

Vision and debate on Schooling and Learning for Women in the journal *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* (National Female Education) (1879–1919)

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This paper analyzes visions and debates over the ‘woman question’ in *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* (National Female Education) (*NN*) (1879–1919), the journal of women’s education, with special emphasis on secondary-level education for girls. Secondary-level education for girls in Hungary was institutionalized in the era of the Dual Monarchy. *NN* is important with respect to women’s education and the women’s movement, because before an ‘organized’ women’s movement existed in Hungary, it was the forum where ideas and experiences about girls’ education could be exchanged and where some social initiatives were mentioned for the first time. *NN* aimed to be a ‘neutral’ forum, which meant that very diverse authors could publish in it, regardless of their point of view, though *NN* had a clear set of values and perspectives as reference points. In this way *NN* represented various opinions that were present in society at that time: ‘Its task is not to be noisy, but to work silently for the interests of female education in the future too.’² Although some articles did not meet the perspective of *NN*, these articles were still published,³ while the editor made a comment to indicate the difference in the perspectives.⁴ In some cases two reactions were published, but then the editor interrupted stating that it was by no means the profession of the journal to participate and provide space for any hot debate. This practice corresponded with the previously defined purpose of the journal, namely that it wanted to avoid any tension with the authors.

In the analysis special emphasis is placed on the visions and debates about secondary-level education for girls, which characterized *NN* on the perspectives, on shaping and reforming the diverse school types and their functions within the system of secondary-level education for girls. The paper thus is intended to contribute to the existing literature by adding a more complex picture of and deeper

¹ This paper is based on my MA thesis, Central European University, Gender Studies, 2004. All the translations in the text are mine.

² Sebestyén Stetina Ilona, „Olvasóinkhoz”, (To our readers) *NN* (1890): XVII. 1–2.

³ For example *NN* (1896): XXIII. 167–173.

⁴ For example *NN* (1887): XIV. 182–183., (1891): XVIII. 142–145.

insights into contemporary discourse and debate about the 'woman question', and women's secondary education.

The journal *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* (*NN*) existed from 1879 to 1919. It was first published on the day when a supporter of women's education, Janka Zirzen (f, 1824–1904) became the headmistress of the first Hungarian State Teacher Training Institute in Hungary.⁵ *NN* wanted an educational system for girls in Hungary which was 'national' and practical.⁶ It also wanted to continue education outside schools, therefore it focused on teachers' personal experiences.⁷ In this way *NN* aimed to fill a gap that existed between formal teacher education and teachers' practice. The first editor of *NN* was educational writer and teacher Sándor Péterfy (m, 1841–1913) from 1879 to 1885. The historian, educator, and author of many textbooks Gyula Sebestyén (m, 1848–1911) became the editor in 1885.⁸ In 1890 Gyula Sebestyén's wife, schoolteacher and headmistress Sebestyénne Stetina Ilona (f, 1855–1933) became the editor. She aimed to rely on the 10-year tradition of the journal, but also wanted to reestablish the foundations, and to reassign the task of the journal; [T]o edit a journal that serves the interests of women's education is doubly difficult in our country, where interest in women's education is not general. But my task is easier, since I do not have to work as a pioneer, since I can rely on the past. Not only has *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* a 10-year-long career accompanied by the approval of the best, but it also has exact guiding principles, colleagues, and a reading public. I know that I will serve our journal and the purpose it serves if I insist on its program based on a 10-year practice, and if the journal makes an effort to keep an eye on, and support the Hungarian female educational movements;⁹ if it raises its voice in important educational issues; if it wants to support the teachers and the parents in their professional work with some illuminating articles; if it provides an opportunity for discussion for the supporters of women's education and the experienced teachers; and if it creates a connecting link between the educational institutions and the professionals working in the field of women's education.¹⁰

After the first decades of its existence, an editorial note referring to the purpose of the journal was published in 1910.¹¹ The editor emphasized that *NN* followed the original program from 1879, but that it was also opened to new and modern schools of thoughts. *NN* also aimed to inform the readers about the women's movement and educational achievements of the more 'developed' nations, and it

⁵ *NN* (1880): I. 1–19.

