In the government's view, the author's work is an example of the importance of listening to the encouraging words of great predecessors, even in the most desperate of times (129.464/1923. III/b. VKM. rendelet).

In 1925, the country's academic world celebrated the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mór Jókai. A special commemorative committee was set up in the country to celebrate Jókai in a fitting manner. One part of this was the memorial to be built in schools, which was laid down in a decree. According to this, a teacher at the ceremony was supposed to highlight Jókai's fervent patriotism, the charm and noble serenity of his poetry. The poet's work has elevated the beauty of the Hungarian language and expanded the strength of the Hungarian spirit (109488/1924. III. VKM. rendelet). In the commemorative year (1925), a commemorative medal of Jókai was even issued to the students, thus bringing the writer closer to the students (2238–1925. VI. VKM. rendelet).

On 22 October 1932, the 50th anniversary of the death of János Arany was commemorated. His person was significant at the time, since he was born in Nagyszalonta, a town beyond the border, and his life's work (poems) and the place where he was born made him an important role model. Arany's poetry was truly Hungarian in its own right, evoking the greats of national genius when read by students (32.710–1932. V. VKM. rendelet).

The Latin poet Horatius appeared as a special person in his 2000th birth anniversary. In addition to the commemoration, a competition was announced and an article in honor of Horace was to be included in the school newsletter for the school year 1934/35. In
addition to his role in universal education, he was intended as a Hungarian role model for students. His influence was felt by generations of Hungarian poets and literary translators, and through education it became accessible to the youth. Thus Horatius became a major figure in Hungarian intellectual history (30.775/1934 V. a–1. VKM. rendelet).

Two of his contemporary role models are dealt with in separate decrees, such as Ferenc Herczeg (1863-1954) and István Szabó Nagyatádi (1863-1924). In 1926, the Minister of Religion and Public Education ordered the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the former’s literary jubilee. The celebration was to take place during the school year, and the program was also set. The program should include the Hiszekegy, the Hymn, the Szózat, excerpts from the works of Ferenc Herczeg, and a play. The government ordered the celebration in the institutions under its control. In their opinion, the event is an excellent opportunity to deepen the knowledge of the Hungarian national past and to strengthen the love of Hungarian literature (17.554/1926. VIII. a. VKM. rendelet).

István Nagyatádi Szabó’s political involvement made him a role model for students. His character highlights the service a man can render to the Hungarian state through his life’s work (50.176–1932 VKM. rendelet). His person was a symbol of peace between social classes and attachment to the Hungarian land. In 1933, on the 70th anniversary of his birth, a statue of him was erected in Kossuth Square in Budapest. A thematic day and commemoration were held in schools (Tamás, n. d.).

One of the most important of these was Heroes’ Memorial Day (1924. évi XIV. törvény-cikk). It focused on the heroic dead who died in the First World War. The commemorations were both local and national and took a wide range of forms. In the classrooms of primary schools, the names of the fallen heroes of the local community were to be displayed on ornate plaques in gold letters. In doing so, they set an example of self-sacrifice and patriotism for the students. The plaques were made to a standard and were provided by the National Committee of the Cult of Our Heroes, Our Greats, and House of Heroes. The plaques also have an educational purpose, not just a commemorative one (40,127/1922 VKM. rendelet). The embodiment of this grassroots remembrance was the decree advocated by the counties of Somogy and Nógrád. These counties held commemorations of heroes on the heroes’ holidays, both at the municipal and city level twice a year. One ceremony was held on 15 March and the other on 2 November (Day of the Dead) at the municipalities' World War memorials. All student of the primary and secondary schools were obliged to attend these commemorations, accompanied by their teachers. This was an effort to strengthen and involve the local communities and to highlight the nation’s heroic dead as worthy examples (181,278/1922 V. VKM. rendelet). Before the ceremony began, the students were given a special lesson to prepare them for the commemoration, where they talked to their teachers about the First World War and its heroes (1613 eln./1925 VKM. rendelet). It was important for the children to know about the heroes of their local communities. Not only the dead heroes but also the surviving war invalids were honored. The ministry ordered that heroes who are still alive be included in education so that students could see examples of patriotism and loyalty. This respect can
then accompany students throughout their lives (500–18/1929 VKM. rendelet). The celebration of Heroes' Memorial Day had begun to fade due to the frequency of the decrees, so it was necessary to revive the commemoration and organize its framework (34.500/1932. V. VKM. rendelet).

