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## ***Education and Transition in East-Central Europe***

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**The State of Educational Research: Central European Silence and Controversies<sup>1</sup>**

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The idea of this special issue is to present a selection of essays about Central European Educational Research. It describes different positions in relation to how the autonomy and independence of educational research as a strategic field has been built and shaped by internal and foreign policies in the last three decades (Boltanski, 2011; Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). The ambition and the scope of this issue is to give an impression of the on-going development and debates of educational research in the region. Through a temporally reflected lens of the last thirty years the issue develops a discourse about challenges and constraints that face educational research within Central Europe.

It attempts to portray what have been the educational achievements of the so called “transition” in the former Soviet countries in Central Europe and what are the barriers to success. Transition is rather complex matter, and there is no generally accepted definition of the concept. On the contrary, the great number of approaches is being constantly developed, some of which referring back to the “turn” and scrutinize it from multiple perspectives, others trying to explore new possibilities and way of thinking. Transition as such emphasizes continuities from one phase to an other and at the same time highlights discontinuities, ruptures, particularities. Conflicts and controversies arisen soon after the transition may seem potentially contra-productive for development but in many cases set a ground in new possibilities. Transition, the change of educational systems and research achievements are three interacting phenomena having a uniquely differentiated impact on our comprehension of

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<sup>1</sup> This issue develops ideas presented at the “Views from Central Europe: Education and Transition” panel discussion at ECER 2015, Budapest conference. <http://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-2015-budapest/programme-central-events/eera-sessions/views-from-central-europe-education-transition/>

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reforms in each country presented in this volume. Seen in this light, the issue highlights the possible reasons lying behind the fact that educational research in Central Europe is reluctant to open up its discourses into a rather unstructured and diverse European and global space.

Papers selected intends to go beyond the structure of the traditional East-West division and address the current unequal distribution of the means of power as well as the reaction of educational researchers and research institutions on the strong centralizing effect of the international organization and NGOs (World Bank, European Commission, OECD, Open Society Foundation)

Predominantly focusing on national struggles of identity and legitimacy of the emerging institutions, the need of the European Commission to unify and compare national institutions reached the central European educational systems unprepared. As a result, it contributed to an on-going “institutional revolution”, to borrow a term from Kozma and Tőzsér.

Expressing some concerns about the inappropriateness of the EU policies Kozma and Tőzsér underlines that despite increasing unification the European accession paradoxically led to unforeseen nationalization. Reframing and reshaping administrative vocabularies in countries with ineffective and uncertain administration in several cases strengthened national power debates in educational research adding legitimacy to otherwise questionable issues. Under the pretext of decisions made on transnational scales the incapability of covering performance gaps, legitimising internal decisions and overcoming certain forms of fragmentation at national level seemed less problematic. Vlatka Domović and Vlasta Vizek Vidović nicely frames and locates this perspective in Croatian context by analysing the unification, standardization and professionalization of teacher education.

The selected authors took rather different positions to analyse how educational research as an autonomous research field is being built and maintained. After a brief outline of the history of education and educational research in a given country the authors illustrate from different angles the autonomous spaces of freedom and interest in established systems of educational research, in which scholars can delineate and rationally design. There is an overall concern among the contributors of the issue that the development of educational research in most countries studied was not formed based on its own principles. Educational research cannot be regarded as an autonomous, self regulated field with homogenous set of discursive practices, research topics and institutions. Expressing some concerns Hatos underlines that the subordinate position of educational research with several paternalistic circles above entails overt controversies and incoherence in the field (Archer, 1984). It unquestionably weakens the Central European positions in strategic design. Relying on recent advances in the study of research governance, it is possible to foresee that power which selectively resources research environments increasingly more and more discursively and contextually mediated (Ball, 2008; Ozga, 2012; Maroy, 2012).

Hence, we should not forget that the richness of its contextual variety, the multidisciplinary and in-between character of educational research in Central Europe might seem as the lack of capacity from one perspective, from an other, however, it can be regarded as possible resource.

There is an intended critical approach towards education and educational research throughout the issue. Firstly, papers can be considered critical in sense that they explore the critical capacity of educational research in the process of democratization of systems having undergone rapid political, economic and societal change between 1986-1994. Secondly the issue critically explores how the interplay of knowledge and research practices is anchored in diverse forms of political and academic narrativity.

In starting to think about the contribution of educational research to the democratization process of post-soviet countries it is worth considering the power of academic discourses. Zgaga brilliantly describes in his account how a single public debate organized to support the realization of the socialist ideological objectives contributed to the political and social reorganization of the country. A single colloquium held in the newly founded independent research institution in Ljubljana to clarify the nonsense of a fashionable concept in arts and humanities – “all-round-developed-personality” – generated an academic discourse leading to a political turmoil. By the same token, Kozma and Tőzsér introduce the reader into the Hungarian history of educational research where not a conceptual clarification but the introduction of a new concept “cultural city centre” opened up debates of basic significance about social mobility and education leading to the renewal of local communities. This initiative turned out to be the endorsement of grass-root level citizen activities eroding the system from inside.

The analysis of the role of educational research in the institutional democratisation shed light on the prevailing power of discourses (academic or political) in a region where institutions can only temporarily be stabilized. In an attempt to further elaborate how the interplay of knowledge and research practices is anchored in academic and political narrativity the authors reflect on the critical power of research communities. Zgaga argues that as opposed to times when kings disregard philosophers, as it was the case in most of post-soviet era, now we live in the period of disorientation, when knowledge, research and discourse is unquestionably relative. Emphasizing the relativity of research he underlines the never ending debates on quality criteria in the region in the light of the current neo-liberal agenda. In line with Simon, Zgaga problematizes assumptions about modern universities, and research communities highlighting that governmental and spiritual technologies are both involved in current higher educational settings. Therefore the world of universities can be considered as “Republic of scholars” with critical capabilities and responsibilities.

Tomusk set forth even stronger provocative position on the interplay of knowledge and research practices. In modern states Science, he speculates is practiced in various spaces (universities, research institutions, third sector organizations, think-tanks). Science, additionally, can build close relation to policies and can position its own interest as evidence based. Hence, as Tomusk suggests, scientific and political discourse becomes indistinguishable. Politics under the disguise of science enters academic spheres, whereas science resolves political issues. Tomusk stresses the critical capacities of scholarly circles in Central Europe to distinguish between voices speaking from different positions in the representation of bodiless institutions. Public engagement is, in his view, far more complex than popularizing science and research outcomes. It is portrayed as the responsibility and critical capacity of intellectuals exercised in a hope to navigate among discourses with the aim to open up prospects of social space.

Although public engagement, in the light of the studies, is of basic importance, grass-root activities, participation and public engagement experienced in the civil euphoria of the “transition” is forgotten and not in priority anymore in the light of the transformation of the modern state confronting with neo-liberal agenda and global financial crisis.

Focusing critical questions beyond national frameworks these studies draw attention to the fact that apart from the institutionalization process of research areas at national scenes relatively little attention is given to the current transformation of the educational research governance taken place at the European level. The authors has prevailingly addressed struggles of communities of scholars navigating among the fast altering vocabularies, perspectives and institutional settings of educational research at national scenes, with far less attention has been given to the ‘European Educational Research Space (Lawn & Lindgard, 2002; Novóa & Lawn, 2002; Popkewitz, 2000; Gretler, 2007). The emerging “networks of knowledge spaces” and mechanisms by which transnational spaces operate remain systematically lacking attention (Sheddon, 1993, 2014). While many of the countries studied are member of European associations (EERA, EARLI etc.) the hybrid character of these association with their capacity of knowledge exchange is mainly ignored. The essays selected offer limited insight into the dilemma educational researchers are now confronted with: the transformation of the modern state. It is insightful to understand the movement from government to governance in modern states that are increasingly embedded in convolving, conflating, interacting transnational policies and policy discourses. Following trajectories and layers of meaning at national and transnational scales is crucial to identify agents or institutions that are capable of critically opening up dialogues and offering opportunities of public engagement.

This indicates a need for more precise understanding of novel forms of research governance that can shape and reframe nation-centred hierarchical structures and the all-empowering Eu policies.

It is our hope that we succeeded in producing a volume that can provide an overview of the state, conditions, challenges and visions of educational research in a region facing rather similar conditions and challenges in the last 30 years. The core part of this reflection is to go beyond the unhelpful dichotomies – contribution to status quo versus endorsement of change, self-governance versus integration into transnational structures and open up a discussion towards new possibilities of thinking.

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*Thematic Article*



**Education in the whirlwinds of “transition”:  
On people who won freedom but must now  
learn how to enjoy it properly**

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**Abstract**

This article addresses the role of educational researchers in the process of the so-called transition in Slovenia. The concept of transition is critically reflected; we believe that understanding of transition processes needs to be installed in a broader historical, social and cultural context. This context is briefly outlined. Processes that have gradually led to a transition are tracked through some key public debates about educational issues that arose in the 1970s and 1980s. They contributed to preparing the ground for radical changes that occurred at the turn of the 1980s into the 1990s. In the final part, the question about the role of researchers in the post-transitional society is addressed. With analysis of the relationship between political discourse and academic discourse we claim that relativisation of the role of research and researchers is progressing in modern times.

**Keywords:** Slovenia, transition, education, educational policy, political vs. academic discourse

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## **Introduction**

For a social science researcher it is particularly exciting if he undertakes an analysis of a social process about which he has his own and direct experience. The greater this experience, the more exciting his work could be. In this respect, analysing the role of educational research over the period of social and political transition is really exciting for me. Neither personal experience nor the need to analyse a reality can't be deleted or suppressed. Therefore, I will not pretend to search for an "objective scientific truth" beyond subjectivity (no need to repeat here what has been explained by several contemporary theorists: why this concept is an illusion and how it is constructed). However, I do not intend to tell a "personal story", but to approach analytically to accumulated material as in books, articles and archives as well as in personal memory.

The direct challenge that I started this work was my participation at the roundtable on Central (or Eastern?)<sup>4</sup> European views on these issues, which was held under the ECER Conference 2015 in Budapest. In addition, long personal involvement in education, educational research and, last but not least, educational politics contributed importantly to increase motivation. Discussion with colleagues at the round table stressed the importance and the necessity of such reflection; inter alia, in this discussion some features of the so-called transition became visible which occurred at approximately the same way in all the countries of Central / Eastern Europe.

But my opinion is that it is precisely exposing the similarities what complicates the understanding of the so-called transition processes and contributes to the creation of questionable generalization and even prejudices. This problem can be seen in particular with authors who do not have their own experience on these processes: on their pictures cows in dark are often black. My opinion, therefore, is that when displaying common characteristics of a societal phenomenon as this one is more energy should be devoted to knowing and understanding diversities, particularities, oddities, paradoxes, and the like. In this article I will not discuss Central / Eastern Europe as a whole (as it was already mentioned, the very definition of Central / Eastern Europe is a challenging topic itself), but limit myself to my country: Slovenia. Since the approaches of colleagues who contribute to this issue are similar (i.e., country case studies), a reader may find herself or himself easiest way to draw a comprehensive image.

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<sup>4</sup> The concepts of Central and Eastern Europe seem quite simple in physical geography, but when the two are approached from a perspective of history, culture, politics, etc., we meet with a shocking complexity. In today's popular discourses of the western world, the term "Eastern Europe" is often synonymous with "the former communist countries" and includes a large part of that space which can also denote the concept of Central Europe. Sancta simplicitas.

### **The transition: Where does it start and where does it end?**

Transition: what a word! This is not a notion to be used only in an intellectual language; it also occurs in everyday conversations – at least in the so-called transition and post-transition societies. Simply, one would say that it is about change: a move from one site or position to another. But this is happening constantly in our life; we are constantly “in transition”. It appears, however, that the term we are talking about includes certain surplus: e.g. a move from “oppression” to “freedom”, from “dependence” to “independence”, etc. Throughout history, this was promised many times – and one of the results of these promises has been growing skepticism about the teleological fundamentals of human history. For a detailed discussion on this topic we do not have enough space here; however, some things must be said before we begin with the “Slovenian story”.

I am prone to write the word “transition” in inverted commas; it is very hard to use it in the sense in which it appears in the dominant discourses of our time. This word has its own contexts and its history. As it is rather broadly known, the intellectual use of the concept originates in political sciences around the 1960s (e.g. Lipset, 1959; Rustow, 1970) to define the transition from undemocratic (less democratic) to (more) democratic political order. However, in a few decades the concept “transited” from scientific language to media and general jargon. According to some authors, in particular if they come from “(post-)transition countries”, it flowed in the 1990s into a vast ideological swamp. It ended in “an ideology called ‘transitology’”, as Croatian philosopher Boris Buden says:

It is based on the cynical idea that people who won freedom through their own struggle must now learn how to enjoy it properly”. He is even more clear at the beginning of his article: “A curious set of metaphors marks the jargon of postcommunist transition: education for democracy, classrooms of democracy, democratic exams [...] This language of postcommunism discloses a paradox that points at what is probably the greatest scandal of recent history: those who proved their political maturity in the so-called ‘democratic revolutions’ of 1989–90 have become thereafter, overnight, children! (Buden, 2010: 18-19).

Changes that happened around the year 1990 in the countries of Central / Eastern Europe can be called “a transition”, but we also know that it was held by different routes and different logics, because they were a result of protracted and complex processes. Understanding the transition in Central / Eastern Europe is in irreconcilable conflict with the “holy simplicity”. As we begin with the analysis of the “transition” in Slovenia, we therefore need to devote a few paragraphs on the historical context while we will

follow the role of education and educational research in these processes in some details from the period after 1968.

### **A very brief outline of the history of education and educational research**

In the 19th century, the territory of today's Slovenia belonged to the Habsburg Empire; Slovenians – like some other nations in the region – were at least lucky enough to receive the impulses of the educational progress fostered by the Viennese court. The law on education of 1869 introduced a comprehensive elementary school which lasted eight years. Language of tuition was Slovenian; it can be understood as right which was later, during certain periods of the first half of the 20th century, unfortunately radically denied. After the First World War, a significant part of the national territory was excluded from the new state, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; this meant, among other things, an end to tuition in mother tongue (e.g. in that part of the territory that belonged to fascist Italy).

Sensitivity to the national language has been always very strong; whereas national identity could not be based on political and economic powers, their role was to a large extent substituted by culture. The perception and appreciation of institution like school (library etc.) has to be understood in this context. This aspect has been further strengthened during the Second World War, when the land was broken between three invaders who all denied the right to language. Strong resistance movement which acted at least in the first years of the war as a coalition of different anti-fascist political and ideological groups (this was a distinctive feature from resistance movements in the rest of Yugoslavia), acted with “a gun and a book” (Repe, 2015). During the war, newspapers and books were published and radio emitted, a professional theatre and even a scientific institute operated in (temporarily) liberated territories – and, of course, schools. Towards the end of the war and after, the political hegemony passed firmly into the hands of the Communist Party, later the League of Communists, as it was renamed after the conflict between Tito and Stalin in 1947.

Socialist Yugoslavia was a federation consisted of six republics. Power was quite decentralized; it was necessary not only because of significant differences in level of economic development but also because of differences in culture, language and the like. Most decisions about the educational system were in hands of the six Republic Ministries of Education and not at federal level; tuition was held in various languages and curricula differed between the republics. Of course, League of Communists was carefully awake regarding all political developments. But the League itself was a kind of a “federation” – union of its organizations in individual republics. Among them controversies occasionally encountered; they were hidden for the public but not always successfully. Due to the conflict with the Soviet Union and “Eastern Bloc” the country

was rather closed towards the east and open towards the west: the border towards Austria and Italy was open and visas were not required. Opposite to the Soviet "etatism" the theory and practice of "socialist self-management" was established and opposite to the "proletarian internationalism" the "Non-Aligned Movement" was promoted.

Thus, and in contrast to other socialist countries under the auspices of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia was characterized by a certain degree of "liberalism", particularly in its western part, which is bordered on two "capitalist" countries. This also affected the development of the education system and educational research. For example, the main foreign languages in schools were English and French, which enabled transmission of information and intellectual links with the West. However, the level of educational development was very different between different parts of the federation. The second half of 1960 was particularly marked by a "liberal" wave, which among other things allowed a million of Yugoslav workers (mainly from less developed regions) going to work in the countries of Western Europe.

It would be difficult to talk about educational research in the period before 1945 and immediately afterwards but already the 1950s brought about some changes in this area. In 1965, the Educational Research Institute in Ljubljana was established, the first institution whose primary purpose was to do research and support development of education. Iva Šegula, the second director of the Institute, explained the circumstances of the foundation by the fact that the "rapid development of the majority of the structural components of society, particularly the economy, made education 'obsolete' and clearly revealed the need for reform of education"; however, implementation of reform aims is not possible without "the necessary scientific procedures – thus, the pedagogic institutes or their variants are born" (Šegula, 1970: 5).

A guess that ideology completely dominated over intellectual life at that time becomes questionable when we begin to search in the archives. To take just one example: in 1966, Vlado Schmidt, the doyen of Slovenian educational sciences, discussed the "methodology of school reform" and tried to investigate how "social science, ideology, educational policy and direct participation of [socialist] self-managers [samoupravljavci]"<sup>5</sup> encroach in this field. He wrote:

Misguided position on the role of these factors can lead the designing of school reform astray. This question is for us the more interesting because there is no

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<sup>5</sup> Language of the "socialist self-government" or "self-management" is today understood by only a few; needless to say, it is also very difficult to translate. A "self-manager" or a "self-governor" (which sounds extremely strange) was anyone who was employed in the "organizations of associated labour", that is, the economy and public services. Small, normally family businesses and farming was permitted but excluded from this system.

doubt that the drafters of the 'Proposal' [i.e., a proposal for a new reform] gave wrong answer to it. [...] With their attitude to any science that was shown above they confessed loudly enough that sufficient ideological formation and socialist political orientation suffices to cope with the school reform while the scientific research is not necessary. We must admit that this view is only partly mistaken because the school reform is really an arena of ideology and politics – but also science (Schmidt, 1966: 99-100).

### **Ideology, liberal thought and education: Towards a critique of educational paradigm**

The end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s – in particular in Slovenia – was marked by the liberal trend in politics and public life. At the political level, it can be illustrated by the removal of the “hard” wing politicians in the League of Communists (the Ranković case), condemnation of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, searching for a “socialist self-managerial market model”, etc., In intellectual circles it was marked by more freedom (and more courage) of expression. During this time an internationally known and recognized philosophical and sociological group Praxis was very active, which organized high-profile international summer school on one of the islands in the Adriatic. In universities radical student movement grew up which was at least partly connected to similar movements in the West. It culminated in spring 1971 when students occupied the University of Ljubljana for ten days; one of their slogans was: Close down faculties (as they are now) – Open your mouth! Not only concern for democracy in general appeared on the public agenda, but also critique of the prevailing educational paradigm.

The most famous example in the field of educational research from this period is the so-called anthropological interpretation of the foundations of education, as developed and presented by the then director of the Educational Institute Franc Pediček. This interpretation expressed a need which should be inherent to the mission of any research institute: the need for a critical examination of dominant paradigms and seeking new ones. Of course, we can't ignore that such a search could quickly come into conflict with the dominant ideology. He presented his views at a national educational conference in 1972 (a provocation which ended with a political anathema and dismissal from the post of the director, but not from a position of researcher at the Institute), which may be briefly very well summarized by the following passage:

If we run the risk [...] of a trial definition of education, we might say: Education appears only as a function of a man in a particular social reality. [...] In other words, education as a true paideia can never appear in well-known frameworks of 'societies-institutions' and 'societies-ideas', because in these societies the

fundamental pedagogical relation man – man is often abolished in rough and veiled ways (Pediček, 2013: 27).

The “liberal” wave, which began in the second half of the 1960s, was stopped in the early 1970s and after the constitutional reform of 1974 it seemed that all the levers of power are firmly back in the hands of the League of Communists. The “liberal” Slovenian Prime Minister Stane Kavčič was deposed (1972); critical intellectual circles were controlled, the student movement was diminished. However, this period left some important outcomes. At the level of the political system it was the new constitution, which strengthened the decentralised model of government. At the level of intellectual life these were new experiences that have shaped a new generation, as well as new institutions that have survived over the next decade (critical journal, book editions, cultural centres, etc.).