⁶ *NN* (1882): V. 17–24.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *NN* (1885): XII. 729–730.

⁹ The author did not specify what kind of educational movements she meant.

¹⁰ Sebestyénne Stetina Ilona, „Olvasóinkhoz”, (To our readers) *NN* (1890): XVII. 1–2.

¹¹ *NN* (1910): 30.

called for the application of successful elements from foreign practice.¹² It also aimed to popularize the Hungarian educational institutions, and took on and supported any 'progress' and 'development' that was based on a 'national' character, and rejected the explicit copying of foreign educational models. Thus any new idea was welcomed in the journal, but as it said 'one had to remain Hungarian'. It was also claimed that after the spread of women's organizations in Hungary, *NN* helped these organizations, because it did not want to lose the competition with other journals that supported women's organizations.¹³

In 1915 Lajos Vázsony (m) became the editor of *NN*.¹⁴ He also insisted on keeping the original program from 1879 but he also formulated the program of *NN* in broader terms, namely that from that time *NN* aimed to deal with any issues that were connected to education and teaching.¹⁵ The last note from the editor was published in 1918, when the new editor Sándor Berecz (m, 1861–?) claimed that the program of *NN* remained the same, but admitted that the First World War had created a new situation. Thus he added that in this situation the aim of the journal was to produce 'progress', peace and happiness, which were Hungarian women's, and especially Hungarian female teachers' tasks.

To summarize, *NN* emphasized the original program from 1879 until the last years of the journal, yet broadened in terms of women's secondary education and in being a forum for women's movement in Hungary. *NN* itself also admitted that it could not resist the contemporary social, political and cultural changes, for example in the case of the women's movement. The strong emphasis on the 'national' character of education remained in the program too.

Women's secondary education in NN

After the Compromise in 1867, the national women's movement revived, which corresponded with the wider European and the American practice.¹⁶ In *NN* it was realized that women's education was an important part in the nation-building process, and women had to be educated because only then could the nation develop: "Yes, we Hungarians have reached this level. Of course mentioning the wooden spoon and the needle as the borderline will not stop soon, but these books¹⁷ are the evidence for the fact that Hungary has reached the second level. The second level means that developing women's education has become a 'natu-

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *NN* (1915): 1–4.

¹⁵ *NN* (1915): 1–4.

¹⁶ Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous greetings: the first international women's movement 1830–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

¹⁷ The author is referring to John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women*.

ral need', moreover a 'national' duty for the educated people, and now the only question is how it should be developed."¹⁸

The first high school for girls (felsőbb leányiskola) was opened in 1875 in Hungary. The dissatisfaction with high schools for girls was present in *NN* from the beginning.¹⁹ What were the reasons for that? Lack of unified management, lack of students in the upper classes, the low standard of teaching, unequal relation between knowledge of the facts and education in the process of teaching; all of these were argued to decrease the standard of teaching in high schools for girls.²⁰ Based on these 'problems' what kind of a woman was the pedagogical ideal of these institutions in the beginning? The 'ideal woman' was to have common sense, but not be bookish, would know the basic facts, could think properly, loved working, and was a happy woman.²¹ What was to be done with all these educational 'problems' defined above? It was argued that the curricula had to be changed, different school types had to be traversable for students, female teachers had to be employed in high schools for girls, and proper text books had to be published.²² For example the supporter of women's education, headmistress Antonina de Gerando (f, 1845–1914) rejected the 'common belief' that knowledge and science caused nihilism in women, and argued that:²³ „By the time educated man can make sense from their own situations namely that they were not created to be slaves, (...) and the more they are subordinated, with the bigger passion they will overdo things.”²⁴

She argued that women should not be excluded from education, and in this way she challenged the previous 'image of woman' that had often been claimed to be in danger because of women's higher education.²⁵ This challenge created a new situation, in which it was argued that on the one hand women could get the same education as men did, but in a different way. This difference in method was based on the difference between the sexes, which meant that women's education was to correspond with women's situation, women's character, and their 'natural' duties

¹⁸ Aladár György, „A magyar nők művelődési foka”, (Hungarian women's educational level) *NN* (1890): XVII. 389–390.

