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CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHURCH AND SCHOOL, MISSION OF LUTHERAN SCHOOLS IN THE HUNGARIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Under the communist regime, for roughly 40 years before 1989 no Lutheran educational institutions were left active in Hungary except for the Theological Faculty where pastors were trained. Then, gradually and simultaneously with the changes, the opening of church schools on secondary, primary and nursery level began.

We have come a long way since then. Today the Hungarian Lutheran church boasts 12 secondary, 10 primary, 22 nursery schools and 7 student halls where altogether 10.000 students are being educated with the help of 1.000 teachers.

At the beginning of the 1990s only 2 official Lutheran Religious Education books were available. By now we have advanced a lot: we have a full set of well-written RE books for all age groups, supported by outstanding Teacher's Books with lots of resources and ideas, for both school and congregational use. The focus of the RE lessons has gradually changed from "knowledge" (e.g. history of church) to "thinking" (e.g. ethical questions of the modern society).

Students and teachers regularly go on 'road shows' together, that is, every now and then school groups visit congregations to join in their Sunday worship and present life in their school with the help of modern technology (pps) as well as give a short literary or musical programme. This activity strengthens the connection between different generations and brings to life news from several sources church members have heard about their schools.

The employment of school pastors became compulsory in every Hungarian institution where more than 300 students are taught. These young pastors usually use modern technology (e.g. write a blog), play the guitar and speak the language of today's generation.

A 4-semester (120 hour) in-service training is offered to non-RE teachers by the Evangelical Lutheran Theological University where course members can learn the basics of Lutheran theology, gain a wider understanding of the Bible, get to know the history and basic teaching of other denominations and look at ethical questions, too, from a Biblical perspective.

My school's educational aims are based on 3 main principles:

1. providing students with comprehensive education and widespread general knowledge
2. preparing students for tertiary studies according to individual interest and talent
3. raising young Christians who become closely attached to their own denominations.

When we think about the last principle we tend to transfer responsibility to the school pastor or RE teachers. Instead, I think we have to consider how much we, teachers of other subjects can contribute to this.

Formal teaching has very little influence on students' personalities. If the reader thinks back to his past, I am sure he will be able to remember a teacher who had great influence on him.

The recollections are most probably not academic nature but moments when something else happened. When a teacher listened to him, talked to him as a person, or shared something from his own life with him.

As students spend most of their time at school, not at home, we must get involved in our students' life on a personal level, beyond lessons, in their free time, too. In my school the class teachers started a campaign called "one programme per month". It means that class teachers organize free-time programmes for their classes and every month they go somewhere together or do something together. It could be social work, hiking, or going to a cultural programme – the choices are wide. In this way they can get closer to each other and students and teachers can get to know each other really well. (This process, then, has a backwash effect on lessons, too: it is often easier to keep discipline in class!)

We cannot forget that we are all role models for our students. Whatever we do speaks more loudly than what we say. I wish that the motto of my school became a guide for Lutheran schools all around the world, for teachers (role-models) and students alike, and that we can live and work in a way that we can accomplish the following Bible verses:

*“How can a young person keep his way pure?
By living according to Your word” (Psalm 119,9)*