These processes had very important effects also in education. In the circles of the League of Communists a plan for a new and thorough educational reform was formed, which is known as career-oriented education (official translation of that time). This was the last educational reform of the ancien régime; it was an ideological response to the socially critical and oppositional movements of the time, as well as a response to the increasingly tight economic challenges in the Federation. On one side, education was identified as the culprit for the “mismatch in the labour market”, as we would call it today, in the language of the European Commission and the OECD; on the other hand it aimed at stopping “socially unacceptable phenomena” as were activities by rebellious students and critical intelligence.

It would be difficult to argue that the design of the “oriented” education was completely ideological product, in which the research circles would have absolutely no words. A glance at the bibliography of that time is sufficient to reject such an argument. Certainly it is true that this reform, on the one hand, was launched as a prime political project; on the other hand, its creators were not totally blind for the trends which at that time appeared in the international field of educational sciences and educational policies. The theoretical concept of the Zagreb professor and politician Stipe Šuvar (holder of the new conception) on the integration of “school” and “factory” could be in some elements linked to the strategies that arose in the period after 1968 in the western world – and which were later gradually leading to what today is often marked as a “neoliberal” paradigm in education: education being reduced to a tool of economics (and political power). It seems paradoxical, but only at a glance.

According to this doctrine the following issues should be ensured in particular in education policy:

1. Equal starting opportunities for all – and this is a quality primary school and initial vocational education;
2. Selection regarding further education based on strict criteria for the quality of knowledge and skills;
3. The more generous approach to job training on the basis of demonstrated capability, gained work and self-managerial experiences. (Ela Ulrich Atena [the then Minister for Education], see Milharčič-Hladnik and Šušteršič 1986).

Five years later, the Law on Career-Oriented Education passed the Slovenian Assembly (1980); its main objectives were formulated as follows:

Oriented education is education for work and self-management, and results from the need of associated labour, social development and all-round personality development in socialist self-managing society. [...] Basic social aim of the career-oriented education is to create a free, responsible, creative, all-round developed personality in socialist self-managing society (Zakon 1980).

But the realization of these objectives and the law as a whole became not only the main – and extremely hot – topic in the field of political and expert discussion on education, but also one of those topics that later gradually lead to a “transition”. In this discussion educational researchers occupied a special position. The most acutely controversy took place in 1985, at a research colloquium entitled “All-round developed personality?”. The colloquium was organized in the framework of two research projects, which were implemented at Pedagogical Institute, and contributions to it were published in the journal *Problemi* (1985). Reasons for the colloquium were primarily in the necessity of a critical confrontation with the supporting reform category “all-round developed personality” (ADP) which was a conglomerate of ideology and pedagogical theory.

The starting point of the colloquium was that ADP is “the fundamental category of socialist pedagogy”, which is considered as “self-evident and unquestionable aim of the entire educational activity”. Therefore, “a thorough theoretical and conceptual analysis needed”. This concept is the “unstructured and vague” and “contains germs of potential ideologisation, it forces into pragmatic interpretations, depending on the current balance of power and partial interests”. This was reflected and exacerbated with controversies in connection with the reform of the career-oriented education. It abolished, for example, the general secondary school (gymnasium) and a final examination; there were only “career-oriented” (professional) secondary schools. These policy ideas led to harsh criticism by some academic fora and individual professors: schools, which would prepare students for university studies, were abolished. A law on

higher education was abolished as well and universities were legally regulated together with “oriented” secondary schools.

Various “informal circles”, especially gymnasias and university professors, were very critical of these reform plans and they wrote a petition (1982; nearly 1,000 signatures), addressed to the political authorities with a request to stop the reform. It was a great surprise and strong provocation to the current political establishment. On the other hand, within this movement a group of young researchers (the so-called School Field group) began systematically to engage in a critical analysis of education in general. In addition to traditional pedagogy [Pädagogik] they promoted sociological, anthropological, philosophical, historical, etc. approaches. The colloquium was thus part of this trend and has raised a lot of dust because it touched on one of the fundamental dogmas of the socialist pedagogy. To illustrate, let's look at just a few spoken and written observations:

[ADP] acts as a norm in whose name it is possible to take action against those who have not developed to the full, as an argument which can be used against anyone and to anything precisely because of its abstract character, once as an anti-intellectual slogan and, for example, against classical education, “gray” theory, etc., the other time as “anti-biologistic” support against the penetration of psychoanalysis in education. (E. Bahovec, Vsestranska ...: 3)

All-round developed personality means in the pedagogical and social discourse that it practically means nothing; it functions so that practically doesn't mean anything else but completely conformable personality, personality that is fully integrated in society. This is a real base; what is protruded from the social conformity, it is one-dimensionality or it is called so. (S. Žižek, *ibid.*: 13)

Even a cursory review of ADP definitions in textbooks, dictionaries, etc. in lands and real socialism and in our law on career-oriented education shows one key point: ADP acts always together with the category of “work as a fundamental value”. The aim, which is to be achieved through the establishment of ADP is therefore unambiguous: diligence, obedience, etc. (V. Miheljak, *ibid.*: 16)

If Stalin proclaimed that the class struggle tightens in the development of socialist society, today we learn that educational dictatorship exacerbates with the maturation of socialism. (T. Mastnak, *ibid.*: 43)

Colloquium had considerable repercussions in the media and brought much trouble to organizers. Nevertheless, anything serious happened to participants of the colloquium. One of the reasons was that at this time a new “liberal wave” (1986) already started in Slovenia, which led towards a “descent from power” of the Slovenian League of



Communists and towards pluralisation of the political space. In 1990 Slovenian Communists left the Yugoslav Congress; it took place in parallel with the formation of independent state and free parliamentary elections (1991). This was the “transition process”; its logic was quite different from other parts of the former common state, which were pushed in the fire of war in the coming years.

In general, the second half of the 1980s was very dynamic in the field of educational research and development. In the context of the new “liberal wave”, the results of the colloquium on the ADP encouraged free and critical discussion on almost all key issues of the national education system in the future. Criticisms of the concept of oriented education reform resulted in the fact that the law on education was thoroughly revised already in the socialist Assembly. Even before the end of the 1980s, therefore, there were important developments and changes in the education system. Gymnasium was reintroduced and its further development was closely linked with international trends (e.g. International Baccalaureate Organisation – IBO). Preparation work for the introduction of a new national external examination (Matura) was launched. Universities were given the mandate to draft a new law on higher education. A number of innovations sprung in primary education; initial teacher education was extended from 2 to 4 years, with a possibility to continue studies at the master’s and doctoral level. “Ideological” subjects were abolished from schools. A debate on private education in schools and kindergartens began, etc. Many teachers and educators took part in these turbulent developments but researchers from institutes and universities also played an extremely important role.

By the end-1990s all the key new democratic institutions were in place; last but not least, the new education system. Slovenia was preparing to enter the European Union. According to definitions this was the period of “transition”. Soon, the country found itself in the “post-transition” and we were faced with new problems.

### **Transition: political vs. academic discourse**

There are two discourses which substantially determinate education and educational policy: political discourse and academic discourse. These two discourses are structurally different, to a large extent incompatible, yet both are interdependent. Periods when they are in mutual conflict are alternating with periods of cooperation. A necessary condition that science and research can actually “benefit society” is the existence of “enlightened” politics. The problem, however, is that this is not a sufficient condition; much also depends on science itself and its own enlightenment. The more the politics is losing the enlightened character, the more questionable is “usefulness” of research and it is becoming increasingly urgent that critical and provocative notes are strengthened in

academic discourse, otherwise it can be reduced to an sterile apology. However, this is what the “non-enlightened” political discourse doesn’t like.

Did the “transition” lead to an enlightened politics? In fact, we should ask whether enlightened policy exists today? In its core, today’s politics is less dependent on the national power relations, and increasingly on the world free market. It appears that the only science that politics entrusts today is economics, or rather its specific current that believes in the infallibility of the market and the effectiveness of austerity measures. This shift has had important consequences for the area of education in the recent period.

It is required from today’s research to be relevant and that its results benefit. It is hard to dispute such a claim; it sounds so “rational” and “normal”: what else should be required from research institutions, funded by taxpayers’ money? However, if you put the claim under a microscope, some tough questions occur. E.g. “relevance” and “benefit” are categories that presuppose an interest but the classical academic requirement has been that search for truth requires impartiality. How to solve the contradiction that this opens? Let us help with two famous names of the past.

At the first dawn of European culture, Plato wrote: „Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one [...], cities will never have rest from their evils, – nor the human race” (Plato, 1998: Book V:18). Over two thousand years later, at the end of the European Enlightenment of the 18th century, Kant answered him as follows:

That kings should philosophise, or philosophers become kings, is not to be expected. But neither is it to be desired; for the possession of power is inevitably fatal to the free exercise of reason. But it is absolutely indispensable, for their enlightenment as to the full significance of their vocations, that both kings and sovereign nations [...] should not allow the class of philosophers to disappear, nor forbid the expression of their opinions, but should allow them to speak openly (Kant, 1917: 160).

Today, the relationship between the “rulers” and “thinkers” plots in a new way, as the separation between them is increasingly vague and unclear. Rulers assume the role of thinkers and thinkers assume the role of rulers – but this is not the realization of Plato’s utopia. Belgian researcher Maarten Simons speaks of “the hybrid character of the modern university housing both governmental and spiritual technologies” (Simons, 2007: 439). This is what makes the relationship between research (science) and politics (governance) more complex than it was in the past. Simons mentions that academic institutions can act as the “Republic of Scholars” who go beyond the state and civil society and their only practical and pragmatic interests. But even great leaders publish

collected works – in a democracy – after the expiry of the mandate they work in universities.

Let us return to the requirement of the relevance and usefulness of research. I think that even in the categories of "Republic of Scholars" the importance of practical relevance of research can't be denied; only dirty details of what we understand by "relevance" remains open. Relevance and usefulness of the so-called "useless academic theories" can be confirmed also in a negative way: in a way of critical analysis of the present and the past. The practical significance of social sciences "rests on shaping the conditions for the future" and, therefore, social sciences "have to be forward looking" (Teichler, 2003: 171). This is the point at which social research comes in close touch to politics, activism and alternative social practices. The mixture of these three components is anything but harmless: "Research can be future-conscious if it raises the critical questions and counter-hypothesis to the assumption of the actors" (Teichler, 2003: 181). Herein lies the source of the problem.

The more the dividing line between "philosophizing" and "governance" becomes loose, the more we have to deal with another shade of relativity of research. In the context of the so-called transitional and post-transitional societies this relativity often occurs with a particular justification, e.g.: "Democracy requires pluralism of political parties – and what's wrong, if you ask for pluralism among researchers and experts?" This trend will be briefly outlined by a controversy which occurred in Slovenia in the middle of the previous decade. Fifteen years after the so-called transition and democratization of education the country was faced with a necessity to reflect on situation and to decide about further developments.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education issued a document that would indicate the direction for further development of the education system. But unlike the documents from the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, this document came to the public without mentioning the authors who have written it as well as without any prior consultation with research and developmental institutions. Therefore, a public question was addressed to the Ministry: Who are the authors and on which bases their claims were justified? Two answers were given: according to the first names were not given, because the Ministry don't want to expose these experts to public criticism; on the other hand, it was said that the documents was written by the ministry officials themselves as it is their duty.

This has led to public controversy, in which one of the participants pointed out that the argument of the Ministry is not new at all:

We used it before some twenty years ago [i.e., around 1985]. But then [...] it was a time when the only real profession [i.e. expertise] was considered Marxist, or more

precisely, diamat [i.e. dialectical materialism] pedagogy. At the time, this thesis opened a space of freedom for a variety of so-called “bourgeois theories” and philosophical views on education. Today, the repetition of the argument in circumstances where it was raised as an argument in defence of the measures taken [at the Ministry], is leading to a complete relativism. It wants to create an impression that all professional [i.e., expert] views and ideas are equal, equally well-grounded, and that it therefore does not matter which of them educational policy takes into account (Kodelja, 2005).

Similar examples can definitely be found in other places. Clearly, the issue here is not the kind of the “pre-transition” conflict, in which “kings” periodically suspended “philosophers”. No, today we live in a democracy and we act on a free market. This case reminds us that we are today faced with the phenomenon of the relativity of research. Researchers offer their products “on the market” and “customers” are free to choose. This issue extends beyond the edges of this contribution; it raises the question of education and the role of researchers in the “post-transition”. We will save it for a next opportunity.

## **Conclusion**

The iconic Slovenian weekly magazine *Mladina* recently posted two flags across the whole page (15.1.2016: 3): one with a white cross on a red square and the other with a red cross on a white square. Under the first it is said “Dreams 1991” and the second “Dreams 2016”. Really eloquent. Around 1991 it was not rare that the national future was announced with a metaphor of “Slovenian Switzerland”. And the today’s role of charity organisations that are not besieged only by migrants from the Middle East, but also by the poor locals, was unthinkable before a quarter of a century.

Particularly in small countries, international context is required to understand the so-called transition. It helps that it is possible to imagine the transition from “here” to “there”. I realized this very early. In 1971, I was a first year student at the University of Ljubljana and I visited a foreign university for a first time. It was in Amsterdam where I came by hitchhiking, met some students and stayed for three weeks with them. Foreign university was so different from home; but also my former country, Yugoslavia, was so different from the “Eastern bloc”. Unlike the countries of the “Eastern bloc”, we needed neither a visa nor permission to travel to the West. The problem was money and, therefore, “academic pilgrimage” was a scarce commodity. Mobility was allowed, but not enabled. My last academic journey from the period of “former regime” led me to a conference on perestroika in Oxford. It was in spring 1990: four colleagues were travelling by an old car and with containers of cheap Yugoslav gasoline in the trunk. During a stop somewhere close to Frankfurt, German police surprised us and took it for

security reasons. But we didn't pay any fine. They were very friendly; for the whole of Europe these were interesting times, full of expectations.

Then the 1990s came. With the disintegration of a country with 21 million inhabitants its education system also decayed. Yet, just before its sad end Yugoslavia negotiated an entry in the EU Tempus programme. At this watershed period, Slovenia, which avoided fiery cauldron, was the only one in the region who received significant funding from the Tempus programme. This was the first great new opportunity: we used it to thoroughly strengthen academic cooperation in Europe, and it indirectly contributed a lot to the development of a new national system. It was only at the beginning of 2000, this programme included other countries in the region, which was now renamed as – the Western Balkans.

The transformation of education in this region was also held at a different logic than in the countries of the former “Eastern Bloc”. It is not only the context of the wars that have devastated the greater part of the region. From a relatively uniform system of the former state (at least) seven national systems were created; today their comparability and compatibility is provided rather by some of the “common European principles” than by a common past. However, European and/or international cooperation is developed to quite different levels from system to system and from one educational institution to another; it typically depends on the level of European integration which individual countries have achieved. International mobility has increased, but it largely differs across countries and sub-regions. To travel to the “West” today, many people need a visa, which was unknown under the “former regime”. On the other hand, in the autumn of 2015 Slovenia set the razor wire fence on the border with Croatia. The symbolic dimension of this action goes far beyond the problem of migrants. All this creates mixed feelings. Even in the field of education. In the twenty-five years, the distance between the top and below-average education increased significantly. This could be optimistically rated as an achievement, if it had not sounded so cynical.

Are there unfulfilled hopes? Of course, there are. On the one hand, it is always the case with human desires that some are not realistic at all. But the number of those who have had experience – extensive enough – of the former system is declining according to natural laws; thereby their unfulfilled hopes are vanishing. They will soon be covered with unmet hopes of the new generation. Paradoxically: it raises optimism.

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*Thematic Article*



**Education and Transition in Hungary:  
Policy and Research in the Process of  
Transformation, 1988--2004**

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**Abstract**

The cross-border co-operations in education and their monitoring studies started as late as 1990 in Hungary. Border regions and their neighbourhood were closed areas during the Cold War era and were opened up only after the political turn of 1989/90. In the first phase of the transition (1990-93) school principals and policy makers initiated cross-border co-operations between schools operated both sides of the state borders. All the more since ethnic Hungarians were living and attending school in both sides of the state border. In the second phase of the transition (1993-2004), those grass-root co-operations turned to be government policy to support the Hungarian communities and their educations and institutions in Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia, later (after the Balkan war) in Serbia and Croatia as well. Those efforts caused, however, serious objections on behalf of the neighbouring governments which felt that Hungary wanted to influence their educational as well as minority policies. 2004 changed the scene completely. Hungary and most of her neighbours have joined the EU while others rushed for it. The EU, however, does not have a direct policy for the national and ethnic communities living in minority status. The grass-root institutions of the Hungarian communities having been established during the turbulent years of 1990-93 face a new dilemma. They should be part of the national education systems of their majority countries (supported by the EU)—or the would-be marginalised.

**Keywords:** educational history, educational change, politics of education; Central and Eastern Europe, political transition, Hungary

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## **Introduction**

System change is one of the key terms in this study. By returning to our previous writings (Kozma, 2009) we attempt to divide this dramatic transformation into three distinct phases. These are as follows: the turn, the formation of the new foreign policy and internal affairs (the strengthening of state power) and the phase of integration into the new international — moreover — supranational organisations. This new period is still on-going nowadays; in case of the East Central European countries this primarily means integration into the European Union in tandem with integration into the new economic order.

## **Narratives**

The events of the system change were named according to the advocates' social and party positions and their current interests. Out of these, the expressions regime change or system change are the most typically used (Kozma, 1992). However, today - 20 years later, there are more in-depth differences as well. Nowadays, very few people understand the so called reform communists' intention behind the term regime change: arriving at the decision to leave the Soviet sphere of influence and the transition to the Western structures. (World Bank, NATO, European Community) As for those who said system change, they put emphasis on the event itself, that everything changed here, or rather that it should (have) change(d).

But in this case, it is not merely the difference of words but also the re-evaluation of the past 20 years. While the narrative above hints a uniform process, in reality it is far from true. In political discourses different phases of transformation are distinguished. According to one comprehension the system change has two phases and these two phases are bisected precisely by the turn. The preliminary phase begins with the third phase of the Kádár regime – the second part of the 1980s – and the phase of implementation from the 1989/1990 turn up until nowadays. This approach was general in Hungary until the European Union accession. For some time it was also a widespread approach that the system change ended with the EU accession

However, we suppose that the system change has three phases instead of two. Besides the first and second phase of the system change – the ones before and after the EU accession – we propose a third, which in the following we will refer to as the phase of the turn. And in the following we refer to it as the phase of the turn. The phrase is not entirely unknown in political science. Recently, the phrases 'transition' and 'transformation' are differentiated by experts. Thus, the German scientific literary works deployed it first (Fuchs, 2002). In the last 20 years the phrase „transformation” has been systematically used in the scientific literature of political science. However, the meaning



of phase of 'the turn' is completely new. Those who emphasise the turn, are the ones who want to contrast the Kádár regime with the era following it. Those however, who want to emphasise continuity – because it is in their interest – do not distinguish the phase of the turn. This, as we have stated already, was the political interest as well. Because if the system change is not a sweeping change, it is more the result of the deep-seated processes, and the position of those who have initiated these processes is still legitimate. We place the emphasis accordingly on the change, the transformation and the turn and in accordance with this we reckon that the turn is the first (short) but decisive phase in our political history. It represents the entire 20th century's windup and it marks the beginning of a new era.

This study is composed of three chapters. We compartmentalised the study according to the periods in Hungary's system changes. In each chapter we characterised; the period, its education policy and lastly its educational research. Naturally, we could not review the entirety of the educational research. To this end, we highlighted educational research from periods that are closely tied to the system change's given period.

### **Education policy and research in the first phase of the system change**

#### *The first phase of the system change, 1988-1994*

We came to this realization ('*kairos*', a significant moment or the 'peak' of time, see Kozma, 2009) in our research series that we conducted on the local, civil-initiative higher education institutions. The birth and career of non-governmental founded institutions warned that there was a moment over the course of the system change, when institution founding became relevant and was enabled. If, however, someone had missed the right moment it was in vain to experiment with the founding of a new institution. In the narratives of institution founding the story-tellers always used the term: 'birth'. This signalled how dramatically the system change began.

It began with laws (concerning the churches, the local governments) that, by nowadays, have become „politically alienated”. These laws disturbed state governance and integration into international organisations. Since then, new parties have emerged and the new generation of voters can no longer appreciate them. What connects these events is the appropriate moment. All historical transformations have such a moment, an introductory phase. All human actions, political acts have their own threefold „life stages” from the beginning to implementation and completion. The turn is the starting moment of the system change.

The phase of the turn lasted for only 1-2 years; in Hungary from circa the autumn of 1988 until the end of 1993. We all partook in it: education policy makers, researchers

and experts. Our decisions in education policies, our research results and our expert reports were strongly influenced by 'the moment'. We have not yet picked up on this dimension thoroughly enough. In the following section, we demonstrate the transformation in the education policies.