¹⁹ *NN* (1883): VII. 147–150., VIII. 409–415., (1887): XIV. 40–45.

²⁰ *NN* (1883): VIII. 409–415.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *NN* (1887): XIV. 40–45.

²³ *NN* (1887): XIV. 53–59.

²⁴ Antonina De Gerando, „A felsőbb leányiskolák tanítási rendszeréről”, (About the teaching methods of high schools for girls) *NN* (1887): XIV. 54.

²⁵ Judit Acsády, „A huszadik század asszonya” A századforduló magyar feminizmusának nőképe, („The woman of the 20th century” The image of woman in Hungarian feminism at the turn of the century) in *Szerep és alkotás. Női szerepek a társadalomban és az alkotóművészetben (Role and creation. Female roles in the society and arts)* ed. Beáta Nagy and Margit S. Sárdi (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 1997), 243–253.

in the society: ²⁶ „In this way women will be able to understand the initiatives of their nation and age, and will be able to fulfill their duties that have been appointed for them. (...) It has to be taken into account that their mental capacities have some limitations, due to their sex and more affectionate character. That is why in the upper classes teachers cannot demand the same from the two sexes.”²⁷

On the other hand this difference in method was questioned, since it was claimed that there was no difference between the sexes: „Since women themselves who have fought for the equality of the sexes have proven that there is no difference in mental capacities between men and women.”²⁸ In sum, it was argued that women could also be educated like men, but the gendered character of education based on the ‘different duties’ of the sexes remained in the context of the contributions in *NN* until the last years.

In the second half of the 1880s it was argued that the curricula and the organization of the different types of schools should be unified.²⁹ The argument for unification of the various types of schools for girls was very important if the class aspect of secondary-level education is considered. Schools were chosen on the basis of the students’ social class. This class-based selection was closely connected to the varied purposes of secondary-level schools.³⁰ While higher elementary schools (polgári leányiskola)³¹ for lower middle class girls aimed to provide education above the elementary level on the basis of women’s ‘natural duties’, high schools for middle class, and upper-middle class girls was to provide education that was equal to what students would study in secondary-level schools for boys. However, it has to be stated that these were defined purposes from the 1880s, which changed later on. The reform of 1885 changed the organization and curriculum of high schools for girls, and stated that high schools for girls were not secondary-level schools. From 1887 high schools for girls were divided into upper, and lower high schools due to the fact that in the rural parts most of the students left high schools for girls after the 4th grade.³² The curriculum in the lower high school for girls was the same as the curriculum in higher elementary schools for girls. This meant that higher elemen-

²⁶ *NN* (1887): XIV. 53–59.

²⁷ „Módosítások az állami felsőbb leányiskolák szervezetén”, (Changes in the organization of high schools for girls) *NN* (1885): XII. 418.

²⁸ Elek Kerégyártó, „Az iskolai fegyelméről” (About school discipline) *NN* (1881): III. 263.

²⁹ *NN* (1883): 147–150.

³⁰ Detlef K. Müller, Fritz Ringer, and Brian Simon eds., *The rise of the modern educational system: Structural change and social reproduction 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

³¹ The 1868 decree about elementary education established girls’ higher elementary schools. Though boys’ higher elementary schools focused on general education and prepared students for their future work, girls’ higher elementary schools provided education that was suitable only for their household duties. The 1887 and 1908 regulations did not change this trend.

³² *NN* (1889): XVI. 269–276.

