TEACHER TRAINING IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

As in other countries teacher training in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has undergone great changes not only in its organization, but also in its curriculum and methods. The demand to improve the quality of teachers' preparation indicates a greater interest in school education which in turn is of immense importance for social progress.

The basic tendency in the development of teacher training since the beginning of the century has been the effort to substitute the university level of teacher training for the secondary school preparation of some categories of teachers. This demand was already formulated by G. A. Lindner, a well-known professor of pedagogy at Charles University, Prague, in the second part of the nineteenth century. Even among teachers themselves this demand for university education was fully supported. But this demand was only realized after 1945. Since then teacher training has gone through several changes and has been gradually approaching the university level.

In Czechoslovakia in the year 1962, on the basis of a detailed analysis, the final form of organization, curriculum and methods of teacher training was realized. The basic criterion for the arrangement of teacher training is, as in other countries, the system of primary and secondary school education. This takes place in state schools only, which are for all children without regard to social origin or religion. It is organized as a unified school, i.e. during the period of compulsory school attendance all pupils are educated together according to a unified curriculum without any organizational differentiation. All schools are arranged in such a way that all pupils can reach the highest education.

According to the 1960 School Act the Czechoslovakian school system comprises institutions of pre-school education, primary education, secondary and higher education. The pre-school education for children up to 6 years of age is not obligatory as yet. In future obligatory attendance at these schools from the 5th year of age is to be expected. The primary section of the school system is the basic nine year school for children from 6 to 15 years of age for whom attendance is compulsory by law. The basic nine year school is internally divided, first into grades 1–5 that are taught by one teacher, and secondly grades 6–9 which are taught by teachers who are specialized in different subjects. The members of the teaching staff are also tutors who conduct extra-curricular activities with children. The educational work in the extra-curricular time is directed by School Children's Centres and School Clubs.

Supplementing this school system there are schools for pupils requiring special care. They are for children who are blind, deaf, physically or mentally defective, maladjusted children and children undergoing treatment in hospitals. Teachers in these schools receive special teacher training.

Some pupils over 15 years of age are given training for industry, agriculture and various other vocations at the Apprentice Training Centres and Apprentice Schools for 2–3 years. Besides receiving professional training they are also given general education. Since compulsory school attendance up to the age of 17 is gradually being introduced (to be completed by 1970), the number of pupils at these schools is constantly increasing. Attendance at these schools is one of the main ways of extending compulsory education. Apart from teachers of general educational
subjects and theoretical vocational subjects, there are also foremen who guide the vocational training in these schools.

Other pupils over the age of 15 may go to secondary schools. The main type of secondary school provides a 3-year course in general education. The next type of secondary school is the 4-year secondary school preparing for industry, agriculture, health care, and commerce. Both end with school-leaving maturity examinations which give pupils the right to go to the university.

Another part of this unified school system consists of schools for adults who study at evening institutes or by correspondence. This enables them to pass the secondary school examinations at the same level as in daily schools. They are called Secondary Schools for Working People, Vocational Secondary Schools for Workers, Works Technical Schools and Works Evening Institutes. At present the students who attend these schools apart from older working people are mainly those who finished their training at the Apprentice Training Centres and Apprentice Schools and who in this way gain secondary school education.

Teacher training in Czechoslovakia is at present differentiated according to the type of school at which the prospective teacher is to teach and according to the nature of his professional activity.

The teachers of kindergartens form the only category of teachers for whom only secondary school education is required. Although it is deemed necessary for them to receive university education, it is not possible to introduce this at present, since the growth of the kindergarten is so rapid, that the universities would not be able to satisfy the demand. Kindergarten teachers are, therefore, educated at the Pedagogical Secondary Schools which are attended by those who have finished the basic nine-year school. After 4 years special training they take the school-leaving examination which entitles them either to enter the school service at the kindergarten level or to continue their studies at a university. The 4-year training enables them to receive professional preparation and also a sufficiently wide general education.

Also the tutors who lead the extra-curricular activity at the school clubs and boarding schools, are trained at the Secondary Pedagogical Schools which are being established at present.

The 1962 Government decree introduced a new way of training teachers for the basic nine-year school. Up to now the training of teachers for the 1st-5th grade and for the 6th-9th grade was different. Now, a unified system of teacher training for the whole basic nine-year school is being introduced. All teachers for the basic nine-year school study for 4 years at Pedagogical Institutes which are independent institutes for teacher training. Students are admitted to the course of study when they have finished secondary school. The theoretical course lasts three years and is completed by the state final examination. In their fourth year of study the prospective teachers enter a one year introductory practice. The teachers in the first year of their career fulfil all the duties of a teacher, but under the supervision of experienced teachers and headmasters. During this year they attend the institute and are prepared for the second, practical examination which entitles them to become teachers.

Teacher training at the Pedagogical Institutes can be divided into several parts. The first part of teacher training is the study of philosophy and politics which orientates the student to social development, scientific world outlook, the state organization and moral principles. This philosophical and political study enables the teacher to understand the principles on which the socialist society has been built.