*Education policy in the first phase of the system change*

As they were drawing near the turn, the reform Communists attempted to democratise the Kádár-regime. They returned to the thoughts of the 1930s third way, such as direct democracy, self-government or agrarian socialism. The turn rendered these attempts superfluous very suddenly. The tension that had developed in between the political party's different centres of power by the 1980s ceased to exist through the birth of the multiparty system. This meant that critical education research became needless, which was previously considered the critique of the system.

The most prominent change in education policy was the ceasing of the state school-monopoly. The local municipalities could take the maintenance of their institutions into their own hands. The education policy became a local political issue all at once, which no longer required research but implementation. Schools were to be developed locally and other options of non-formal learning, treating them as one unit and also locating the possible sources of financing locally. The once all-powerful counties were radically weakened and were no longer centres of power. Due to this, educational research and development's traditional financial contributors, clients and supporters dropped out. With this, those designers and experts were paralysed who had previously designed and developed education in a traditional manner.

*Educational research in the first phase of the system change*

The critique of education - as one of the (latent) critique of the system – was initiated and represented by the sociologists (and here let us not ask questions such as who were they, for the reason that the story of sociological restart would lead us astray.) The sociological critique of education only partially targeted the classrooms and the consequences of its professional activities (Ferge, 1969, Kozma, 1975). The critique of the education system's role in social mobility was much more prominent. Pieces of regional research contributed to this with a new perspective, these examined if a specific institution was in the right position in its social space. These pieces of research demonstrated how the dysfunctions of education are often caused by their incongruent location in social space, and also the inadequate communication with the communities they were intended for.

These pieces of research (Forray & Kozma, 2011) did not only lead to the critique of the institutions but rather the critique of the structure (education system) as well as the thoughts of its alternative renewal. In these notions (the so-called 'cultural city centre' concept) the renewal of education was no longer discussed, but rather the renewal of specific regional-social community. Not with the aid of economic policy which was the monopoly of the ruling party but with an alternative method, for example through the development of education and social leisure activities. This way the development of education had become an alternative of developing towns and villages. This led to the development of democracy and gave way to political system change.

The research of cross-border cooperation is the other new field in educational research. The areas located along the borders were, up to that point, considered stagnating areas all over Europe, pre-eminently in Central and Eastern Europe (Lang, 2005). The previous pieces of educational research considered the areas that are located along the border stagnating (Kozma, 1988). The areas' former centres - pulled apart by State borders - were not only stagnating but degenerating, often losing their status cities. Now however, throughout the turn the borders were opened and the former economic, educational and cultural cooperations could be revived, primarily in Hungary's Western and Southern borders. These were the first pieces of cross-border educational research (Forray & Pribersky, 1992; Imre, 1995). These pieces of research focused on the student- and teacher movement which had started on both sides of the border, primarily because of language learning (German language). They have attempted to outline the method of education development that is based on cross-border cooperation, the potential of organising the services of education more rationally, as the European cooperation is fulfilled.

This was later elevated to the level of Euro-region politics. The Western areas of Hungary entered the Alps-Adriatic Euroregion whereas the North Eastern areas entered the Carpathians Euroregion. If, in the future, we were to analyse these cooperations its advantages and disadvantages, strong points and weaknesses would surely come to light. (These were based on the cooperation between the directors of the institutes, avoided difficult questions such as the nationality question, economic rivalry, and the lack of capital flow etc.)

### **Educational policy and research in the second phase of the system change**

#### *The second phase of the system change, 1994-2004*

The system change – as numerous other social-political changes in the history of Central and Eastern Europe (including Hungary) – was initiated from the outside and also from the 'top'. That is to say, in this case it derived from the radical change in international

power relations. The position of Central and Eastern Europe was once again enhanced for a short period of time due to the fact that 'Berlin walls' of different forms and ranks stretched over this area (it is only logical that since these walls were located in this area, their demolition also had to take place here). Concerning Hungary, (as well as her neighbours) the dilemma manifested in the question of where to belong in a political and economic sense. Which national 'structure' – centre of power, which allegiance - to integrate into.

The radical disassembly of the previous isolation took place – compared to what we could sense in the Kádár regime (as a slow transformation processes) – in reality happened with dramatic pace. (see also what's written on 'the moment'). By nowadays it is more visible – twenty years after – how the isolation that we had lived and grown up in (that was forced on us as a result of belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence as well as the Cold War situation) lead to: on the one hand, the feeling of captivity; on the other hand, served as a protective shield. Hungary, a country that over the course of the 20th century had already split from an international level integration (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) now once again lost its political and economic 'safeguard duties'. That is to say, its reliable market that it could (willy-nilly) produce to; the loss of which meant the sudden facing of new, previously unexperienced challenges. In day to day life all this meant: on the one hand, sudden losses (unemployment, the appreciation and depreciation of loans, the shift in social distance, the increase in economic distance, new forms of social tension) were experienced. On the other hand, it lead to the appearance of a kind of consumer society (or merely its Eastern European accidental light) and its experience somehow eased the endurance of the other, harsher reality.

We can date the system change's second phase – at least in the case of Hungary – approximately began with the third quarter of the 1990s (the Socialist Government's 1994 re-election) and lasted until the EU accession in 2004, that is one decade. This decade was characterised by the country's quest for identity regarding the foreign policy and the external sector. In the system change's first – euphoric – phase the public opinion (including many experts as well) was in the popular fallacy that: in Hungary, in the late stage of the Kádár-regime (the 1980s) those structures developed, that would ease or at least make the integration into the West possible. ('back to Europe' was the, by nowadays, almost forgotten governmental motto). Now (in the second half of the 1990s) it turned out that this all qualifies as 'merely a game' in contrast to the harsh reality of the market economy, in which both the international politics and the government policies are different from what they seemed to be from the outside. (In one of its episodic but relevant long-term decisions was that not even the 'friends' of the new government – much as Hungary was celebrated previously by the Western European

public opinion – could invite Hungary into the European Economic Community nor could they help with the remitting of the country's huge debts).

We could characterise the society and the governmental (internal) politics in the second phase of the system change by the fight for its identity; searching for a new identity that would relate differently to what transpired in the Kádár regime (or rather to the power distribution that had developed within it). When observed from a distance, these two directions can be markedly separated. The politicians and opinion formers belonging to one direction expected the integration of society's new political identity into the new structures. They had hoped – as experienced advocates of *realpolitik* – that the judgement of Hungary would be positive if they merged into the new actualities as obediently (that is to say: into the NATO, the European Union and the world economic processes) as it had into the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact. Those people, who would take the foreign policy in this direction, spoke mostly from previous experience – as practitioners of *realpolitik*. They knew that 'small countries' had very limited latitudes when negotiating with 'big countries.'

The other political direction was also rooted in *realpolitik*, when looking around Central Europe one could see something else: the search for new national identities, new (in many cases traditional) values, turning to the past and the revival of folklorism. As a response to this, Hungary's new identity was in its historical past, with the revival of values and establishments of the lost; pre-war eras. This search for identity encountered the interests and inquiries of wider (electoral) layers; and could often allude to the memorable sins of the Soviet sphere of influence (especially 1956) as well as the Trianon peace treaty behind it.

This, naturally, was only the match between the political and intellectual groups. Behind this was the weakened – over the course of the turn – state ordinance as well as the now apparent – due to the sudden anomie – and vivacious civil sphere's match - even if the outcome (state power) was easily predictable. The turn's reminiscences (municipalities, attempts of self-government) were still existent – whereas the new realities (international relations) would require strong and increasingly stronger state ordinance. The 'ferry country' aspect, concerning internal affairs (social policy, parliamentary policy) were characterised by this democratic division of power over the decades between 1994 and 2004. That is, the back and forth between the groups of the state ordinance and the society's (by then) more or less strengthening, non-state sphere.

From these groups many are brought up when we run back over this era, twenty years later. From these, in the present context, we emphasize only two: the churches (although they were significantly weaker structurally during the Kádár regime, but they more or less managed to preserve their hidden prestige) and the local area self-organised groups

that were now rallied as a result of the weakening of the regional administration and the empowerment of local authorities. Further non-governmental operators also appeared in this decade – in Hungary (moreover, almost even competitively) as well as all over throughout East-Central Europe. From these we have to emphasise the international economic organisations. Their appearance was once celebrated – new, previously unprecedented shops, workshops, manufacturing plants; as well as banks, service provider offices and the services themselves. It only became apparent over the course of the decade how deeply these influenced the fight that the – once feared and despised – state apparatus had fought to regain its influence over the system change. They regained what they had lost with the privatisation of the economy and the democratisation of society (as well as their legitimacy that they had lost as a consequence of breaking away from the Soviet sphere of influence and still could not gain back with the integration into the new structures).

*Education policy in the second phase of the system change*

From all the changes in education policy in this context we highlight the changes in management. The education management that was formed in the second phase of the system change also carried on with the fight between the state and the civil sphere. However, in this sphere unique traditions had to be changed or could be referenced. Those who thought of education policy as a means of integrating into the new structures referenced international examples and advocated the implementation of international solutions. These 'international' management models and techniques were primarily Anglo-Saxon inspired, reflected their reality and thus fitted the deregulation policies – which was suggested by the quickening of the neoliberal market economy and the social policy adapting to it. In terms of Hungary it meant local governments and the (more or less) evolving, bottom-up initiated self-governed education management. In this management model the governance did not – could not – have a voice in the processes (of teaching-learning). Instead, it could regulate the entrance exams (applications for admission, preliminaries) and school-leaving exams (exams, evaluations and degrees) more precisely and with more technical support.

Those who held the notion of new identity important referred to traditions that defined education, not only in Hungary but all over Europe. And what were now, in the influential era of neoliberal market economy, they tried to weaken wherever they could, still it was prominent from the management through the certification system to the teacher training. These traditions all pointed to a centralised education management in which it is not the market, but rather the state that regulates the textbook supply as well as the (regional) supply for those still attending of compulsory school. that is to say:

such (national) curricula, teaching objectives and accordingly trained teachers which and who would carry a defined message.

*Educational research in the second phase of the system change*

Educational research had to search for and find possibilities for continued existence and cooperation in this educational policy operating medium. Doing all this with the advancement of the expansion (Mérleg 2006-2010) with the education system's newer, higher-ranking types of institutions, the investigation of the higher education.

*Cross-border co-operations.* Now, the investigation of cross-border co-operation's political background – in the second, turbulent phase of the system change – was provided by the presumed or actual opportunities of Hungarian-speaking communities neighbouring Hungary. In the moment of the turn, cross-border co -operations could have been seen as spontaneous. Now, after a few years the cross-border co-operations became enabled as a result of the new situation. This new political situation meant the destruction of rigid, dictatorial systems along the borders and gave way to the easier transportation and communication of those living there, and also the support of communities bordering Hungary. The intent was there – although with a different intensity – in the era of both governments (socialist or civil) because the 'minority question' meant a type of priority for all governments.

The mentioned co-operations were conducted along almost all sections of the borders. (co-operations with Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia) Few or scarcely documented co-operations appeared with Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. Based on the previous pieces of research, as a form of continuation to those on the southern border section – in the triangle of Szeged, Szabadka and Temesvár – there were already studies on the topic of cross-border cooperation (Imre, 1995). The cross-border co-operations with Ukraine and Romania appeared as new elements of the study. (For later studies that detail the co-operations across the border sections of Hungary, Ukraine and Slovakia see: Forray & Kozma 2002: 128-143, 144-167).

*Education of minorities.* It was similarly important to note that a new type of 'town pair' cooperation was (either) formed or revived, with a major town on this side of the border and one on the far side. (e.g. the cooperation of: Nagyvárad and Debrecen, Nyíregyháza and Beregszász, Miskolc and Kassa, Szeged and Szabadka or even Temesvár, Győr and Pozsony) With advances in the investigation it was outlined more clearly that; with the decrease in the importance of the state borders (and its effects) certain regional centres – most prominently Vienna and Budapest – catchment area and how it overwrites smaller regional centres' ability to attract, e.g. Szeged or Debrecen, Győr or Kassa (Forray & Kozma, 2002: 144-167).

More important was however the observation of the cross-border educational areas' formation, such areas where it could be supposed that over time (and with the fulfillment of the system change) educational cooperations could be established. Besides the aforementioned Szeged—Szabadka—Temesvár area the areas between Beregszász—Szatmárnémeti—Nyíregyháza and Debrecen—Nagyvárad could be outlined. During the studies in these areas (the turn of decade in 1990/2000) a type of educational cooperation was initiated more or less by the locals. It was not difficult to go on with this line of thought and vision the positive continuation of this process. That is, in the aforementioned areas not only the institutions but also its users – teachers and students will wish to cooperate (Süli-Zakar, 2005).

Pieces of research conducted on higher education. Work continued in two directions. Firstly, in the Carpathian Basin – later in a broader area: Central Europe – the observation of the national communities' education and the situation of educational policy (Kozma et al., 2004). Secondly, the observation of the higher education that gained an important and new role in the respective regions' rebirth (Kozma et al., 2001). From these pieces of research it changed into the research of the cross-border higher education and science support. This piece of research yielded many – often unexpected, almost surprising – results.

The cross-border co-operations – that is to say the development and management (funding) of Hungarian education across the border – in light of the studies, in all cases investigated, had proven to be government assistance. Those national minorities could form their own autonomous schooling, which had been granted funds from the 'mother countries'. These funds had to manifest in different forms; since in the given period of the system change the countries were not preparing for co-operation, but the formation of their new political identities. And in this phase of identity searching state education fulfilled an important role everywhere – it seemed that the educational separations that were aiding the national minorities with their political autonomy were unwanted. Thus the funds took private forms. All the more so as the system changing countries' shaken governments were, for a long time, searching for their legitimacies, and were not in the position of preventing the flourishing private educational initiatives (at least in the sphere of higher education.)

*Church engagement.* Higher education's 'regionalisation' and 'privatisation' was still conducted in a half legitimate form. The newly formed states neighbouring Hungary have not yet re-regulated their higher education; whereas Romania, which was not a new state, began the establishment of a new political system, with underdeveloped higher education law regulation.. This half legitimate situation enabled that, within the



unfolding minority education, from the local participants the most organised could have an active role. And these were the Churches.

All case studies show that minority churches became influential figures of national communities' education everywhere. (As in the cases of the Lithuanian Polish church, the Italian Austrian Catholic church, or a Romanian or Ukrainian Hungarian Protestant church.) This development can be easily traced back to a simple reason. With the support of foreign capital, foreign higher education in transitional districts (and here we primarily need to think of the influence of Soros György's foundation), or with the support of organisations that still owned – or already owned – some sort of immovable property. For (higher) education these lots were needed. Thus, these seemingly regional, national communities could double their resources spent on the development of higher education. The teachers (and their education) were usually financed by the mother country; while the adherent lots were provided by the local churches.

*Comparative educational research.* The research of cross-border educational cooperations brought about other revelations as well. One such revelation was that the whole of Europe is filled with minority education although they are not visible. Namely due to the fact that state statistics successfully cover them, hide them from investigation. (Mostly the lingual distribution, and official or half-official statistics of foreign language learning make them visible). That is to say, the case is not as it was originally – as the researchers had initially supposed (and as a direct consequence, the public opinion to this very day believes) that the national communities fight for autonomous education is the phenomenon of the Carpathian Basin or Central Europe. The case is much rather that national minority communities are everywhere. Europe, as a whole, is the housing of national minority groups that continued to exist even after the 19th century's nation-state wave only each of their level of identity is unique. We have an (official) understanding only of the educational efforts of those (minority) groups that already or still have their political identities. The cultural or lingual communal awareness is not identical to this, it can be regarded as a sort of private matter. However, education in Europe is not a private matter but rather state policy. Participation in education from the side of the citizen is a question of political affiliation and its expression.

The other revelation of cross-border educational research was – based on these – that the system change, that went off along the boundary between Europe's Western and Eastern parts – did not only shake a few politicians in a few counties, as some political forces wanted people to believe. No, the whole of Europe has been shaken. A sign of this was that national communities also started the formulation of their political identities, those who have not yet reached this point. This meant that they also started the formulation of their educational autonomy. Pieces of cross-border research – that were

once based on the almost forgotten regional educational research and in the moment of the turn were brought back to life as border region co-operations – hence now introduced international phenomena and transformations; became a type of comparative studies. And this is the most important event of the system change's second phase: the regional educational research that was enclosed into a respective country or region, narrowed down to a very provincial way, became conjoined with the international regions' comparative research.

### **Education policy and educational research in the third phase of the system change**

#### *The third phase of the system change, 2004-*

The third phase of the system change is typically dated from 2004, when Hungary – alongside nine other, mostly East-Central European countries gained accession to the EU. Many people even claimed that this decisive moment was the aim of the system change – or at least considered it as its historical effect then (Halász, 2003); others had established a number of expectations that later on proved to be mere illusions. There is no doubt however, that from many perspectives it ended a preceding transitional phase (not only in the history of Hungary) – at the same time we cannot proclaim that the system change's long drawn-out historical period is actually over with this. We can justly regard 2004 as a borderline. That turbulent phase of the system change, that we can date from the middle of the 1990s, the Socialists' re-election (1994), ended. From 2004 many visible changes had occurred.

Hungary's search for identity – not (only) in the field of world politics, but primarily in the European, in greater detail, the Central European scene – ended in 2004 for a long time. Many doubted and still doubt the future of the European Union – while others would like to transform it – however there is no doubt that it ended the East-Central European countries' race for the restoration of their identities or their re-formation. The facts and requirements (subsidies and tenders, financial support and regulations) of EU membership almost immediately settled the tensions – and their media coverage – between Hungary and her neighbours. The explanation of which was mainly symbolic: the clear determination and international communication of separation, autonomy and the right to dispose.

At the same time, its EU membership provided opportunity for new rivalries on the scene of Central European diplomacy (as well as economic and political): the race for the access of EU funds (to those symbolic and concrete). This race has proven to be a much more familiar field – mainly to the political group, that in its youth had already been (to some extent) socialised in the previously integration of an imperial nature (the Soviet sphere of interest). In the previous phases of the system change could still go on – on the

scene of internal affairs – between those who wanted the country's identity rebuilt based on traditions, and those who searched legitimacy in the integration into the new „international structures”.

This dilemma ended with 2004, unequivocally in favour of those who saw Hungary's position (as realistic) in Central Europe within the imperial structures. (On imperial affiliation see Ferguson, 2005: 9-28).

Furthermore, 2004 ended another dilemma: the dilemma of the state strapotenza that was shaken as a result of the system change. The state power (public authorities, organisations) that served the empire before the system change, over the system change lost their power and influence over political and economic processes. (It was exactly this loss of influence that led to the civil euphoria, that we have previously named the first phase of the system change and referred to it as a result of the turn.) In the second phase of the system change – precisely sensibly afterwards – such a system of 'checks and balances' was formed in Hungary, that we could call exemplary in the system of democracies; but which resulted in the increasingly incapable state administration. At the same time, the European Union – due to its formation and its very nature – manifested in the form of an increasingly powerful bureaucracy in Central Europe; to many provisions of the Commission in Brussels legitimacy had to be/could be obtained or organised subsequently. A country with ineffective and uncertain bureaucracy thus could not communicate with the European Union in accordance, it just drifted along.

The result of which was an original illegitimacy. Many resolutions of the EU could become legitimised through the member states adapting them into their own legal systems or accepting them as their own decisions. Meanwhile it has proved easy to refer to the European Union, especially in politically uncomfortable situations. Thus, the EU membership consistently provided the opportunity of the inward validation of counties still lacking legitimacy, since with Brussels – and the different institutions of the European Union – the path led almost exclusively through them. Not only were the state authorities in need of reorganisation – which were shaken in the previous phases of the system change and have been fighting with different non-state initiatives – but also (re)shape them with the use of the EU model, which led to the birth of another, huge bureaucracy. (e.g. besides the ministries, using [originally] the French model of offices that could directly communicate with the production and economic sphere, allocate sources etc.) The notion of the remodeling of administrative classifications (counties vs. regions) also arose.

Many regulations of the system change's previous phases – especially the first phase's sudden recrudescence – had proven to be increasingly uncomfortable; it was no longer simply about the solidification of state authority, but also with reference to Brussels.