tary schools for girls were equal to lower high schools for girls. Due to the 1887 reform opinions were very varied about the purpose of higher elementary schools for girls in *NN*. It was argued that the reform of 1887 degraded higher elementary schools for girls, when it made them equivalent with lower high schools for girls.³³ Higher elementary schools for girls were defended though, since in the rural parts they were the only place, where the intelligentsia could be educated.³⁴ The debate about the 1887 decree revived with a memorandum that had been written by the headmasters³⁵ from higher elementary schools for girls in 1888. The journal *The upper elementary and higher elementary educational journal (Felső nép és polgári iskolai közlöny)* published the memorandum on 15 February 1888, and *NN* informed the readers about this memorandum not much later.³⁶ The memorandum aimed to change the whole system of secondary-level education for girls. According to its authors the 1887 decree gradually degraded higher elementary schools for girls, since they were made equivalent to lower high schools for girls. There were two options offered in the memorandum. The first was to change the system of higher elementary schools for girls to upper high schools, and the second was to establish the 5th and 6th grade of the high schools above the higher elementary schools for girls. The writers of the memorandum supported the latter option. There were only few contributions in connection with this memorandum, because the emphasis in *NN* was on another memorandum about high schools for girls from 1891, on 'gymnasium' for girls from the 1890s and on the demand for women's acceptance to universities.³⁷

After the 1887 decree that had reorganized the whole system of secondary-level education for girls, the next debate discussing the standard and system of high schools for girls began. Many points of views were present in that debate. Most of the authors agreed on one important issue, and that was the necessity of high schools for girls. The cause of the conflict was the official purpose of high schools for girls. Many scholars, advocating women's rights for education, including headmistress Antonina de Gerando (f, 1845–1914), headmistress and educator Janka Kasztner (f, 1850–1923), and journalist, writer and politician Aladár György (m, 1855–1906) agreed upon the issue that had been present in the contributions earlier in *NN* too, that high schools for girls did not surpass the level of elementary education, and their purpose was absolutely unsuitable.³⁸ Due

³³ *NN* (1888): XV. 46–56.

³⁴ *NN* (1891): XVIII. 97–103. This argument is connected to the debate from 1887, in which it was emphasized that schools are chosen for the students not only on the basis of gender and social class, but also on place of living.

³⁵ The names of the writers were not specified in *NN*.

³⁶ *NN* (1888): XV. 143–147.p

³⁷ *NN* (1891): XVIII. 97–103.

³⁸ *NN* (1888): XV. 429–442., 502–505., 1890. (XVII): 389–394., (1891): XVIII. 1–6.

to the 1887 decree, the original purpose of high schools had been redefined. At that time the official goal was definitely to prepare middle-class women for their 'natural' functions, and the secondary character of high schools for girls was totally abandoned.³⁹ The advocates of women's education argued that high schools should prepare women for commercial professions,⁴⁰ having realized that fact that the higher education women achieved, the more chances they would have in the labor market. Antonina de Gerando stated that women's education was not to be based on foreign practice,⁴¹ and on the program of boys' schools. She argued for an education that was not the same as the boys' education, but was similar to it, and was based on the 'natural' functions of women.⁴² In his answer to De Gerando's proposal, historian, educator, editor of *NN* (from 1879 to 1889) and author of many textbooks, Gyula Sebestyén (m, 1848–1911) defended the standard of teaching in high schools for girls and claimed that the level of these schools was much above the standard of elementary schools. He stated that the new reform regulating the two types of high schools was necessary and fruitful:⁴³ „I am absolutely convinced that one does not serve the purpose of women's secondary-level education, if one 'wants to start the work on the roots of high schools for girls with an axe', because the time of women's secondary-level education that is present in the more developed and Western countries, is not due in Hungary. Women's secondary-level education could only develop naturally and healthily from the institution of high schools for girls in a way that it will have a positive impact on the whole system of women's education in Hungary.”⁴⁴

There were various points of views about the situation of high schools for girls in Hungary. Much of the debate that started in the early 1890s was about the place of secondary-level schools for girls in the system of education for girls, and also about the name that labeled and categorized these institutions.

Before women were accepted to universities in Hungary in 1895, the secondary and university system of education were linked in the debate. The existence of the secondary-level schools for girls was questioned on the ground that women were excluded from university education in Hungary. There were two opposing views in the debate about the secondary-level education for girls. In 1891 *NN* informed its readership about a memorandum that had been written by headmasters⁴⁵ of

³⁹ *NN* (1890): XVII. 105–112.

⁴⁰ *NN* (1890): XVII. 105–112., 237–243

⁴¹ The author does not specify what kind of foreign practice she means.

⁴² *NN* (1888): XV. 429–442., (1891): XVIII. 1–6.