The last type of “role model” had a connection with nature and environment. Back in 1906, Count Albert Apponyi issued a decree calling on students to protect the environment. The origins of the institution came from the United States of America. The first was Birds Day, and the second was Arbor Day, which was introduced in Hungary (26120/1906. eln. sz. VKM. rendelet). This tradition was revived by Kuno Klebelsberg when he decreed that these days should be observed. One day of the year was dedicated by schools to learning about birds and trees. The celebrations included educational programs for students on the usefulness and protection of birds. During the programs, children made bird feeders and planted saplings on Arbor Day, contributing to the beautification of the environment and the protection of nature. In addition, different publications were offered to the students on the day to deepen their love for nature and animals (300–76/1931 VKM. rendelet). A year later, the decree was amended to include a commemoration of national heroes. On these days, students tidied up the graves of the heroes and planted plants on war memorials. At the same time, they cared for the memory of the heroes, which was of foremost importance for the education of the nation (59.963/1932. VIII. d. VKM. rendelet).

Summary

The defeat in the First World War (1918), the revolutions of 1918–1919 and the Treaty of Trianon (1920) posed significant challenges to the Hungarian political leadership and society. In addition to the human losses (tragedies), the disintegration of the country's territorial integrity also had an impact. The challenges also had an impact on education, where the ministers of culture of the period played a major role. The work of Kuno Klebelsberg and Bálint Hóman was based on the creation of Hungarian "cultural supremacy" and the concomitant increase in the level of education. Klebelsberg, as a politician working in the 1920s, wanted to put the whole system on an old-new footing, to provide European education. Hóman, who became head of the ministry in the 1930s, placed great emphasis on national education. Both ministers wanted to seize every important opportunity to promote this noble aim. One of the most important means of doing so was to provide national role models for young people. The government was able to influence education mainly through the decrees issued to communicate their aims. These legal sources were published selectively in the official journal called „Hivatalos Közlöny“ ("Hungarian Gazette")

The choice of role models was a key issue for the ministry. People who have made a lasting contribution to Hungarian history, the history of science or art were chosen. In selecting the various role models, the aim was to disseminate them nationwide so that children would have a choice of role models to choose from throughout their lives. The difficulty in grouping them was that the vast majority of these were historical figures, but they had made a difference in different fields. The first category included historical figures...
(rulers, princes) who played a role in the country’s historical events. The second category is made up of cultural figures (writers, poets, and scholars). In addition, they tried to set an example for the students in terms of themes such as the Day of Birds and Trees or Heroes’ Day.

The education ministers of the period had a strong influence on the practice of role modelling, but both sought to educate future generations along universal – Hungarian and foreign – examples. The tangible results of their work (the decrees) provide a new analytical perspective on the history of Hungarian education between the two world wars, as well as on the history of the legal regulation of the period.

Reference List


27,919/1922 V. VMK. rendelet. A m. kir. vallás- és közoktatásügyi minisztérnek 1922. évi 27,919 M. P. számú rendelete március tizenötödikének megünneplése tárgyában. Hivatalos Közlöny, 1922.03.06.

adományokból a Magyar Tudományos Akadémiaát megillető résznek a Magyar Földhitelintézet pénztárába való utalása tárgyában. Hivatalos Közlöny, 1925.11.18.
994/1926. III.b./1926 VKM. rendelet. A m. kir. vallás- és közoktatásügyi miniszternek 994/1926. III. b. számú rendelete a Mohácsi Emlékkönyv ajánlása tárgyában. Hivatalos Közlöny, 1926.06.05.
17.554/1926. VIII a. VKM. rendelet. A m. kir. vallás- és közoktatásügyi miniszternek 17.554/1926. VIII. a. számú rendelete Herczeg Ferenc irói jubileumának az iskolákban való megünneplése tárgyában. Hivatalos Közlöny, 1926.03.11.
30.093/1933 Va–1. A m. kir. vallás- és közoktatásügyi miniszternek 30.093./1933. évi Va–1.számú rendelete Bátory István emlékezetének megünneplése tárgyában. Hivatalos Közlöny, 1933.06.01.