Self-government – ever since its formation – was a strong counterweight to central government, it stood in the way of swift and effective governance (that is to say: centralised decision-making) and was becoming increasingly unserviceable. (that was reflected in its funding problems more than anything else) After 2004 it was seemingly simple to question or even terminate them with reference to Brussels. (Behind the debates on the reorganisation of public administration (based on the French model) this state intention could also be discovered). In the previous phase of the system change the strong political reasoning against governmental centralisation could still be the well-known (neo)liberal principle on the small and weak 'state' (that is one of the well-known key terms of international capital intrusion, involvement). After 2004 this neoliberal key term appears from time to time in the reasoning of politicians; in reality it was evident that from these governmental rationalisations the public bodies arose strengthened.

*Education policy in the third phase of the system change*

The system of half-legitimacies – that was formed in an earlier phase of the system change – strengthened in educational policy with the EU accession. With the accession the way was open to funding resources that were only accessible to member states; and not education policy. (Education is, according to the Maastricht Treaty, based on the American model and belongs to the internal affairs of the respective country, and the Commission in Brussels cannot interfere with it.) At the same time this is one of the areas, in which the 'institutional revolution', that the Commission in Brussels claims as its own ideology, that could be effectively and swiftly moved forward. The present regulation enables only anaemic 'European studies', not even studies but merely their proposals. On the other hand, the member states – Hungary by all means – would have needed, would need these development funds in the field of education that they cannot obtain only if they connect their development somehow to the vocational training. This significantly empowered those attempts in education that placed vocational training above general training.

As a result of the EU accession attempts appeared and strengthened that wanted to 'Europeanise' the education in some form, by developing international programmes and frameworks. (e.g. the framework of a unified evaluation systems, European credit transfer system etc.) In an earlier phase of the system change it could be a question for debate, how in contrast to the continental tradition to what extent can education be saturated with liberal principles. In an earlier phase of the system change it could have been a question for debate, how in contrast to the continental tradition to what extent can education be saturated with liberal principles (institution funding, the commercialisation of textbook printing, the freedom of choice in schooling, local

curricula etc.) These principles and the educational management based on these, became increasingly functionless with the EU accession. (Those unification attempts that Brussels called for (e.g. the so called Bologna system) would have required a strong and stable educational governance.

The EU accession has also calmed down certain situations in educational policy, settled some debate questions that caused serious disturbance in a previous phase of the system change. It was only a matter of time before the education management fragmentation and the local municipalities' education management separateness decreased or disappeared. The question of the education system was also permanently settled, it remained unified and was not partitioned into four-, six-, and eight-year education secondary schools. It is only a matter of time before the unifications, that were well-advanced in higher education throughout Europe – reach secondary education. (in the form of international matriculation).

#### *Educational research in the third phase of the system change*

By then, educational research had become a routine, even though the underlying, original philosophy was not always a shared view. The Hungarian representatives of this line of research (e.g. Imre, 1995, 2005; Balázs, 2005) employed this approach/method of educational research as a type of technique. Here we would like to mention an instance of cross-border cooperation that was conducted most intensely in the area of Győr and Pozsony, and is most closely linked to the upswing of the automotive industry (Rechnitzer, 2011). Out of the pieces of educational research conducted in the third phase of the system change we will highlight two below. One is the examining of the Bologna process and the other is the appearance of the so called learning regions.

*Minority (higher) education in the Bologna process.* The Bologna process is the 2000s huge attempt at the formation of a unified, European higher education (euphemistically they said/say the 'European Higher Education Area') – in its essence, it meant state higher education.

In higher education, that is managed and funded on a member state level, to create a type of European alternative to the quickly commercialising (mostly of American origin) and globally dominating, market-organised higher education. This (the 'European Higher Education Area') would have served as a safeguard duty and among the participants it would have meant increasing unification and 'nationalisation'. The Bologna process envisioned unified state higher education, in which it did not search for nor did it appoint training places (and roles) following secondary education through the different grass-root initiatives in regional scope of authority (Teichler, 2004).

Here, the Bologna process crashed with those higher education initiatives that appeared all over Europe during the 1900s and constituted as local, regional, communal minority, ecclesiastic, voluntary or as other forms of private higher education. Facing this colourful and stirring reality of minority education of Europe in the 1990s (see Kozma et al., 2004) the Bologna process put these once initiated (at the dawn of the system change) 'newborn' institutions. Based on the study of its 'career' (see Pataki & Kozma, 2011) – that was more than a decade old – it had to choose from the following options. If they integrate into the unifying state higher education due to EU pressure: on the one hand, they gradually lose their original social momentum and their local-regional initiators; on the other hand, with state recognition they are gradually stabilised and become official (legitimate). If they do not integrate – resisting the state pressure forcing the Bologna process – they lose (do not gain) state recognition, the necessary accreditation. In this case, they can remain as local (regional, communal, civil initiated) institutions but can no longer fulfil their higher education function, as designed by the founders. Is there a way out of this dilemma?

Some of the cases cited above suggest a possible escape route: the alternative accreditation. In non-state higher education (market, private, and higher education of a commercial nature) this practise has been known before. If accreditation is not exclusive – one can have recourse to alternative quality assurances for recognition and standardization – then the institution be 'valid' while staying outside the Bologna process. This, however – along with the non-state higher education – is not a road followed in Europe – especially not in the freshly admitted East-Central European states. The only network that developed such an alternative accreditation is the Roman Catholic Church. The question is how in the future they could fit these alternative accreditations along the borders, the higher education institutions stretching over the borders into their states' higher education system – that are still very much adjusted to the Bologna process.

*Learning regions.* Another novelty of the 2000s was the appearance – in the field of educational research - of the concept of the so called 'learning regions'. The concept itself was worked out in the US in the mid-1990s (Florida, 1995). It involved the observation that in certain regions (large geographic regions) the sign of development, the motor of development with the appearance of innovative activities. (for example the media industry) In the United States the conception was one out many that competed with one another in terms of regional development. The concept of the learning region gained its real substrate in Europe, where state control was more influential and the European Union is designed as a single state (state bureaucracy). Richard Florida became a Pope-like figure in the field of alternative territorial development, and by the early 2000s the concept of the 'learning region' became an alternative method of

development besides the understanding of the nation states' (in many cases even against it).

The learning region – that is presently displayed (assigned) in a European fashion by the member states and to this reason they also compete with one another – due to its very nature and dynamics fits economic forces the most, more so than social ones, and it fits the political forces the least. They can thus intersect and cross state borders that the member states and the European Union recognise as sacrosanct, and propose the possibility of a future regionalisation, moreover, from an economic perspective.

Another concept of the learning region stands closer to and suits the initial beliefs of the domestic educational researchers better. In this alternative conception (European Centre, 2003) the learning regions are not great economic zones in which production, education and research are intertwined and developed into a network. But rather areas in which we can find social pressure and political will for the transformation – for 'learning' in a broader, more comprehensive sense – which could also lead to the revitalisation of a respective region (Benke, 2016). The pieces of research and debates concerning learning regions were most prominent and flourishing in the 2000s (Rutten & Boekema, 2007). By the end of the decade the attention of international researchers gradually shifted to other topics. The official assignation of learning regions became the task of the state and gained European Union legitimacy. Despite this, we can say that this is the most modern form of educational cooperation. It is such a concept that proposes the revitalisation of territorial and social communities with the help of cultural and educational initiatives (Benke et al., 2016).

### **Lessons Learnt**

Our overview above has a number of lessons on the relations between the Hungarian system change, education policy and educational research.

The political scientific literature on the transformation Eastern Europe is not very extensive. From this piece of scientific literature it is bountiful to note the experience that the researchers gained through the reunification of Germany. The research on the transformation of Eastern and Central Europe still remains to be seen.

The development of education policy and educational research is usually not included in this transformational process. They rather demonstrate the developments as if they were arbitrary. In reality these developments, as we see them today, were not formed based on their own principle. We can understand them once we attempt to place the eastern European education policies and research innovations back into the political circumstances they were born in.

In Hungary the system change did not have two phases, as we have previously thought. Instead, we can describe it in three phases (1988-1994: the turn; 1994-2004: the pathfinding, 2004-nowadays: the phase of European integration). The characteristics of education policy and educational research reflect these phases in Hungary. In the first phase the new topics of educational research included (among others) municipal school funding and cross-border co-operations. The typical research topics of the second phase were minority education, grass-root initiatives in higher education and the characteristics of Central European co-operations. From the educational research of the third phase we highlighted the problems of the Bologna process as well as the pieces of research conducted on learning regions.

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*Thematic Article*



**Romanian applied educational research on the way of becoming a strategic action field: fluctuations, inconsistencies and vicious circles**

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**Abstract**

The article approaches the Romanian educational research of the last two decades in the context of evolutions in the Romanian education and society. After concluding that as a strategic action field educational research is not yet institutionalized I have attempted to explain this weakness relating it to other fields and by analyzing the dynamics of educational research agenda on the data base published by the single state owned educational agency: Institute of Educational Sciences. This content analysis underlines several contradictions in evidence based policy-design which one had to add to the other sources of inconsistencies in educational policies mentioned in the article. Although many recommendations can be made starting from my results I have highlighted two very concrete and of high emergency: recognition for educational research as a specific domain and an improved position for research in the training and practice of teachers at all levels.

**Keywords:** educational research, Romania, strategic action field, content analysis, policy-design

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## **Introduction**

Being involved in educational research in Romania for more than a decade I often have the impression that, though many good quality research is being done in the area, those who are spending effort in this domain are somehow marginal relative to both the educationalists and the social science researchers, on the one hand, and the results of their research inform in a disappointing measure the educational policy debates, on the other. Among the many recent research that could have been valuable inputs for policy design in education one could mention Fartușnic (2014) on the issue of school finance, Surdu (2011) with a report on the issue of teachers' absenteeism in Roma schools, Mureșan (2014) on the impact of educational aspirations and achievements on demographic phenomena or Ion and Iucu (2014) who directly investigate the uses of research in the practice of teaching, to mention only a few that have drew my attention recently. Although a simple online search identified more than 100 educational research articles focusing on Romanian published between 2011 and the middle of 2015 in academic journals most of them have little or no impact on the way educational policies are devised and implemented.

However, there is in education and in educational research in Romanian much more than meets the eye and the purpose of explaining the actual state, especially considering the bleak situation of Romanian education, needs a more careful analysis.

With this paper I took advantage of the invitation from the Hungarian Educational Research Journal to elaborate on the topic of educational research in my own country following a presentation at the EERA Conference in Budapest in September 2015 to reflect a little deeper on the state of the field in my country. For this aim I have described the context of Romanian education and its post-1990 evolution, I have conceptualized education and educational research using the framework of strategic action field and explored the potential for longitudinal description of applied research in the area using as data source the research project list published by the Institute of Educational Sciences, an educational research body which is subordinate to the Romanian Ministry of Education. Concretely, I have investigated the longitudinal dynamics of educational research topics, correlating them with changes in governments and in political ideology, looking for eventual clues into what determines what topics gain the attention of those placed in the center of policy-making: the Government.

The scope of the descriptions and conclusions deduced from my subsequent analyzes are limited as are the data used to described the educational policy agenda or the state of education and policy making. Nevertheless, a discussion of Romanian educational policy cannot be started without understanding the main trends of the past in educational processes and outcomes.

## The context: Romanian education post-1990

In 1990 Romanian education was wearing all the features of Soviet style education: complete participation in compulsory education had been achieved, almost full literacy, large segments of post-lower secondary education were enrolled in vocational education and training designed for the necessities of the large industrial sector of the country (Florescu, 2016) while access to higher education was kept under strict control making the transition to the tertiary degrees one of the most difficult task faced by youngsters and their families looking for a socially rewarding educational destination (Reisz & Stock, 2006).

The two and a half decades that have passed since then witnessed dramatic changes in the Romanian educational landscape.

**1. The virtual disappearance of vocational education and training in the initial education.** Although at the beginning Romanian educational system could have been described at least partially as a dual one, in which large segments of pre-tertiary students had learned in forms of vocational training and apprenticeships gradually, during the first two decades after 1990, these forms of education designed for the necessities of specific industries lost their appeal and significance. As Romania suffered a massive deindustrialization forms of IVET became more and more obsolete, void of any relevance for the world of labor. After a constant decline in quality mainly these forms of pre-tertiary education have been abolished in 2009. In 2012 though, part of a re-industrialization push, they have been reinstated again but the enrollment figures prove a low demand.

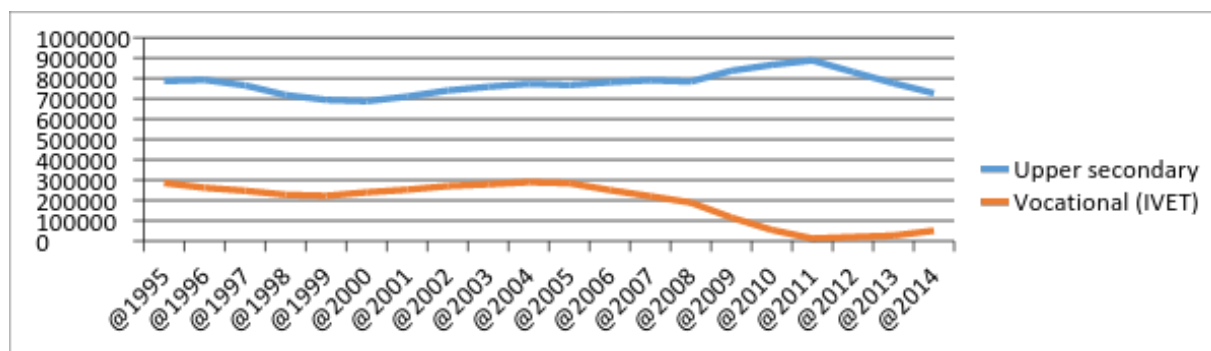
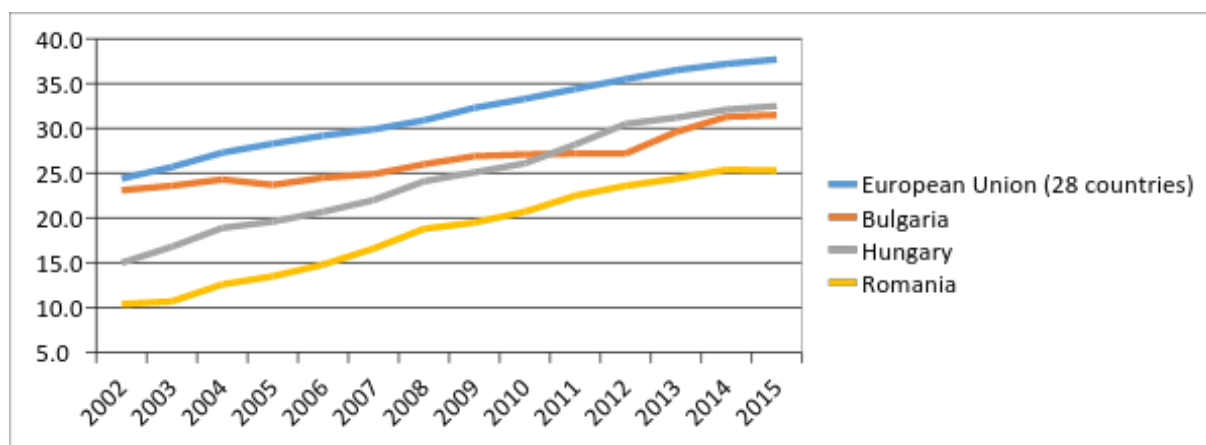


Figure 1. Students enrolled in general theoretical upper secondary schools as compared to enrollment in IVET at the upper secondary level (Romanian Statistical Office, Tempo Online)

**2. Massification of tertiary education.** While IVET was dying, enrollments in the tertiary education were skyrocketing. From 1998 to 2009 the number of ISCED 5 and 6 students enrolled in Romanian universities increased more than threefold, a rate of increase that has been rarely met in any other European country. According to analyzes

regarding the expansion of higher education, demand for credentialized degrees in Social Sciences, Law and Business and Administration explain much of the expansion and the subsequent contraction, entailed by the saturation of demand in these domains after 2010. Percentage of young adults (25-34 years) that have graduated tertiary education reached in 2015 25,3% which is still rather far from the EU average (37,7%) but is much higher than the starting levels.



*Figure 2. Rate (%) of tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) graduates among 25-34 years old (Eurostat)*

These first two dynamics highlight the transformation of Romanian socio-economic system from what Soskice and Hall (Hall & Soskice, 2001) might have called a rather coordinated market economy to a regime of liberal market economy. Compared to the situation two decades back one cannot notice that at least concerning education the features fit the models of liberal market economy sketched in the types of capitalism literature: lack of articulation of school and work including weak IVET and difficult transition from school to work (although overall unemployment is low, the rate of activity is unusually low in Romania and the transition from school to work rather difficult in Romania: for instance the employment rate of youth graduates 5 years after graduation are among the lowest in EU - around 66% in Romania and 77%, respectively in EU-27 in 2014 according to the Labor Force Survey of 2009; according to the Labor Force Survey of 2009, the length of job search for a graduate in Romania is 10 months compared to the EU 27 average of 6,5 months - see Eurostat) and large enrollment figures in tertiary education to which one can add the poignantly low levels of participation in lifelong learning (see Hall & Soskice, 2001). This is important as the public's discontents regarding the education refer most often to the weak connects between the worlds of school and that of work.

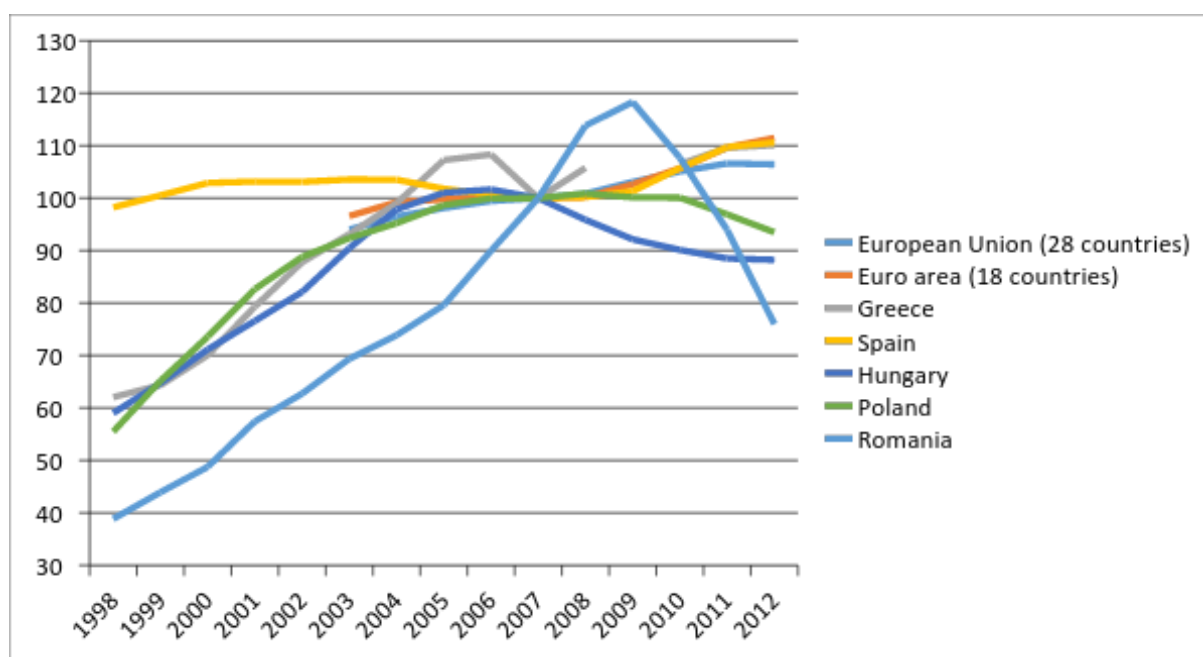


Figure 3. Enrollments in ISCED 5 and 6 (2007=100)

**3. Mediocre outcomes of education.** Over the last decades the indicators of results and efficacy of the educational system had been rather disappointing: in all the OECD measurements of student competencies in which Romania participated the country's results had been below the OECD average and without clear signs of improvement (OECD, 2007, 2010, 2013; Preda, 2009). Measures of educational efficacy – dropout rates, early leaving of education have been shaped during the same interval after the evolution of the public financing of education. This is linked to the following feature of Romanian education.