⁴³ *NN* (1888): XV. 443–451., 505–506.

⁴⁴ Gyula Sebestyén, „Észrevételek de Gerando Antonina kérvényére” (Comments on Antonina de Gerando's proposal) *NN* (1888): XV. 451.

⁴⁵ Namely, headmasters Emil Gerevich (Besztercebánya), Péter Kerner (Lőcse), Menyhárt Marikovszky (Máramarossziget), Pál Marusák (Sopron), József Ghyczy (Pozsony) and Alajos Manyák (Trencsény) signed the memorandum.

high schools for girls to the Religious and Educational Minister, since, as the authors of the memorandum had stated, the 1887 decree had created a situation that hindered progress.⁴⁶ Besides, headmistresses were not wanted in high schools for girls, since, women were not thought to be capable of running an institution like those. Moreover, male teachers would not want to work with headmistresses. Headmistress and pioneer of Hungarian women's education, Janka Kasztner (f, 1850–1923) and educator and author of many textbooks Vilmos Szuppán (m, 1854–1933) argued that high schools for girls could not be incorporated into the system of secondary-level schools, since that would contradict their purpose.⁴⁷ Janka Kasztner also stated that there was no need for secondary-level schools for girls, since women were not accepted to universities in Hungary,⁴⁸ while schools that provided a practical education, like high schools for girls, were absolutely necessary: „Is not secondary-level school unnecessary, if its 'natural' continuation, namely university education is missing?”⁴⁹

Others argued that high schools for girls should be secondary-level schools, because as they claimed, high schools were for the middle and upper classes, and they provided more education than elementary institutions.⁵⁰ It was also added that it was not a problem that high schools for girls did not prepare the students for the university, since that was not the exclusive aim of secondary-level schools for boys either. The debate after the memorandum from 1890 intensified heavily around the terms themselves used in the debate for characterizing the different types of schools.⁵¹ Much later, even in 1897, when the debate was very intensive after women were accepted to universities, the names of labels and categories of secondary-level education for women had still not been agreed upon.⁵²

The problem and confusing situation of education for girls was still not solved with the new idea of 'gymnasiums' for girls in the 1890s, since the original purpose of high schools for girls was very entrenched. Higher elementary schools for girls still also remained in the system. It was argued that what would solve the situation was the standardization of the whole educational system, which would mean that the differentiation between higher elementary schools for girls and the high schools for girls would come to an end.⁵³ One solution for standardization was that higher elementary schools for girls would become high schools so that the education of the girls would not stop after the 4th grade in high schools. In

⁴⁶ *NV* (1891): XVIII. 24–38.

⁴⁷ *NV* (1891): XVIII. 1–6., 50–64.

⁴⁸ *NV* (1891): XVIII. 1–6.

⁴⁹ Janka Kasztner, „Még egy szó a leányok hivatásszerű képzéséhez” (One more word about women's professional education) *NV* (1891): XVIII. 2.

⁵⁰ *NV* (1891): XVIII. 24–38., 97–103.

⁵¹ *NV* (1891): XVIII. 24–38., 50–64., 97–103.

⁵² *NV* (1897): XXIV. 142–149.

⁵³ *NV* (1894): XXI. 177–178.

the 1890s opinions were varied about the issue of secondary-level education for girls, and 'gymnasiums' for girls in particular, which were directly connected to the university education of women.⁵⁴ Apart from *NN*, other journals published articles about this issue too.⁵⁵ Actually, the debate was started by the liberal and independent journal *Élet (Life)* in 1892.⁵⁶ Opinions were very varied in terms of the organization of the various institutions of women's education, namely high schools, higher elementary schools and 'gymnasiums'.

Many authors took part in the debate in *NN* about the question why these 'gymnasiums' for women were needed. Contrary to those who claimed that 'gymnasiums' for women were absolutely unnecessary,⁵⁷ headmasters, headmistresses, and scholars welcomed the new idea of 'gymnasium' for women, and stated that these institutions were absolutely necessary in Hungary, since women's university education was a key element for development.⁵⁸ „The 'gymnasium' for girls, as the means of university education should be opened. Even if someone has to make sacrifice, and only one gifted female student will be supported within one decade, the results will be pleasing. Our intellectual life and our society is not developed enough to hold back the majority of national force that wants to break through, and is qualified to work and create in the intellectual life.”⁵⁹

In the 1890s one of the first propagators of women's university education in Hungary, politician, journalist and writer Aladár György (m, 1855–1906) claimed that women's scientific education was not equal to university education. He argued that 'gymnasiums' were needed because:⁶⁰ „Women's 'gymnasium' means not only higher education, but also women's access to new and different fields of life.”⁶¹ It meant that gymnasiums had to prepare women for university studies and work, especially for the medical studies at the university. It was also stated that the 'gymnasiums' for women were based on the 'female character', therefore, for example, different methods had to be used in them.⁶² „That is why we are demanding suitable secondary-level education for women. But nobody has to be

⁵⁴ The first girls' 'gymnasium' was opened in 1896 by Országos Nőképző Egyesület. The state however supported the girls' high schools, and the secondary courses established above the girls high schools.

⁵⁵ Ildikó Müller, „Nők a budapesti tudományegyetemen a századfordulón” (Women at the University of Budapest at the turn of the century) Ph.D. diss., (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, 2001)

⁵⁶ *NN* (1892): XIX. 316–321.

⁵⁷ *NN* (1893): 123–136.

⁵⁸ *NN* (1892): XIX. 293–294., 295–300., 316–321., 411–417.

⁵⁹ Aladár György, „A női gymnazium, mint kultúrzsükséglet” (Women's 'gymnasium' as the demand of the culture) *NN* (1892): XIX. 300.

⁶⁰ *NN* (1892): XIX. 295–300.

⁶¹ Aladár György, „A női gymnazium, mint kultúrzsükséglet” (Women's 'gymnasium' as the demand of the culture) *NN* (1892): XIX. 297.

⁶² *NN* (1893): XX. 201–207.

frightened because of this. We do not want secondary-level education for women, which is similar to the boys', but we want a suitable secondary-level education for women. Why? First, because boys' secondary-level education is not worth a lot. It only provides education for skilled jobs, but not intelligence. It does not make boys come to like intellectual life. Second, because women's character is different from men's, and that is why women's education should be different from men's. Women's education should correspond with women's character. That is why attempts at establishing high schools for women were not successful in Hungary, since they either copied the programs from boys' schools or German high schools instead of corresponding with the Hungarian situation."⁶³

It was also argued that 'gymnasiums' for women had to be more practical than high schools for girls, since 'gymnasiums' aimed to provide higher education for girls, which would enable them to study or work in the future.⁶⁴ Later university professor Lajos Felméri (m, 1840–1894) concluded that the country was not ready for the university education of girls.⁶⁵ He argued though that the middle and the upper classes needed 'gymnasiums' to be able to live as high-class citizens. With this statement he clearly defined the purpose of the 'gymnasiums' for women on the basis of social class.

Apart from 'gymnasiums' for girls, the debate went on about high schools for girls too. As stated before it was argued that a new 'gymnasium' for girls would solve all the problems. It was also added that the curriculum of high schools for girls was unsuitable.⁶⁶ In the fourth year, those, who did not wish to continue their studies later, could complete their education with two more years of study. Others, whose aim was to continue their studies, would study in 'gymnasiums' for girls that educated students for the final exam, and provided 'national' general education.⁶⁷ In addition the school would also pay attention to those, who left the school after the age of 16.⁶⁸ It was claimed that the reform of high schools for girls should be based on the collective opinion of headmasters and teachers.⁶⁹ Historian, educator, and author of many textbooks Gyula Sebestyén (m, 1848–1911) emphasized that the reform should not be only about high schools for girls, because they belonged to a certain system of institutions.⁷⁰ According to this view of education, the whole system of girls' education needed some reforms. It was determined by then that high schools for girls were suitable for

⁶³ Antonina de Gerando, „Női középoktatás” (Women's secondary education) *NN* (1888): XV. 433–434.

⁶⁴ *NN* (1893): XX. 201–220.

⁶⁵ *NN* (1890): XVII. 285–292., 389–394.