**4. Inconsistent educational policies and weak state support for the educational system.** After 1990 the major buzzword in Romanian education became `reform` which actually introduced an era of frequent changes justified by the state of the system and motivated by the visions and interests of stakeholders. Two major Reform Laws shaped the era, in 1995 and 2011 both passed by right-wing majorities that pushed for liberal reforms in education. Both were subsequently followed by the efforts of the left-wing governments to limit the effects of the Reform laws in order to guard the especially the interests of staff employed in the public educational sector. Ironically, reform in education was attempted with stingy resource provision, measured as proportions of public budget allocated to education. Though defenders of educational policies argued constantly that in nominal terms the amount of public resources used for education has increased significantly, statistic that has been even more augmented by the constant decline of the educational demography, the reality is that Romania has always been in

Europe during the last two decades, among the countries which provided the least amount of funding for education as percent of GDP. There is no surprise that the outcomes of education in Romania are not among the best at the European level given the constant shifts in policy priorities and the underfunding which produces a largely unmotivated and negatively selected teaching staff.

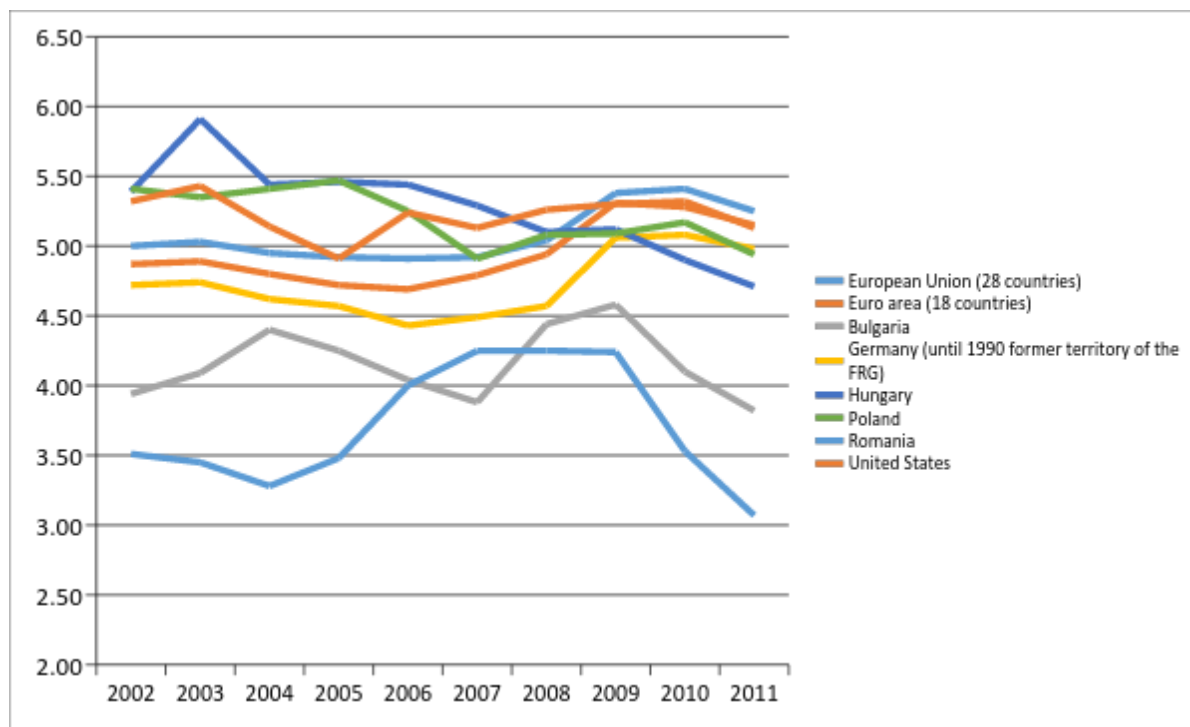


Figure 4. Expenditure on education as % of GDP or public expenditure (Eurostat; Numbers for Romania for 2006 and 2008 interpolated by the author)

But the inconsistencies of educational policy, and their fluctuations along government allegiances lead us notice another trait of decision making in the area, which is revealing about the place of research, being mainly driven by ideology instead of scientific evidence. Various political majorities acted upon education following the interests of their constituencies without much consideration for hard data, impact evaluations, ex-ante evaluations, randomized trials a.s.o. This points to one of the theses of my paper, which is the weak institutionalization of educational research as a strategic action field. Strategic action fields are autonomous, self-regulated, areas of contention (debates) in policy design, according to Fligstein and McAdam (2011) which is the case of the general educational policy discussion in Romania but cannot be used as a description for the educational research sphere which is not clearly institutionalized - with identity, internal rules and organizations. Being this absence of institutionalization stressed I will turn to my working hypothesis concerning the evolution of the educational research agenda in Romania, which I consider as a reflection of the policy agenda, on the one



hand, and of the general neoliberal agenda that comes together with the influence of the large donor organizations like the World Bank, OECD or the European Union.

*Main actors in Romanian educational research*

The field of policy oriented educational research is as diverse as one can assume upon a shallow analysis. However, after a more thorough assessment one can identify 5 main categories of actors doing applied research in the area:

1. The Romanian Government through its research infrastructure, in this case the Institute for Educational Sciences. As is stated on the IES's homepage: *'it is a national research, development, innovation and training institution in the domains of education and youth, a unit that is linked to the Ministry of Education...'* (author's own translation). The Institute employs tens of researchers with expertise in education and related areas and carries on research tasks drawn by the Ministry of Education. The major international educational measurements in which Romania takes part (PISA, TIMMS etc.) are coordinated locally by the IES.
2. International donor organizations, especially the World Bank, UNICEF and the European Commission implement their own research agenda in Romania pursuing their education policy goals. For this objective usually they contract independent foreign and indigenous experts who conduct research along the institutions' objectives. Major educational policy reforms in Romania have been pushed forward by these organizations usually relying on own needs analyses, impact assessments a.s.o. In several occasions these reforms have been accused of being too much in the direction of a neoliberal, market driven education. Such were the change to a per-capita financing system of higher education in the 90s, the social inclusion programs of the Romanian governments designed with the help of the World Bank and European Commission but also the various EU programs directed towards improving access to education and improvement of nation's human resources.
3. Several powerful NGOs active in the area of children's rights and well being, mainly international ones - like Save the Children, Open Society Institute - but local ones also, benefitting from large international donations - like Romani Criss - have been pushing for policy changes in various area employing among other things research results. The welfare of children and youth from some disadvantaged groups - those with disabilities, Roma, children of transnational families - largely overlooked in the mainstream agenda is promoted by these organizations.

4. Romanian universities and the institutes affiliated to the Romanian Academy of Sciences follow their own researches on topics which are most often less related to the issues of immediacy pursued by the other actors. Often the research agenda is one of catching up with the international research topics and paradigms. Academic research in the area is fruitful sometimes by giving independent input to decision makers but also by generating a pool of independent experts that can cooperate easily with the other actors.
5. Beyond the above mentioned four categories we can pick a fifth one, that of local and international consultancy which provides the research skills and expertise needed by some of the main educational policy actors to design programs and policies via baseline surveys a.s.o.

Among the five classes of actors relationships are complex and not seldom competitive and/or even load with conflicts. The government has to face often the pressures towards policy changes from both the international donors and the large NGOs which, on their behalf have also a strenuous relationship, marked every now and then by alliances followed by separations. On the other hand it may happen quite frequently that academics raise critical voices against current policies, both at national and international level. This is more the case the less the academic research relies on national funds but on international one obtained through researchers' own networks.

### **Educational research - a field that emerges with great difficulty**

Although educational research is being made by so many actors, educational research per se has very difficult time emerging as a strategic action field in the sense of Fligstein and McAdam. We can immediately gather some clues pointing into that direction. One important indicator is the absence of a national association of educationalists in Romania not to mention one of educational researchers. Some niche organizations really exist - like that of Romanian elementary school teachers (*Asociația Română a Învățătorilor*) or that of Romanian Pedagogists from Covasna and Harghita - these two being the most salient after a shallow web search. Even more symptomatic for the absence of self-organizing capacity of educational field in Romania is that the main educational journal of Romania - *Tribuna Învățământului* - does not have on its web page any link to any independent educational organization but of state ones. The absence of such professional organization highlights the weak professionalization of the education jobs and stresses its' weak self-regulatory capacity, its feeble professional identity and low levels of social capital (connectedness and trust) within the professional body. There is no wonder then that compared to the situation of other European nations, Romania is represented in the EERA (European Educational Research Association) by the University of Bucharest while most of other countries have national educational

associations as affiliates of EERA. Causes for this faintness are manifolds but can be easily revealed to insiders in the systems.

First, like most other policy domains, *Romanian education as a field is a subordinate one* meaning it has above itself more authoritative circles - that of government first, then that of political parties with their competitions, that of trade unions, of media and experts. Education is a field of policy competition on which the regulations - laws, procedures etc. - are outcomes of strategic interactions of actors from all the mentioned superordinate levels much in the manner described by Margaret Archer in her classic work on the emergence of modern educational systems in England and France (1984). Not only the policy considerations but the people inside the educational field either are wavering among conflicting powerful groups which all have terrifying leverages upon the teachers: the political apparatus has an important say in the career prospects and in the distribution of resources, trade unions can protect against administrative abuses, a.s.o. Because of these centrifugal forces the educational profession has a hard time in consolidating a unique mission, a set of values and objectify them into an organization capable of regulating the profession from inside and insulate at least partially the educators from the mentioned outside pulling forces. A similar logic applies too for the case of the little relevance of educational research in policy design: as policy design is the outcome of strategic interaction among levels of government, political parties, and other actors *there is little room for evidence-based policy* other than those that serve the interests of groups in the field. Proof for the opportunistic treatment of research data is the strictly interest based placement of commentators regarding the results of international competency evaluations - usually those holding the power in the field contest everything about them while their challengers use them as tools to contest the distribution of power within the education domain.

Secondly, research is not seen as a core and defining part of the educational profession. We find evidence for this in the most recent published criteria for awarding the much desired Merit Salary Increase of 25%, a prize that is delivered for 5 years to the best quarter of teachers on the basis of achievement records where research and publications play almost no role while 80% of criteria refer to „complex activities with educational and training value”<sup>9</sup>. This has to do again with the centralized, highly hierarchical practice of the education jobs, in which all organizational reflection is structured in a bureaucratic manner in which there is no customary role assigned for self-regulated practices, experiments, debates, a.s.o. To make things worse, research in education is not a homogenous set of practices that would observe a common perspective on validity and relevance. While trained educators focus in their research

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<sup>9</sup> One can find the criteria here: <http://ismb.edu.ro/index.php/ru/gradatii-merit>

effort almost entirely on topics of pedagogy (effectiveness of teaching methods, class organization a.s.o.) with a low level of methodological sophistication, a lot of current educational research is trans-disciplinary, with inputs from psychology, sociology or even economics and a high degree of complexity in their use of analytical instruments. Many of those who are doing high quality trans-disciplinary research in education do not see themselves as educational researchers but psychologists, sociologists etc. Such a disconnect could entail among other causes, a weak penetration of research results in the ranks of teachers, little relevance of educators' own research outputs and, subsequently little interest for research among teachers.

### **The agenda for education reform: an analysis of the research tasks of the Institute of Educational Sciences**

Although the landscape of Romanian educational research as described above seems confused one actor stands out as having a special relationship with the main policy maker in the area: the Institute of Educational Sciences. It is a research institution directly subordinated to the Ministry of Education which employs the Institute's resources for its policy objectives. Thus, a lecture of the topics covered by the Institute gives a picture of the evidence-based policy agenda of past and present governments in the field of education.

The previously described emerging status of educational research as a strategic action field in which policy research is subordinate to the strategic considerations of major stakeholders suggests for the case of Institute of Educational Sciences a couple of working hypotheses regarding its research agenda: 1) the research topics will be vary with changes in government; 2) the topics will reflect the ideological orientation of the government: while left-wing government will be more interested in topics related to the fair distribution of educational resources to students and teaching staff right wing governments will be interested more in issues connected to the narrative they neoliberal agenda.

In order to assess the evolution of the Institute of Educational Science's research agenda in connection with the contextual factors I have done a simple thematic content analysis of the data base of research topics published by the Institute on it's own webpage (at <http://www.ise.ro/teme-de-cercetare>). My task has been greatly eased by the fact that the research topics are published sorted by year in a standardized way, tagged with keywords and with links to the research activities' outputs.

The IES webpage contains 92 research projects covering a time span 1991-2015 (inclusive) - though there is only one project older than 1996, all the other 91 projects have been running no later than 1996.

The analytic procedure was unpretentious: I have simply coded each of the 92 units of analysis with thematic labels describing the areas/domains of education research covered by the project. I built the list of codes partially with the help of the keywords used by the IES in their database entries while others I have picked up inductively and, in a certain way using a trial-and-error approach. The final list contains 24 codes of which 2 are rather meta-codes, referring to the type of approach in the project (survey, attitude measurement, on the one hand, and theoretical, on the other) while the rest of 22 codes refer to areas of research and intervention in education. The data table that resulted from the content analysis can be downloaded from <http://www.hatos.ro/home/researches>.

Finally 174 codes have been attributed to the 92 research projects - an average of 1.89 per research project - which highlights the fact that most of the project can be described either by the topic and the general approach (25 projects employed a kind of survey method to reach to their results) or, usually, by two thematic codes. However, I tried to avoid multiplying excessively the labels by attempting whenever possible to identify one or maximum two main themes.

One observation has to be made concerning the time-labels of the research projects: I have coded only the year of project inception which adds a limit in the analysis as each project is counted as a one-year one, though several of them (not many actually) lasted for several years thus deflating for several years the number of ongoing research projects.

### **General results**

The simple line-chart of project inception by years underline the fact that research in education follows the general pattern of public investment in education and research (research is usually a subordinate department in the Romanian Ministry of Education). While the average number of projects started by year is 5 (if we exclude the year 1991) there are several years in which projects' start have flourished relative to the previous and the next periods, especially 2006-2007 (an interval in which public investment in research had been generally more generous than in the previous intervals), but also 2012 and 2014. Whereas the drop of 2013 may hide the actual implementation of projects started in 2012 the increasing slope of 2004-2007 and the subsequent downward line of 2008-2010 reflects the manner in which publicly funded research has been affected by the austerity policies of the economic downturn.

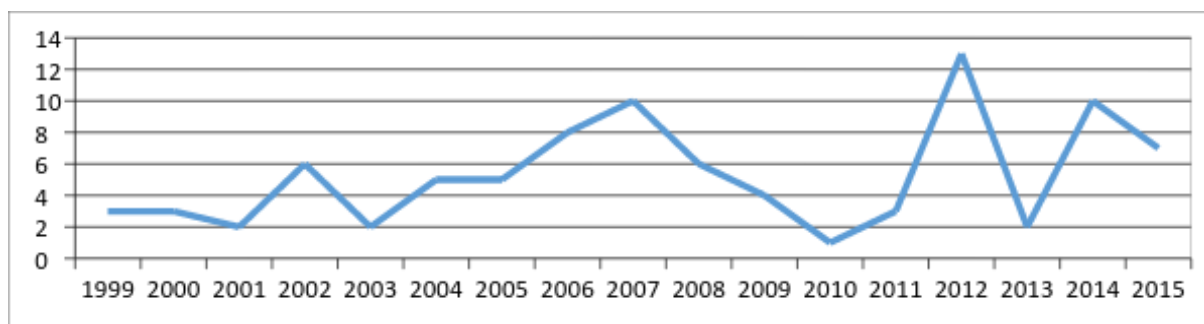


Figure 5. Research projects started by year at the Institute for Educational Sciences (N)

Most frequent covered topics by the IES's projects are those in area of educational system's evaluation using statistical data (among them are notorious the Reports on the State of National Educational System that have been first published in 2005), researched covering educational policies, civic and moral education, educational management and researches on youth.

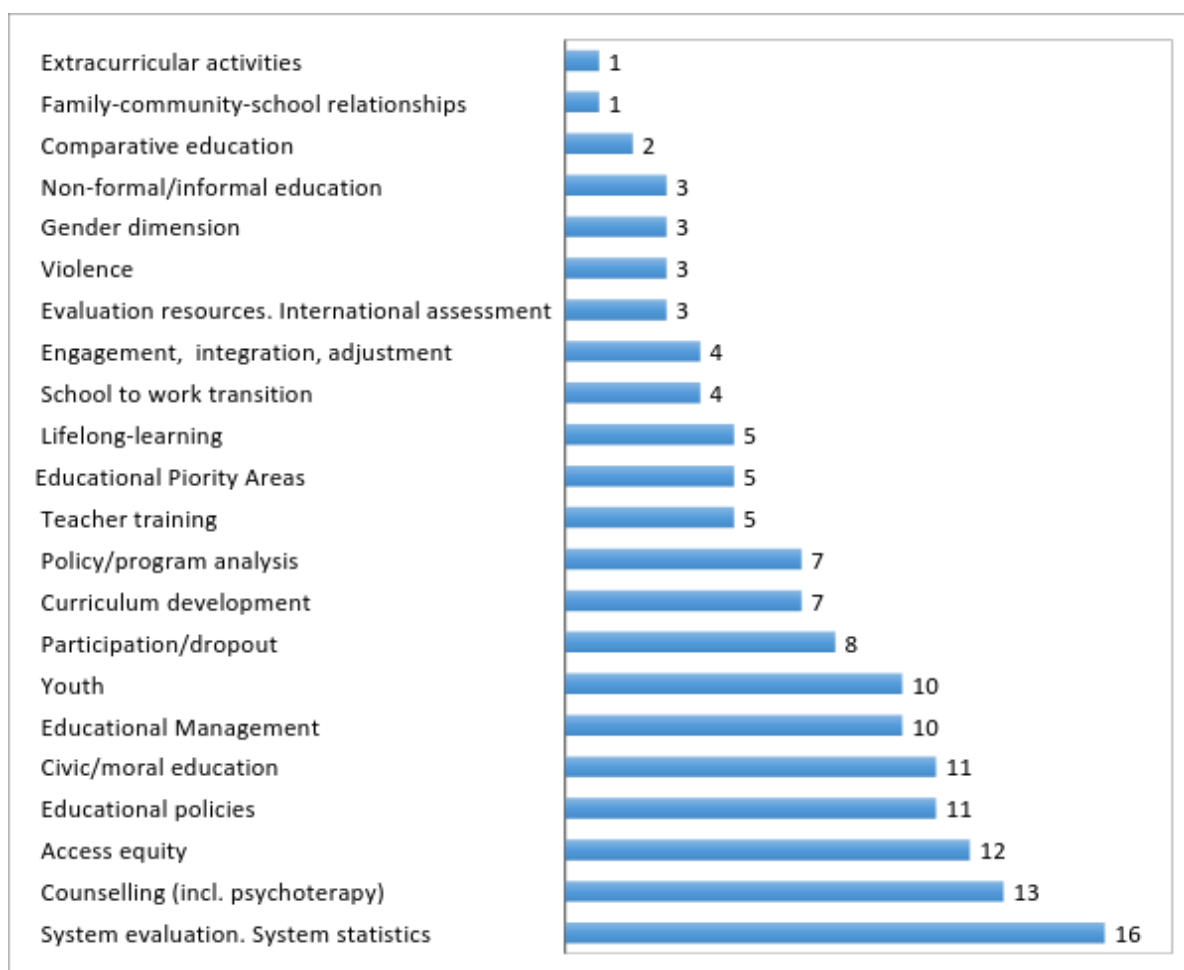


Figure 6. Frequency of Topics of IES research projects (N)

Surveys, mostly quantitative have been a major tool for policy research in education. They are done on various populations, mostly on students, but on teachers, parents and members of the community as well.

### **Does the research agenda depend on the political leaning of the government?**

One plausible hypothesis is the variation of the research interests of the Institute of Educational Sciences according to the ideological orientation of the Government. This is suggested by the rich international policy research evidence available according to which educational policy depends on the ideology of the political majority (Busemeyer, 2009; Jensen, 2011; Kempkes, 2010; Poterba, 1997; Svallfors, 1997) and by the ideologically inspired debates concerning educational policy alternatives like those concerning marketization or privatization in education. Several of the research topics in the database of the Institute of Educational Sciences are prone to such positions: access equity, participation and dropout, lifelong-learning and the gender dimension which are more of focus for leftist movements as they relate to the relationships of education with the distribution of life chances.

In order to test this working hypothesis I have analyzed the association of topics with the ideological orientation of governments in power between 1990-2015 described simply using a left-right dichotomy (pre-2000 - mostly right<sup>10</sup>, 2000-2004 - left, 2005-2008-right, 2009-2012 - right, 2012-2014 - left, 2015 - right) excluding the two methodological codes - of survey and of educational theory. This was done by comparing the observed frequencies of the crosstabs of government (ordered chronologically) or of the government's ideological leaning with their corresponding theoretical frequency computed using the well-known chi-square formula.