⁶⁶ *NN* (1896): XXIII. 40–57.

⁶⁷ *NN* (1897): XXIV. 142–149.

⁶⁸ *NN* (1896): XXIII. 40–57.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *NN* (1898): XXV. 194–199.

the urban parts of the country, and another solution was to be found for the rural parts. It was argued that high schools in the future should prepare students for the school-leaving exam, provide 'national' and general education, and not copy the system of education for boys.⁷¹ In connection with the issue of the system of high schools for girls, the class aspect of education changed in comparison with its view from the late 1880s. It was argued that the schools should be organized on a democratic basis, and should not be class-based.⁷² However, different types of schools were still organized for students from different classes. This meant that the rigid boundaries and explanations of the class-based system of education were transformed in some ways, but there was still a demand for different types of schools for students from different class backgrounds.

From 1899 the interest in the secondary-level education for girls declined in *NN*, and this lasted until the 1910s. Due to women's movements and the peace movement, the focus of contributions became for example choice of profession,⁷³ alcoholism,⁷⁴ peace,⁷⁵ and women's suffrage.⁷⁶ Therefore from 1899 to 1910 there were very few contributions about the issue of secondary-level education for girls in *NN*,⁷⁷ though the Religious and Educational Minister Gyula Wlassics (m, 1852–1937) issued a new decree in 1901. However, the image of high schools for girls as the ones that educate girls mainly for their housewife duties remained strongly present in the socio-cultural understanding of education for girls of the time. The question was posed again, if high schools for girls were needed at all, because the education they provided was claimed to be absolutely unsuitable, since these institutions prepared girls exclusively for their 'natural' functions, and did not prepare them for university studies.⁷⁸ It was agreed again in *NN* that the establishment of the first 'gymnasium' for girls was a social need, due to the unsuitable education in high schools for girls, but only the most intelligent students were expected to continue their studies in 'gymnasiums' for girls. As stated above, since the establishment of 'gymnasiums', it had been argued that school selection should be based not on only social class, but on educational merit too.⁷⁹ This meant that the opposition against 'gymnasium' for girls was not only an opposition against taking away women from their 'natural calling', but also an opposition against women's social mobility.

⁷¹ *NN* (1897): XXIV. 186–191.

⁷² *NN* (1898): XXV. 62–68., 130–135.

⁷³ *NN* (1901): 117–118., 139–141; 1903. 209–213., 271–277.

⁷⁴ *NN* (1903): 228–230.

⁷⁵ *NN* (1902): 382–387.

⁷⁶ *NN* (1903): 143.

⁷⁷ *NN* (1901): 333–337.

⁷⁸ *NN* (1906): 161–166.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

After the turn of the 19th and 20th century it was again emphasized that there were some serious problems with high schools for girls, since they totally excluded women's practical and professional education for life, and concentrated only on the 'natural' female duties.⁸⁰ That is why the need for practical education became the focus again. Although there were no debates about secondary-level education for girls in *NN*, the journal claimed that public opinion, especially teachers and educationalists were concerned about the secondary-level school system for girls, but this was only mentioned in the review section of the journal.⁸¹

Besides reporting the debates and contributions in other journals, there were some articles which discussed the situation of girls' education in *NN* in the second half of the 1910s. It was argued that due to the changes in the family, public, and economic life, high schools for girls could not provide proper education for their students.⁸² That is why 'gymnasium' classes above high schools had been established in Budapest, and later the rural areas as well.⁸³ By 1912 it was generally admitted in *NN* that partly due to their deficiencies, the high schools for girls had become depopulated.⁸⁴ To solve this problem these schools had to provide technical or professional studies that could prepare the students to earn their livings later in life.⁸⁵ Headmistress Antonina de Gerando (f. 1845–1914) argued that the decrease in attendance happened because of some 'disadvantageous' steps.^{86–87} There was a general need to do something with high schools for girls, either to totally transform them into 'gymnasiums', or to technical schools.⁸⁸ It was again claimed that the system of secondary-level education for girls should be unified, because that would make it easier for students to move between the institutions, it would also reduce diversity of the curricula, and would postpone the decision about the choice of profession.⁸⁹ With reference to the unification of the whole system of women's education, it was emphasized that women could not be excluded from the decision making process in the field of women's education, since: „No decision should be made without women, since women know their own problems, needs and wishes the best. As this question is not only an 'educational question', but a 'woman question', women should be involved too.”⁹⁰

⁸⁰ *NN* (1911): 65–71.

⁸¹ *NN* (1911): 279–280.

⁸² *NN* (1912): 270–272.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *NN* (1912): 270–272., 1913. 4–12.

⁸⁵ *NN* (1913): 4–12., *NN* (1913): 228–234.

⁸⁶ The author did not specify what kind of 'disadvantageous' steps she meant.

⁸⁷ *NN* (1913): 4–12.

⁸⁸ *NN* (1913): 187–191.

⁸⁹ *NN* (1913): 187–191.

⁹⁰ Karolina Szigethy, „Egységes leányiskolák” (Unified schools for women) *NN* (1913): 187–191.

University and secondary-level education for girls was again connected,⁹¹ and it was stated that secondary institutions for girls had to prepare students for the university.⁹² Overall, it was claimed that not only higher elementary schools, but also high schools for girls and university education had to be reformed.⁹³ University education was again in the scope of attention in 1914/15, which was due to the twentieth anniversary of women's acceptance to universities in 1895.

Conclusion

In the paper I have summarized and analyzed the broader context of debates and perspectives about girls' schooling and learning with a focus on the provision of secondary-level education advanced in the pages of *NN*. My main questions included what the major topics and themes of the debate on girls' secondary-level education were, how these changed, and when and what new elements appeared in the debate. From my reading of *NN* it has become clear that there was a women's movement before the 1890s; after the Compromise in 1867 in Hungary. One of the main aims of the women's movement in Hungary that emerged from the 1870s was nation and class – oriented, and one of its major aims was to achieve women's right to education and to challenge the patriarchal dominance first in the field of education, then in the field of work, and lastly in the field of politics, which corresponded with the wider 'Western' practice.⁹⁴ Education, nation and class were strongly connected. Advocates of women's education argued that creating something that was 'specially and particularly Hungarian' was needed in Hungary for building the nation. Education was important from a class perspective too, because it meant prestige. Sending daughters to school was seen as a precondition to arrange for the girls' future, even if parents were aware for example of the dissatisfaction with secondary-level education for girls.

NN was important because it did not function as a mouth piece of narrowly defined group interests, but functioned as a real and successful forum, where fruitful and powerful social initiatives began. Based on this insight it may be argued that a major direction in continuing the research in this area this would be to ask in what way, how, and in which direction did *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* as part of the women's movement contribute to the social, cultural, political, and especially educational changes in Hungary at the time.

⁹¹ *NN* (1914): 359–371.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous greetings: the first international women's movement 1830–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

VISION AND DEBATE ON SCHOOLING AND LEARNING FOR WOMEN
IN THE JOURNAL NEMZETI NŐNEVELÉS (NATIONAL FEMALE
EDUCATION) (NN) (1879-1919)

This paper analyzes visions and debates over the 'woman question' in *Nemzeti Nőnevelés (National Female Education) (NN)* (1879-1919), the journal of women's education, with special emphasis on secondary-level education for girls. Secondary-level education for girls in Hungary was institutionalized in this period, the era of the Dual Monarchy. NN is important with respect to women's education and the women's movement, because before an 'organized' women's movement existed in Hungary, it was the forum where ideas and experiences about girls' education could be exchanged and where some social initiatives were mentioned for the first time. NN aimed to be a 'neutral' forum, which meant that very diverse authors could publish in it, regardless of their point of view, though NN had a clear set of values and perspectives as reference points. In this way NN represented various opinions that were present in the society at that time. In the analysis special emphasis is placed on the visions and debates about secondary-level education for girls, which characterized NN on the perspectives, on shaping and reforming the diverse school types and their functions within the system of secondary-level education for girls. The paper thus is intended to contribute to the existing literature by adding a more complex picture of and deeper insights into contemporary discourse and debate about the 'woman question', and women's secondary education.