Before getting to the results it is worth mentioning that in terms of chi-square there is no overall significant association between the variables considered – governments and the frequency of specific topics. Although the use of chi-square test in this case is strictly explorative – the number of expected frequencies smaller than 5 is so large that the computed chi-square is not usable (Agresti, 1996) – it is important to notice that no clear pattern of association can be inferred from the data and at least a strictly observational basis our working hypothesis does not stay on solid grounds.

### **Trends in topics of applied education research by IES**

Thus grouped and assessed, against theoretical frequency of occurrence, I was able to identify trends in the evolution of the research topics on the IES's agenda. Three topics

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<sup>10</sup> Although in the considered interval, only between 1996-2000 Romania had a right wing government, all but one of the pre-2000 projects reported here were implemented during this period.

have been high on the agenda recently: curriculum development – probably in the context of the debates concerning the new national curriculum, educational management and educational policy analysis.

*Recent topics* (salient topics during the last two governments):

- curriculum development
- educational management
- policy analysis

*Inconsistent patterns*

- educational policies
- equity in access to education
- system evaluation using statistics
- Educational Priority Areas<sup>11</sup>
- Resources for evaluation; international assessment
- participation, dropout
- youth issues
- non-formal/informal education

*Past/ declining topics*

- teacher training
- school to work transition
- civic and moral education
- counseling
- lifelong learning and adult education
- school violence
- gender dimension

### **Ideology and research topics**

Reiterating the analysis after grouping the data according to the ideological orientation of the government in the interval one will find the same lack of consistency. There are only several topics that can be associated with the left-right dichotomy:

- Curriculum development (left)
- School to work transition (right)
- System evaluation using statistics (right)

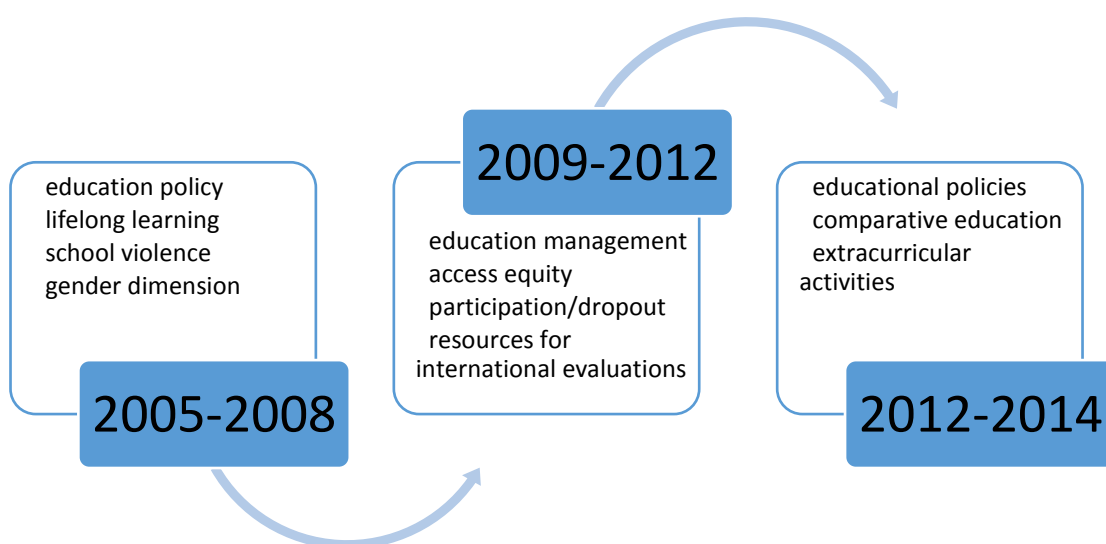
More interesting than the few correlations thus noticed are the inconsistencies within the same ideological category: for example, Educational Management has been more often approached during the 2009-2012 government than the previous one, also mostly liberal, of 2005-2008, the similar pattern being found for the case of access equity,

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<sup>11</sup> Educational Priority Areas (Zona Educațională Prioritară) has been a concept of territorial targeted social inclusion measures designed to increase educational access and outcomes for people living in deprived areas.



participation/dropout, resources for international evaluations and others. Looking at the data the more obvious pattern seems to be that of radical shift in agenda from one government to the next one regardless of the placement on the left-right scale (this appears more clearly comparing the 2005-2008 governments' agenda with that of the 2009-2012 one and also this one with the next one). The most coherent agenda seems to be, in my opinion, the one of corresponding to the 2009-2012 government (center-right, Christian-Democrat in this case) which suggests a concern with effectiveness and equity. Moreover, one can enlarge the analysis by inquiring the impact of the agenda of superordinate international organizations (the European Commission especially) through processes of isomorphic processes (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).



*Figure 7. Focal topics of researches by legislature (2005-2008)*

Before jumping to conclusions I have to highlight that the results of the content analysis describe only in an incomplete way the policy agenda of the considered interval. Given the weak institutionalization of educational research and of evidence-based policy making, one could infer ironically that researches have been commissioned more in areas which were not of upmost interest for the government. Moreover, a better understanding of the research activities motivated by the policy interests of the government should impose differentiating between research projects which were done without policy design motivation: as a research institute the IES is eligible for most of the research financing available at home or in Europe and, moreover, is an interesting international research partner. Thus, the list of topics uncovered by our content analysis does not reveal merely what had been the concerns of the governments in matters of education at certain points of time but also the topics high on the international

educational agenda to which the IES is connected in various ways especially diffusion through scholarly networks.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

My aim in these pages has been to describe the Romanian educational agenda of the last 25 years and to help the understanding of its dynamics in connection with the evolution of the Romanian education. In order to achieved this I started with a synthesis of the post-1990 evolutions in Romanian education in which I highlighted the transformation of the socio-economic scaffolding from a version of coordinated market economy that have emerged after 1990 slowly into a liberal market economy, the mediocre outcomes of education and inconsistent educational policies accompanied by meagre state support for education. This is important in order to put education in the proper perspective if the aim is to make education more relevant for the world of work which cannot be done independently of considering labor laws and the structure of economy in terms of industries.

Conceptualizing Romanian education and educational research using the strategic action field framework of Fligstein and McAdam (2011) as areas of strategic interaction between competing stakeholders it appears that educational research is in an incipient stage of institutionalization as a strategic action field. There are several possible explanations: one is the subordinate place of education relative to other areas of political action and, consequently, the inconsistent use of evidence-based policy making in education where political or ideological considerations. Another correlate, if not entirely a cause, is the fact that research holds a marginal place in the educational profession.

There is, however, a way of having a glimpse into the governmental research interest in the area as the Romanian Ministry of Education has in its structure a research institute – Institute of Educational Sciences – to which it commissions most of its research tasks. Taking advantage of the fact that the IES has published a well structured and pre-coded list of research projects post-1990 I have made an analysis based on coding each project with the main area/areas of research and with the year with the aim of describing the chronological evolution of the governmental educational research agenda and of correlating the changes in agenda with the changes in political majority and of the ideological leaning of the government (left vs. right).

Although the analysis is with some significant limits there are some results that can be concluded from them:

1. The intensity of applied research activity, measured via the number of research projects, reflects, on a year-by-year comparison, the dynamics of the public

funding for education and research. This suggests not only that in periods of generous funding for education there is more money for research but also that intentions of policy change are more intense and policy makers are giving more considerations to evidence-based policy change. A vicious circle which underlies the inconsistencies of educational policy is evident here: in times of austerity policy-design is more politically or ideologically driven which is not a warrant for positive outcomes while preconditions for better policies are in place in times of state generosity.

2. Most frequently occurring topics are: system evaluation using statistics, counselling, access equity, educational policies and civic or moral education. Most of the research documents use quantitative methods – surveying teachers, students and parents seems to be the most preferred research strategy – though there are also qualitative or mixed-methods approaches also. Comparative education reports, conceptual and theoretical approaches are rather rare if we are not considering the literature reviews that put in a conceptual framework the empirical reports. On a longitudinal perspective, recently emerging topics are curriculum development, educational management and policy analysis while past topic – no longer present on the research agenda are: teacher training, school-to-work transition, civic and moral education, counseling, lifelong-learning and adult education, school violence and the gender dimension.
3. Comparing the research agenda across governments and political leaning does not provide clues for consistent correlations. The most striking feature of research program change is the radical shift in research priorities between successive governments: change of government entails dropping several previous topics and adopting several new ones. This is more evident as the project data base is richer, i.e. for the most recent three or four governments. The relation of these fluctuations with the effectiveness of actual policies is a matter to be discussed and analyzed yet. On the other hand the correlation of political leaning with the research topics appears to be negligible. One reason for this can be the little ideological consistency of Romanian governments and political majorities which involves that policy decisions are usually determined by strategic interactions in which ideology plays little part compared to stakeholder interests. Important processes at work though in deciding the policy research agenda appear to be isomorphic ones ignited and sustained by the contact with large international actors.

Even after discounting the limits of the results from the analyzes it appears that evidence-based policy making in the area of education is hampered by some *Catch-22*

situations: 1) economic hardships seem to be prone for increased politically based policy-making with much attention to constituencies' competing interests and less regard for the collective good; 2) sustainability of policies is obstructed by the tendencies of governments to abandon previous policies and promote new ones of their own. Making educational policies more evidence driven and more sustainable cannot be achieved if educational research is not better institutionalized as a strategic action field in itself which means at least the following: a) recognizing educational research as a specific domain, officially, for instance, through a professional organization set up via the collective action of those working in the field; b) putting research in a more important place in the training and practice of teachers, even through career incentives, on the one hand, and in the design of educational policies, on the other.

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*Thematic Article*



**Transitions in Croatian pre-tertiary education and teacher education since independence**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to give an overview of developments in Croatian pre-tertiary and teacher education since 1991. The starting point is a brief presentation of the country context in the transition period from socialist to democratic society. The developments in pre-tertiary education have been analysed in two periods – from 1990 to 2000, and from 2001 to the present moment. The main strategic documents are presented and their implementation is discussed. The reform of the system of initial teacher education is elaborated in terms of three concepts – upgrading, standardization, and professionalization. The implications of the implementation of these concepts for structural and curricula changes are problematised. In addition, a third theme, that of educational research, has been introduced in order to present the interconnectedness between educational transitions and educational research.

**Keywords:** educational reform, pre-tertiary education, teacher education, education research

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## **Country context**

Croatia is one of the smaller European Union countries with a territory of about 55,000 square kilometres and 4,284,889 inhabitants according to the 2011 census. Regarding its ethnic composition, Croatia is a highly homogenous country with 3,874,321 (90.42 %) inhabitants declared as Croats and 410,568 (9.58%) declared as members of national minorities (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia, 2014). Although the data about ethnic composition indicate ethnic homogeneity of the Croatian society this does not mean Croatia is a culturally uniform country. From the socio-political perspective two traditions have influenced Croatian culture and life in general. Continental Croatia is closer to the Central European circle due to the fact that it was part of the Habsburg Empire since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, while the coastal region is closer to the Mediterranean cultural circle due to the long-lasting connections with the Republic of Venice (Godler & Domović, 1999).

In the recent past, two milestones have had the most important role in shaping the Croatian educational context. The first one was Croatia gaining its independence in 1991, and the second one was the country becoming member of the European Union in 2013. These two events brought about changes in the political, economic and social system, emphasising ideas of liberal democracy, political pluralism, privatisation of economy and civil society (Prpić, 1993). In the 1990s, Croatia partly shared the experience of other Eastern European countries in the transition from socialist to capitalist economy. On the other hand, the change of political status from being part of the former Yugoslavia to becoming an independent state was marked by the Croatian War of Independence, lasting from 1991 to 1995. The post-war transition period was burdened with the material destruction of one third of the territory combined with a negative demographic trend in general, a high unemployment rate, a large number of people who got early retirements, and a very unfavourable educational structure. The generally unfavourable situation has been aggravated by psychological factors such as high expectations and hopes that changes of formal political and institutional changes would lead to social and economic welfare (Domović & Vizek Vidović, 2015).

## **Transition in pre-tertiary education**

### *Period 1990 - 2000*

Two distinct periods could be identified in the educational transitions since 1990, one lasting from 1990 to 2000 and the other from 2001 until the present. The first five post-war years can be marked as damage alleviation as the focus was on the reparation of

physical infrastructure as 33% of schools were heavily damaged during the war, and Croatia was coping with 386 264 displaced persons in 1995 (Perković & Puljiz, 2001). After the war, the major task was to rebuild the infrastructure in terms of improving material conditions and human resources. At that time, the civil sector educational organisations played an important role for teacher professional development, offering psychological assistance to teachers and students as well as introducing new themes such as civic education, intercultural education, and a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

At the same time, the legislative ground for the whole educational system was laid down with the adoption of key acts on education: the Elementary School Act in 1990; the Secondary School Act in 1992; the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education in 1993; and the Preschool Education Act in 1997.

The structure of pre-tertiary education remained firmly rooted in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century model of lower- and upper-primary school with four grades of classroom teaching, followed by four grades of subject teaching. Secondary education also did not change, with four year of comprehensive schools (gymnasiums) and three- and four-year vocational schools. The schools were operating mainly according to the pre-war curriculum with some adjustments to the new political context regarding social science and humanities subjects with major emphasis on the national context, and the introduction of religious education as an elective subject. So, in the new secondary school curricula an ideological shift could be observed in that some school subjects, such as *Marxism and Socialist Self-Management, People's Defence and Social Self- Protection, Production and Technical Education*, were abandoned and new subjects, such as *Politics and Economy* and *Ethics and Culture*, were introduced (Baranović, 2008).

#### *Period 2001 - 2015*

The period from 2001 to the present can be perceived as a continuous state of change. The focus of policy makers and educational experts was on curriculum modernisation and teacher education reform. Major structural changes were discussed, such as nine-year elementary school and new models of vocational education, but without achieving consensus between policy makers and stakeholders.

In the year 2001 the White Paper on Croatian Education was created, intended to serve as the basis for the comprehensive transformation of the Croatian educational system (Pastuović, 2001). The aim of the proposed reform was the improvement of efficiency of the educational system through the following changes: transition to a six-year elementary school; introduction of nine-year compulsory education; modernisation of the curriculum; education of teachers for a six-year elementary school; introduction of



state examinations based on external evaluation; reform of the university system in accordance with the Bologna Declaration; decentralisation of financing and management of the educational system. The White Paper was not further elaborated into educational strategy as was initially planned.

Besides the attempt to outline a general education reform, in the period from 2000 to 2005 specific concerns were raised regarding the educational values of inclusion and social cohesion. These issues were articulated in two policy documents, the Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities (2000) and the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities (2002), which promote the integration of national minorities into the Croatian society with guarantees of preservation of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity (Tatalović, 2006). Pupils and their parents can choose between three options: being educated in their mother tongue and script; attending bilingual classes or nurturing their language and culture in extracurricular classes (Domović et al., 2013).

The second attempt to introduce a holistic approach to educational changes was described in a new strategic document – the Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 (2005). The priorities stated in that document were similar, with greater emphasis on teacher education and their continuous development, on strategies for improving the management and efficiency of the education system and on achieving greater social cohesion through education. The implementation of the Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 was accompanied with extensive change of education legislation, such as the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (2008), the National Pedagogical Standard for the Elementary School (2008), and the Vocational Education Act (2009).

In the period 2004-2007 the necessary infrastructure for steering educational reforms and the quality assurance of the whole educational sector was developed with special focus on mechanisms for the external evaluation of education. In 2004, the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (Act on Establishment of National Centre for External Evaluation of Education, 2004) was established with the task of implementing various external evaluation measures for pre-tertiary education, followed by the National Agency for Science and Higher Education in 2009 (Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education, 2009) with the task of monitoring and evaluating the quality of higher education institutions and public research institutes.

In the same period, policy makers, educational practitioners and experts got involved in the process of developing new school curricula with major focus on alleviating pupils' workload and enhancing learner-centred teaching and learning. In order to fulfil that task, extensive preparations started which resulted with the document Strategy for the Construction and Development of the National Curriculum for Pre-School Education,

General Compulsory and Secondary Education (2007). That document was a precursor to the National Curriculum Framework for Pre-school Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education (NCF), which was finalised in 2010. The starting point for the development of the NCF was the European Key Competences Framework for Lifelong Learning (2007) as well as a learning outcome approach. The goals of the NCF were summarised as follows „The basic characteristic of the *National Curriculum Framework* is a transition to a system based on competence and student achievement (learning outcomes), unlike the previous one, which focuses on content. .... The *National Curriculum Framework* instructs teachers to overcome subject specialisation, and to take part more or less equally in developing students' core competences by applying the principle of shared responsibility – in particular by making explicit the values that are intertwined with cross-subject (cross-curricular) topics” (2010: 9). The introduction of cross-subject topics is one of the major curricular innovations as compared to the previous strategic documents. The cross-curricular themes have been defined as follows: Personal and social development; Health, Safety and environmental protection; Learning to learn; Entrepreneurship; Use of ICT; Civic education.

The NCF turned out to be another huge project involving a great number of educational experts and practitioners, that got to the level of formal adoption by the Croatian Government but was not further operationalised and implemented in the teaching practice.

Most recently, the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge (Strategy) was formally adopted (2014). The part of the Strategy covering pre-tertiary education has been elaborated through eight topics: development of capacity enhancement of educational institutions; implementation of comprehensive curricular reform, change of primary education structure, rising the quality of work and the social status of teachers, improvement of educational institutions leadership, development of comprehensive student support services, securing optimal work conditions of educational institutions. The implementation of the Strategy has started with the project of comprehensive curricular reform in which more than three hundred educationalists have been engaged on a full-time basis. This work is in progress and the first results are expected in six months.

The overview of the developments in the pre-tertiary educational sector in the last twenty five years reveals that, in spite of various attempts on policy level and strategic documents development, only fragmented and limited interventions have been implemented (e.g. minority education; relinquishment of some school subjects and their replacement with new ones; state exam at the end of secondary education) without major structural and curricular reforms.

## **Teacher education 2001 - 2015**

Croatian initial teacher education has been significantly transformed due to the implementation of the Bologna process across higher education. This external pressure has been used as an opportunity for rethinking the structure and approaches to teaching and learning at institutions for teacher education. The processes in teacher education which started in 2005 with the introduction of new curricula could be described in three words: upgrading (from secondary to postsecondary, higher education level), standardization, and professionalization.

### *Teacher education as part of the higher education system*

In Croatia, there are different categories of teachers depending on the educational level at which they teach: teachers in grades 1 to 4 of primary school (class-teachers), subject teachers in grades 5 to 8 of primary school, subject teachers in secondary academic schools (gymnasium), teachers of general education subjects in secondary vocational schools, and teachers of vocational subjects in secondary vocational schools. In the pre-Bologna period the education of each of these categories differed significantly. The greatest difference was in the type of institutions in which prospective teachers were educated. Primary teachers were educated at higher professional schools which were usually outside the university. Upper-primary and secondary school teachers (subject teachers) were educated at university level.

Debates preceding restructuring the initial teacher education system led to a consensus between policy makers and teacher educators that all institutions responsible for teacher education should be integrated into universities as faculties. Consequently, programmes for primary teachers were transformed into university programmes. In that way, dualism in the education of primary and subject teachers was overcome as now all programmes last five years and a Master's degree is compulsory for all categories of school teachers to enter the profession. Teachers of vocational subjects in secondary schools who get their Master's degree in other professional fields are required to take an extra year of study in order to obtain teaching qualifications (Domović & Vizek Vidović, 2011).

However, the model of studying differs between class teachers and subject teachers as the program for class teachers (grade 1 to 4 of primary school) is organised according to the simultaneous model while subject teachers are educated according to the consecutive model.

The simultaneous model implies a curriculum designed according to the integrated model of undergraduate and graduate level (5 years, 10 semesters, 300 ECTS) and it is

delivered at faculties of teacher education. On the other hand, study programs for subject teachers are organised in two cycles – BA level (180 ECTS credits) and MA level (120 ECTS credits) at the faculties for specific academic disciplines. At the BA level, students mostly take two disciplines (academic subjects or majors), while educational studies, teaching methodologies and teaching practice are studied at the master's level (Domović & Vizek Vidović, 2011).

It has been observed that the universitation of study programmes for primary school teachers has some benefits, but also drawbacks. The main benefit is equal educational status of all categories of teachers. It seems that upgrading the status of institutions responsible for primary teacher education has made them more attractive for secondary school graduates from more prestigious secondary schools and with better school achievements. Also, in terms of curriculum content, several courses related to academic disciplines (subjects) as well as ICT and educational research methodology have been included. On the other hand, the scope of educational sciences and school practice has remained the same or even has been decreased. It opens the new debate about the quality of teaching competences acquired in initial teacher education. The universitation of primary teacher initial education has also put more pressure on teacher educators for attaining high research productivity, which has somewhat shifted focus from teaching and supporting students' learning.

#### *Standardisation of teacher education*

The responsibility for designing pre-Bologna teacher education programmes was fully in the domain of faculties or departments as autonomous agents with an orientation towards discipline-based curricula and content-centred teaching. The introduction of the concept of learning outcomes and student-centred teaching raised the awareness of curriculum designers and teacher educators for more inter-institutional cooperation. One of the important steps in that direction was the provision of the Act on Elementary and Secondary Schools (2008) which stipulated that teacher professional competences should be acquired through programmes with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits.

The harmonisation of teacher education programmes was further enhanced by the process of reaccreditation of higher education institutions conducted by the Agency for Science and Higher Education. The reaccreditation reports, which were made public, enabled institutions to compare their functioning and achievements.

The most recent development which supports standardisation and harmonisation in teacher education is the introduction of the Act on Croatian Qualification Framework (CQF) (2013) which recommends the development of occupational and qualification standards for all professions including the teaching profession. The CQF steers higher

education institutions to systematically apply a learning outcomes approach as a basis for curriculum planning. In order to implement the CQF, the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports opened a project line for defining qualification standards for various programmes and adjusting curricula to the defined standards. Several projects aimed at defining qualification standards for teacher education programmes have started, involving teacher education faculties from different universities. The main goal of these projects is to define qualification standards in terms of learning outcomes which will represent the common core competences for all involved programmes.

### **Teacher education and teacher professionalization**

As mentioned earlier in the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge (Strategy) (2014), one of the strategies for pre-tertiary education is rising the quality of work and social status of teachers. Among the measures for the realisation of this goal is the professionalization of the teaching occupation. Professionalization has been described as the realisation of the following conditions: general awareness of teachers' work as socially valuable and enjoying high social status; high level of specific knowledge and skills which enables teachers for autonomous decision-making in complex situations; acquisition of professional competences through a long period of initial university education followed by a formal induction period ending with an exam for full licence; lifelong competence development based on formal continuous professional development and informal learning and periodical evaluation of competences (re-licensing); programmes for initial teacher education which, besides professional knowledge and skills, enhance acquiring professional values and building teacher professional identity; establishment of professional associations which regulate, by means of a code of ethics and other acts, the criteria for entering a profession and professional practice. These conditions are further operationalised through several measures, such as: the development of national competence standards for teachers and a code of ethics, development of a comprehensive model of induction and teacher licensing, attracting the best candidates for teacher studies and the retention of the best teachers in the profession.

The 'universitation' of teacher initial education can be recognised as an important part of the professionalization process combined with the introduction of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Another important issue regarding professionalization is the further improvement of the induction process and the development of a licensing system. In order to start these developments, the project *Development of the national qualification standard for teachers as a basis for the implementation of a teacher licensing system* ([www.nskzaucitelje.hr/eng](http://www.nskzaucitelje.hr/eng)) was carried out, which resulted with the proposal of national qualification standards.

The professionalization of the teaching occupation in the way envisioned in the Strategy should be a joint endeavour of different key stakeholders. At this moment, the academic community and educational experts are leading the implementation of some concrete activities, but for the full realisation of this goal more support from other stakeholders, such as policy makers, teacher unions, and professional teacher associations is required.

### **Educational research supporting transitions in pre-tertiary and teacher education**

During the early transition period, several significant trends could be observed within the educational research community. In the pre-transition era, educational research was mainly concentrated within pedagogy departments at faculties of humanities and social sciences, while teacher education colleges outside universities were marginalized as they were strongly teaching-oriented institutions. At university departments, some educational research was also carried out, mainly by psychology departments, while teachers who taught teaching methodology courses were not encouraged to do educational research as they could get their doctoral degrees only in the area of their basic academic discipline.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Bologna process and EU initiatives regarding the tuning of educational structures in higher education strengthened the awareness of a need to start interdisciplinary educational research with stronger networking between research institutions. These synergic efforts have resulted in the formal recognition of educational sciences as a distinct interdisciplinary area, allowing for the implementation of postgraduate studies. The other accomplishment in this area has been the establishment of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), a specialised research unit at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb in 2003. Starting several lines of research, CERD has become the stronghold of educational research in the areas of curriculum development, teacher education and professional development, the social dimension in higher education and self-evaluation and external evaluation of pre-tertiary education. Moreover, certain trends can be observed regarding specific research orientations among institutions conducting educational research. For instance, a comparison of work done at the three most prominent departments of psychology (in Zagreb, Zadar and Rijeka) shows that at the University of Zagreb research focuses on learning mathematics and science, at the University of Rijeka it focuses on learning reading and writing, and at the University of Zadar on motivation to learn.

The process of tertiary teacher education resulted in lively research activities at the institutions which prior to that were not eligible to participate in state-funded research in educational sciences, especially in various teaching methodologies. An important contribution to educational research has been made by establishing doctoral studies at the Faculty of Teacher Education and also by renovating doctoral studies at the

Department of Pedagogy at the University of Zagreb, which has strengthened interdisciplinary research in educational sciences. These doctoral studies have supported doctoral students to research some new topics, such as early education, multicultural education, civic education, school climate and culture.

Furthermore, in order to support the cooperation and networking of educational researchers, in 2012 the meeting point for educational researchers was established as a biannual conference called *Days of Educational Sciences*, and, in 2014, the Croatian Educational Research Association (CERA) was founded, and in 2015 it became member of the European Educational Research Association. This is a new opportunity for educational researchers to network and cooperate in the country and abroad.

## **Conclusions**

In the analysed period, the changes in pre-tertiary education started with laying down the legislative basis for the educational reform. The acceleration of changes occurred after 2001 with the White Paper which outlined the key goals shaping the further developments at policy level. However, due to the chronic financial lacks of the educational sector and insufficient human resources and institutional capacities, the reforms were only partially implemented as intervention measures for some concrete problems.

One of the hindrances to the implementation of a comprehensive educational reform might be the fragmentation of efforts of different stakeholders, even mutual mistrust, as well as discontinuity in the governing of the educational sector, sometimes with periods without clear goals or priorities for education. It also should be noted that the educational sector was the one with the highest rate of fluctuation of ministers, who on average stayed in their position 1.5 years (20 ministers of education since 1990).

The latest Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (2014), as an attempt to link all three areas in order to join the efforts of key stakeholders in raising quality in education, research and innovations as major drivers of socio-economic development, was received with mixed feelings in the academic community. It has been positively evaluated in a public debate, because of its comprehensiveness, underlying expertise, and operationalisation of concrete measures, but the question remains open whether there will be sufficient financial and human resources and institutional capacities for its implementation in the planned time frame (Domović & Vizek Vidović, 2015).

Teacher education underwent significant structural changes during the last decade due to the general transformation of higher education instigated and inspired by the Bologna process. In our opinion, the greatest positive change has been the abandonment of

dualism in education of primary class teachers and subject teachers. An important step forward in designing curricula has been the implementation of a learning-outcomes-based approach and the promotion of student-centred teaching. One of the challenges for a change of paradigm in teaching and learning at teacher education institutions are often insufficient teaching competences of university teacher educators. That is why, a debate about improving the competences of teacher educators has recently been opened at most institutions.

Until recently, educational research has been a relatively neglected field, compartmentalised within specific areas (e.g. educational psychology, sociology of education, subject teaching methods). The raised awareness of a need for research-informed educational policies as well as the inclusion of educational sciences into the corpus of formally recognised fields of science gave a new momentum for networking and cooperation of researchers in interdisciplinary research.

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*Thematic Article*



**Higher education, social change and policy**

**Voldemar Tomusk<sup>14</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Higher education has been often seen as an essential contributor to a positive social change and as such attracts the attention from donor agencies as well as charitable foundations, such as for example Open Society Foundations. However, as higher education appears by its very design as a predominantly conservative institution with significant interests of its own to defend, in order to survive and perpetuate itself, its track record initiating and sustaining social change through education, research and policy studies remains at its best mixed. This paper takes a critical look at higher education and the primary mission granted to it by the nation state to stabilize the reality, in search for possible entries to contribute to social change and the conditions under which this could take place. The author argues that left alone, university is likely to frustrate many expectations society might have for the goods to emerge from it.

**Keywords:** university, social change, cooling-out function, public policy, social institutions, hermeneutic contradiction.

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## **Introduction**

Before starting dissecting the great institution of higher learning, scrutinizing its possible links to social change and not necessarily entirely uncontroversial connections to public policy, I feel obliged to state just briefly on which grounds I claim any competence exploring such rather complicated matters.

For twenty years two months and two weeks I worked for Open Society Foundations' (OSF) Higher Education Support Program (HESP) in their Budapest and London offices. The most significant part of the work HESP did during that time was related to reforming systems of higher education in the formerly communist countries of the Central-East Europe and the former Soviet Union (CEE-fSU). That work covered various areas – supporting institutional reforms through founding a number of independent graduate schools as well as liberal arts colleges, supporting student-driven initiatives towards creating inclusive higher education environments as well as exposing corruption in higher education institutions, supporting faculty development.

At around 2007 I became for a few years rather heavily involved in Nepal, mostly related to founding an independent social science graduate training institution in Kathmandu. My last works in the Foundation took me to the Middle-East and North Africa, particularly Palestine and Tunisia. The latter case being particularly fruitful thinking about possible shortcomings of a rather well functioning system of higher education in terms of contributing to building a better world beyond its own confines.

The past few months have allowed me taking a few steps back from the day-to-day grant-making, reflecting upon the past two decades of work, taking a deeper look at some of the relevant literature and pondering where would one go from here. That is, leaving all the rhetoric – political and other – aside, how would one think about supporting higher education for the purposes of building a better world? Indiscriminately subsidizing a large and to a significant degree entertainment-oriented industry is likely to deliver too little and far too late to make the planet Earth even a slightly more friendly place for any greater share of human beings.

## **I.**

Since its early days of support to higher education OSF took a rather radical position that we did not fund higher education related projects for the narrow purposes of higher education, but that the ends of it should reach further. The exact expected impact of such work continues to be discussed, as it cannot ever be set in stone, as well as are the strategic dimensions of the project work that would allow reaching the desirable impact.

Declaring explicitly the ends of higher education support being beyond education was a rather bold position back then, as it is now. Leaders from Vladimir Lenin to Tony Blair have declared their goals in terms of “Education, education, education.” What exactly that might entail I will discuss a little later. It would suffice to state here that for the reasons good or otherwise, critical work on education proves often rather difficult as so many hopes and expectations have been invested in it. At the same time, higher education has over the past 20-25 years grown into a large international service industry and there are good reasons to think that without adequate critical engagement with it and mechanisms of accountability, the high expectations of many towards it will most likely remain profoundly frustrated.

In the UK for example higher education constitutes the largest export industry of the entire economy, second only to the financial service sector. Other countries are trying to learn from that experience. Currently popular rankings and league tables arrange universities and even countries in a global hierarchy, where those positioned higher take over market shares from those positioned lower. I have, for example seen attempts by some of FSU countries not known for their exceptional transparency attracting fee-paying medical students from the countries with a particularly high demand.

Twenty-five years ago when I entered higher education as a professional, British higher education had set before itself a lofty goal of one third of the young people entering higher education. This was considered back then as a particularly high aim. Twenty-five years later 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the young people globally enter post-secondary education. In many lower-middle income countries higher education participation rates are reaching 50%, meaning that talking in terms of Martin Trow (1974), higher education is becoming universal globally. How much is this delivering in terms of economic, social or even cultural development remains open. Whether higher education constitutes the horse or the cart of economic development is the question James Murphy asked back in 1993, and still remains open.

Social change is also not necessarily a simple concept. On the one hand, change is happening anyway, or as Sun Tsu put it “If you wait by the river long enough, the bodies of your enemies will float by.” The following picture may illustrate this approach:



Picture 1. A non-policy policy in higher education and beyond<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, however, quite often governments may find themselves in a situation where, because of the lack of the resources or political disagreements, no policy can agree upon. But that does not mean that the status quo will be maintained. “Non-policy policy” has all the characteristics of a policy and has its consequences, including the non-intended ones (Tomusk, 2004b). So it happened for example in the 1990s in CEE-fSU countries that many universities floated down the river Lethe with their bellies up.

Be as it may, social change is complex issue, which we have been discussing in various contexts for many years. Some suggest that we should be talking about a “positive social change” in order specify what exactly we have in our minds. The issue here, however, is that most likely there is no such thing as universally accepted *positive* social change. What somebody sees as positive may well appear as something else to somebody else. Policies are fundamentally about re-distributing resources always limited. What constitutes the higher common good should remain open and discussed by each and every generation. Trying to fix this would most likely constitute the very end of the open society. Perhaps it would be one of the main responsibilities of higher education to cultivate such a spirit of openness to the next generation and pass on the culture of within the confines of which this can be practiced.

## II.

Talking about social change, one might indeed wonder about the reasons for this being so closely related to higher education. After all, talking about the university institution - historically it has served more the cause of social conservation rather than social change.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/maxvenator/status/648894850679603200>

Suffices to return to Magna Charta of European University, as it was signed back in 1988 by some 350 rectors of European universities in Bologna, as they were strategically positioning higher education on the map of the emerging European Union, to replace the previous structure of the European Communities through the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty. Magna Charta declares as the first among its fundamental principles:

The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by means of research and teaching.

It is worth noting that the university's fundamental mission as seen here would be more about handing down humankind's historical learning experience than that of actively shaping social or political structures. As a matter of fact – university connections to social and political structures do not appear at all in such fundamental documents, which obviously plays it directly to the hands of those critical of university's reproducing the structures of inequality and injustice rather than challenging these. Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, would be one of the key scholars whose works should be mentioned in the latter context. Were one to follow the French line of thought more closely, one could even suggest following Luc Boltanski (see e.g. Boltanski, 2014), the task the nation state has charged university with is not so much about changing or even criticizing the state and the society than manufacturing, spreading and stabilizing *the reality*. Such a proposition would raise many interesting questions, such as for example what happens when the role of the master is being transferred from the nation state to the market under the regime of the World Trade Organization or, indeed - to a supra-national entity such as the European Union. Although fascinating, discussing these issues would reach well beyond the purposes of the current discourse.

The power that has boosted university to the current heights has been predominantly generated by another institution - that of *science*. Although *science* being practiced in many organizational settings, such as research institutes, think-tanks and other third-sector organizations also known as NGO's, in contemporary societies university by and large serves as the most significant host of *science*, receiving a significant share of its own mystical powers as a social institution from it (Tomusk, 2003).

It is science that allows universities to make claims for universality, often being traced back to the CUDOS principles inspired by works of Robert Merton, suggesting science being based on the principles of communalism, universalism, disinterestedness and organized skepticism.

For our purposes it would be significant to notice that some of these principles most likely stand in tension with some of the expectations democratic societies have for the

university looking for diverse ways of knowing, such as feminist epistemologies, indigenous knowledge, positive support to the diversity of identities and irreducible richness of lived human experience. On the other hand we also see university being used in service to strictly national political and cultural interests. The latter being particularly played out in Europe where the nation states, referring to the EU's subsidiarity principle, have refused granting European Union a mandate regarding higher education, to a significant degree to the detriment of building a common European public sphere.

One may suggest that university finds itself in a rather difficult spot in contemporary societies. As an institution with a significant control over the reproduction of social structures, it has the potential of having a significant say in changing those structures or even the potential to disrupt them. However, to be painfully honest, the latter potential is hardly ever being used. Much of its institutional power is being derived from *science* that would see any political engagement as a compromise to its abstract universalistic claims, while behind the scenes it runs its own politics not always entirely selfless and innocent (see e.g. Sidley, 2015). University has growing so large and made so many promises in so many directions that it is experiencing increasing difficulties maintaining internal consistency. I would suggest that while university represents a significant potential to support social change and indeed appears critical as an institution with the potential to maintain the openness of the horizons of our existence, it cannot do it by being left to its own devices. It has to be constantly taken to the account of those expectations - to the extent we collectively wish university to carry these out.

### **III.**

As higher education has been expanding globally over the past 20-25 years, it has become the institution to initiate middle classes into independent adult life. However, increasingly so, higher education has also taken on the function of absorbing significant numbers of young people for whom societies cannot identify rewarding and satisfying roles to play. In that sense higher education functions, as Burton Clark suggested back in 1960, as a cooling-out device in which the expectations for better and rewarding future are being slowly but surely put at rest (Clark, 1960).

Thinking about finding a place for the young people's societies appear unable to offer rewarding opportunities, two other institutions come to mind – that of the penitentiary and the military. Military service has indeed served for a long time as the way to initiate particularly young men into the adulthood. Professionalizing the business of waging a war has, however, rendered the conscript armies made of untrained late teenagers largely useless.

One of the countries where I have recently worked offers a rather remarkable example of the university-penitentiary nexus. That country has developed a large higher education system within a weak national economy. The only sector, offering graduates rewarding employment are the foreign-funded NGOs with a rather limited number of job openings. The alternative available to the graduates would be to leave the country altogether, although the complicated international scene and visa regimes put serious limits on that option. Despite this, higher education has been expanding rapidly for some twenty years, one of the main reasons for that being that having large numbers of young people roaming on the streets and throwing stones at the security forces perceived as unfriendly, would most likely interrupt the fragile development the country and lead to violence. Although the calculation here appears rather different from that of the usual rate of the returns assessment, the solution, at least in a short term, is still being perceived as the best among those available. There are those, however, who suggest that such a disregard to students' own investment into their education and the opportunity cost paid is likely to backfire sooner or later. The 1,300 disillusioned Tunisian university students who left reportedly the country in 2015 to fight for the Islamic State in Syria (MEMO, 2015) may caution against the not entirely thought through policies of higher education.

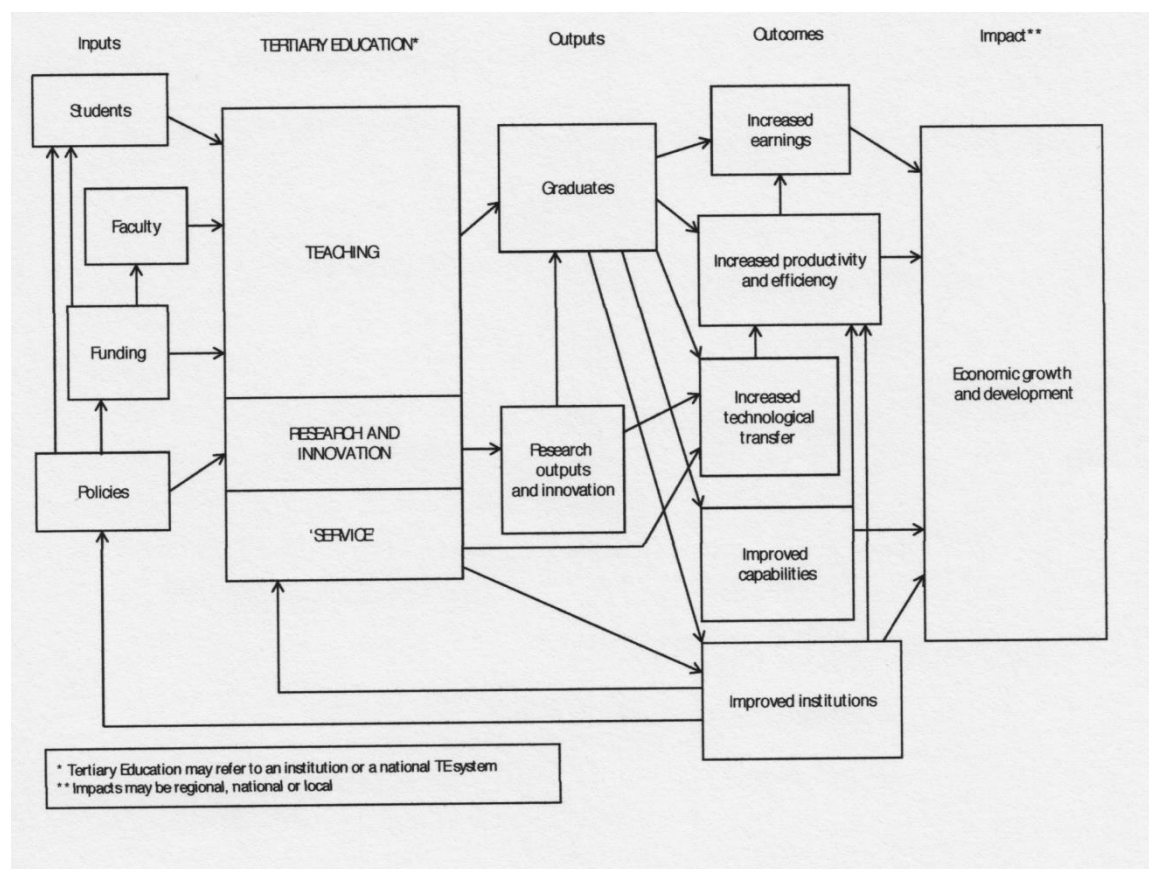
#### **IV.**

As the sector keeps expanding and the burden of it grows on the purses of the nations, particularly those of lower-middle and low income, where expectations are high in terms of a higher education degree serving as a ticket to the social mobility elevator or out to a country with a higher standard of living, the cost of it needs to be justified. As Figure 1 indicates, this is increasingly being done in terms of the economic growth and development linked back to higher education.

Justifying expanding the higher education sector on the grounds of the economic growth it is expected to feed has been, at least by some of the commentators, perceived as problematic since at least the 1990s (see e. g. Murphy, 1993). It is being argued that expanding economy allows more young people the privilege to benefit from higher education and, in a way, from the extension of childhood by another three or four years. This, however, is not an argument that would necessarily please the taxpayers paying for that privilege. That particularly in countries that offer higher education free of charge. Offering higher education free of charge means, as rule, redistributing public revenue to the benefit of those better-off – young people from families representing higher cultural, social and economic capital who enjoy access to higher education as opposed to the entire population, a half or more of which do not have that access. To justify its cost, higher education must demonstrate its value to the society, which it is



indeed doing with a great degree of passion, reaching as far as at times censoring any critical voices, including those within its own ranks. We know, for example, that in some UK universities students have been instructed that giving unenthusiastic feedback on their learning experience is likely to lead the decline of the university's reputation and with this the value of the degrees of the graduates, diminishing their employment opportunities (Gill, 2008).



*Figure 1. Conceptual framework of higher education impact (Oketch et al., 2014)*

As higher education participation rates are rapidly reaching 50% in lower-middle and low-income countries, the argument of higher education providing access to highly qualified well-paid jobs no longer stands. Such jobs are not available to the growing cohorts of university graduates. University graduates, instead of occupying highly qualified jobs drive individuals representing lower levels of formal education downwards on the employment hierarchy or altogether out of it. But in even in the world better known to us – aren't we all aware of holders of PhDs in social sciences even from the very best of the universities are a year after graduation still working in the copy room, proving often too expensive to be hired as a school teachers?

In that world the argument of higher education leading to a marginal increase of labor productivity justifying the better pay no longer stands. Some, such as Simon Marginson for example, argue that the problem stands well beyond the competence of higher education:

What higher education cannot do on its own, despite the supply-side promise of human capital theory, is expand the number of high value positions, so as to enable expanded mobility into middle and upper echelons of society (Marginson, 2015).

My own view on the matter is that higher education declaring its inability to deliver according to its promises acts irresponsibly. They either should figure it out – for example how graduates from higher education would be capable becoming job creators creating jobs for themselves and one or two of their friends, instead of consuming the benefits of the economic growth not happening and jobs not available – by taking a cue from people like Matthew Crawford (Crawford, 2009), or somebody should take them to the account on the grounds other than the dubious self-serving “policy” research.

Marginson (2015) suggests that “Educational research cannot identify the alchemy by which sub-elite credentials can be turned into gold. “ Perhaps somebody should disclose to the public the true nature of these degrees then. If higher education is about the offspring off the affluent classes experimenting with their independent living – this should be made known; if it is about absorbing social and political tensions and “cooling-out” the expectations of the excluded and underrepresented – that should be put on the table too, even if it threatens the industry’s interests. If the only lesson in democracy students learn is about collectively choosing the drinks for a party – is the price of the education really worth it? By the end of the day, that latter decision, reached democratically or otherwise, does not carry much of significance after midnight anyway.

The promises of higher education offering social mobility to the excluded and underrepresented groups remain mostly undelivered, except it is being done by the very best universities with a comprehensive student support available. Widening access to second or third-rate universities provides precious little in terms of social justice, turning instead into *cooling-out* of hopes and expectations as argued above. Arum and Roksa (2011) have for example demonstrated that over 40 % of the students in four-year colleges learn pretty much nothing during their first two years of study and that later they learn even less. Meanwhile the inequality gap is widening. Those lagging behind at the entry lag even more behind later. It seems to be the case that while lip-service is being paid to the agenda of social justice, there is a high degree of reluctance to invest into making it a success. One may agree with Teichler (Teichler, 2015) that distributing skills for equally will, independently of the reputational value of the particular credentials, lead towards a more democratic society. There are, however, two

further concerns here: (i) it may require a rather long waiting for the benefits to accumulate over generations; and (ii) one cannot be certain how much in terms of real tangible skills some of these colleges actually provide.

Social change seen from the point of view of education can be seen through Nancy Frazer's prism of recognition and redistribution (Frazer & Honneth, 2003). I would argue that the potential of social change this framework offers remains rather limited. Redistribution being offered in terms of widening access to low quality and low relevance sub sectors of higher education fails to deliver. Recognition, which I tend to see more as a matter of curriculum policy, stands in tension with some of the ideologies of Science, finding feminist and indigenous epistemologies as problematic.

Science is the religion of our times and research is appreciated for its redeeming power. Science appears, however, as massively overreaching for its promises, as well as confining university in a rather restrictive intellectual straitjacket. Discussing this at any depth would reach well beyond the purposes of the current discourse and has been provided more competently than the current speaker would be able by others, such as late Paul Feyerabend (see e.g. Feyerabend, 1999, 2011). For the purposes of our occasion I would only suggest that I am rather surprised how African universities have been recently instructed setting-up industry-liaison offices at a considerable cost (AAU-AUCC, 2013) in an utter disregard to the amount of relevant knowledge being produced at the respective universities and industries being mostly absent. It is also known and well documented (see e.g. Tomusk, 2011) that there is considerably less money to be found in the intellectual property rights business than commonly assumed by consultants to the higher education industry.

Regarding research informing better policies, I would like just to remind us about one of the leading European higher education policy researchers, a German sociologist Ulrich Teichler, who after retiring soberly concluded that the one of the main functions of policy research was to provide scientific legitimation to policies already adopted by governments (Teichler, 2003). This constitutes the very opposite of one of the main missions of the intellectuals – telling the truth to the power, looking more like representing power to fellow intellectuals and citizens. The recent mobilization of higher education researchers and consultants implementing Bologna Process and manufacturing legitimacy for it would serve as a remarkable example of the latter (see e.g. Tomusk, 2004).

It is rather common for the academics to scold politicians and policy makers for their lack of interest in their research, allegedly allowing designing policies considerably better. A recent discussion on related matters suggests, however, that informing policies would require policy researchers and advocates being aware of the technicalities of the

policy process and the big political issues allowing the context for the interventions as well as presenting narratives catching public attention (Tomusk, 2016). Policy research living in a holy innocence from the political is doomed to remain irrelevant and one should not blame that only on the politicians. The other extreme – science selling itself off to the political does not, however, appear an option considerably more appealing.

Public engagement is a notion gaining increasing prominence. There are many ways to go about it, widely different for their impact in terms of their cultural, social or perhaps even political change. Recent discussions in the UK suggest that within the academia this is usually reduced to popularizing science and research outcomes among the lay public. While it has a lot to do justifying the public funds spent on research, the agenda does not appear necessarily as unproblematic – those with more purist tastes for the work on the fields of science, even this constitutes nothing short of a waste of precious time and brain resources of the scientific workforce (Moriarty, 2016). Comprehensive agendas for engaged higher education, such as for example exemplified by Bard College remain less than rare. Bard College, New York, has founded an international network of higher education institutions seeing civic engagement as the leading idea of curriculum design as well as the faculty scholarly work, extra- curricular activities and the forming of partnerships with higher education institutions and foundations (Becker, 2015).

The current climate of higher education in its drive towards re-arranging the landscape of higher education in hierarchies based on rather different values does not necessarily reward civic engagement particularly highly, while the challenges such institutions face in terms of the resources required and faculty and administrators' contributions are many.

## **V.**

Following the above it is not at all surprising that those with the courage to look at higher education with their eyes open see a number of conflicts and contradictions and discrepancies between the declarations made and goods being delivered. Some years ago I invited Hans Weiler, a political scientist from Stanford, to give a talk similar to what I am delivering here this morning. He had quite a few things to say about what he saw as the overwhelming ambivalence of the university institution. According to Weiler, university demonstrates ambivalence about a number of issues, among them ambivalence:

- about the relative priority of teaching and research,
- about the proper relationship between the university and the state, or between the university and business,
- about what and whom to include and exclude from the pursuits of the university,

- about how centralized or decentralized the structures of decision-making should be,
- about how democratic or authoritarian a university governance should be,
- about the relative importance of the autonomy of the individual scholar and the autonomy of the institution,
- about the national or international an institution the university should be,
- about how regulated or deregulated the life of the university and its members should be,
- about the importance or obsolescence of disciplines,
- about the relative virtues of the status quo and of change, or of freedom and order (Weiler, 2005: 5-6).

This, one may suggest, shows great inventiveness on behalf of university communities finding ways of, as the old saying goes – *Having ones cake and eating it too*, by means of playing both or all sides there might be. While Weiler suggest university being in inherently ambivalent institution, his analysis suggests it being a rather opportunistic institution, demonstrating little core value beyond its own interests. Those who may still remember the early days, might recall that at one stage such opportunism was explicitly promoted by higher education consultants, teaching universities to become “adaptive and entrepreneurial” (Davies, 1987). A decade later the entire sector had been caught in the fire of entrepreneurialism.

Showing such a degree of ambivalence causes, however, major difficulties taking universities to the account:

It is not difficult to imagine how easily a university could avoid accountability for its results and accomplishments as long as there is ambivalence about exactly what and institution is supposed to accomplish. As long as there is ambivalence about a university’s goals and purposes, it makes little sense to hold it accountable for whether or not it has achieved the goals (Weiler, 2005: 6-7).

While Weiler demonstrates difficulties taking the university institution and higher education as a major global industry to the account, his analysis offers little in terms of identifying a conceptual path along which constructive criticism could be provided.

Needless to say that the latter is not necessarily an easy matter, requiring some courage to walk roads beyond the current mainstream higher education discourse walled with defensive rhetoric under the disguises from the core values of *Science* all the way to human rights (Tomusk, 2011).

## VI.

Russian writer Viktor Pelevin (2003) in his essay “Macedonian Critique of the French Thought” argues that there is a particular trick French intellectuals play on their reader – that the reader is almost being convinced that there is a point to those verbal constructions, and only at a very close look finds out that there is none.

It is therefore with a degree of hesitation one resorts to the French social thought in a search of a scalpel to further dissect the university institution. The need for identifying further instruments becomes, however, urgent as the Anglo-Saxon naivety of perception, bordering with the very denial of the existence of the institutions as *bodiless beings* controlling a significant portion of human behavior, hits the wall trying to gain traction in understanding social processes.

According to Young, institutions are “recognized practices consisting of easily identifiable roles, coupled with collection of rules or conventions governing relations among the occupants of these roles” (quoted in: DiMaggio & Powell, 1991: 8).

According to Luc Boltanski:

An institution is a bodiless being to which is delegated the task of stating of whatness of what it is (Boltanski, 2012: 75).

While the existence of institutions as theoretical constructs is easy to question or even deny, their function regulating our daily behavior, hopes and expectations is hard to overestimate. For those having in some way or another benefitted from the mythical powers of the university as an institution – either being an academic or scientist declaring a privileged access to the truth or as a graduate enjoying the powers of a *degree* entering a job interview, the existence of institutions becomes a fact less questionable.

The rather interesting issue Boltanski raises stems from the fact that institutions as bodiless beings cannot talk for themselves. They need human intermediaries, and we cannot ever be entirely certain whose will the person representing an institution conveys – that of the institution – abstract and purified in the centuries of debates, arguments and even at times violent clashes and revolutions, or that of a potentially corrupt human being:

But the problem is that, when it has no body, this being cannot speak, at least other than by expressing itself the intermediary of spokespersons ... (Boltanski, 2012: 84).

Out of this grows the phenomenon which Boltanski calls the *hermeneutic contradiction* – the difficulty of distinguishing the voice of an *institution* as a pure bodiless being from the voices of its *spokespersons* – bodied human beings tainting the will of the institutions with their own interests and expectations. For example, when a renowned scientist acting as a spokesperson of the university declares to the public how additional funding would allow the university solving most of not all the problems contemporary societies face, one may find it difficult indeed to draw a line between the voice of the bodiless, disinterested institution, the interests of the higher education industry and those of the speaker as human being worrying about their job security and income. I would suggest that a great deal of interesting critical work could be done by dissecting the map of ambivalences offered by Weiler, using the concept of the *hermeneutic contradiction*. The fact that we can never be quite certain whose voice we hear offers, however, a powerful instrument to take institutions and their spokespersons to the account.

It is particularly the voice of Science that is in our days caught in the hermeneutic contradiction. I suggested earlier how evidence based policy could easily become policy based (manufacturing of the) evidence (Tomusk, 2016). Ashis Nandy explains:

As more and more areas of life are ‘scientized’ and taken out of the reach of participatory politics to be handed over to experts, the universities as the final depository of expertise have become a major global political actor of our times. In addition to their other tasks, they legitimize the ‘expertization’ of public affairs and the reign of the professionals (Nandy, 2000: 116).

It is particularly relevant for our purposes, as Boltanski argues, following Bruno Latour, how *Science* is actually monopolizing critical intellectual work while declaring it being beyond the grasp of lay public (Boltanski, 2012: 123). This would allow Science to play it both ways – declaring the contemporary society complex beyond the comprehension of the regular education public and building close loops with policy makers offering its own interests as evidence based policies or confirming the wisdom of certain political circles, groups or individuals on allegedly “scientific” grounds.

University, through its massive expansion, has gained a huge amount of interest of its own. For some decades after WWII it grew into a very nice and civilized place to be with an unprecedented job security and lots of flexibility, absorbing, among the others, significant numbers of upwardly mobile former members of working classes (Ryan & Sackrey, 1996). It is therefore with a degree of unease that one realizes many of the recent voices raising in defense of the university or defense of the humanities or in defense of other possibly great values, that what is on stake are not those values, but the privileges of the privileged.

In its aspirations to dominate the domain of critical thought, science meanwhile is massively overreaching. A recent paper “The Normative Insignificance of Neuroscience” by Selim Barker (Barker, 2009) demonstrates how science tries to resolve issues that belong to the political domain of fundamental matters of human social life. However, reaching to the bottom of such cases and finding there not *Science*, but personal ideologies of the particular scientists, requires hard work and a great degree of professional scientific competence.

It is within the confines of the university where the voice of *Science* is claiming to possess knowledge, possibly all of it, and various political interests meet. While historically there have been other competing voices there, such as for example that of the Roman Catholic Church and the Nation State trying to express themselves through the university, it is increasingly the managers who try to control the voice of the university, at least as long as a scientist has not raised the research funds considered sufficient to occupy the stage and talk. I do believe that it is absolutely essential for the university communities – students as well as the faculty to exercise their critical faculties distinguishing between the voices, acknowledge that there are fundamental issues concerning human beings living with each other science can never resolve, and that therefore need to be discussed and agreed upon among each generation. On the one hand, it is the voice of *science* that threatens open society with a radical closure on the scientific grounds. But what may actually be well the case is that instead of the voice of science, politics is entering the conversation under the latter’s disguise.

Declaring university as a radically apolitical institution may well lead to a situation similar to that in the Soviet Union, where *Historical and Dialectical Materialism* was the scientific discipline of the highest importance and every student took a course is *Scientific Communism*. Alternatively, it may easily become an institution of creating economic value only, where all other values, including those of human lives, freedom and dignity are being reduced to their cash value, reminding me a recent discussions in the House of Commons, where after two hours of discussions on the possible impact of BREXIT on British higher education the only European value identified was the £ 580 M UK universities receiving annually from EU in research funding, money frankly insignificant for a sector of such size.

## **VII.**

Moving towards bringing it all together, I would argue that there is a significant amount of critical work for university communities to do that would indeed support social change as well as prepare students to make a contribution to building open societies – keeping these open for their own lifetime and handing the same ethos over to the next generation.



I would see it happening under the heading of “accountability”, taking to the account:

- the political classes,
- the institutions of university and science,
- the spokespersons of those institutions – scientists and intellectuals.

University communities taking political classes to the account is not an uncontroversial proposition. I have seen deeply politically divided campuses in Nepal leading to very destructive outcomes, such as explosions and burnt down libraries; I have also seen clashes between the Islamist and Secularist student activists in Tunisia. But there are also cases such as the student reaction to the kidnapping of students in Iguala, Mexico, in September 2014, where students occupied campuses and read aloud the names of each of the 43 students kidnapped by the police and handed over to a criminal militia for killing, until the perpetrators were arrested and taken to justice<sup>16</sup>.

Universities fall often short of their promises and, as Weiler has suggested, taken university to the account may be a rather complicated matter. I do believe that students can possibly play a significant role here. Historically Higher Education Support Program of OSF has worked for example with the Anti-Corruption Student Network in South-East Europe taking universities to the account on issues of corruption – nepotism, bribery and others all they way on the misuse of public funding.

Critically analyzing the discourses manufactured by academics and intellectuals is perhaps even a more complex matter. To demonstrate Science overreaching in its claims requires a high degree of professional competence, but still needs to be done to avoid what Feyerabend called “the tyranny of science”. But it is also about the value science, particularly social sciences being practiced. Jacques Ranciere in his critique of Pierre Bourdieu as a “sociologist king” argues for example how the allegedly critical work of the guru does deliver precious little in terms of a social change, quoting along the lines Bourdieu himself:

The sociologist would be, generally, the scientist [savant] and physician of self-denial. By not changing the ranking of the lowly ranked, he would give them ‘the possibility of taking on their habitus without guilt or suffering’ (Ranciere, 2004).

As opposed to this comes Michael Burawoy’s *public sociology* program:

The recognition of public sociology must extend to the organic kind, which often remains invisible and private and is often considered to be apart from our professional lives. The project of such public sociology is to make visible the

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<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014\\_Iguala\\_mass\\_kidnapping](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Iguala_mass_kidnapping)

invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life (Burawoy, 2007: 28-29).

“Who would be interested in a sociology for sociology’s sake (in the way people refer to ‘art for art’s sake’)” asks Boltanski,

– that is to say, a sociology, which exhausting itself in ever more sophisticated and meticulous descriptions, has no other objective than its own fulfillment as a discipline of knowledge? .... The processes through which the actors in social life constitute the wholes of which they form part, and cause them to last or subvert them, are themselves articulated, in large measure, with the possibility of critique, not only when they challenge the existing orders, but also when they are led to justify them (Boltanski, 2012: 17-18)

In doing so, our aim is, as Boltanski suggests “to help society – that is, people, the people who are called ‘ordinary’ - deliberately maintain themselves in the state of constant imbalance in the absence of which, as the direct prophecies announce, domination would in fact seize hold of everything” (Boltanski, 2012: 160). The price of open society is imbalance. Security secured by some for themselves, including the spokespersons of some of the great institutions, comes at the cost of a doom for many – socially, economically and otherwise. There are many open questions regarding university engaging with society and society with university, however, as the world stands – disengaged university makes little sense, neither would it be productive to leave university solely in the mercy of the political classes or the neoliberal markets.

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*Research Paper*



**Science Education in Hungary**

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**Abstract**

Examination of the efficacy of science education has been in the forefront of domestic and international research in recent decades. Thirty years ago the efficacy of science education in Hungary was internationally recognised. However, there signs as early as the 1990s that student outcomes were declining in Hungarian students' ability to apply knowledge and problem-solving. Based on the results of the PISA assessments, there were no considerable changes in Hungarian students' knowledge. Besides the overall performance which corresponded to the average, however, it could be observed that Hungarian students' ability to apply knowledge related to experiments and measurements lagged behind that of students in other countries. Based on the results of the 2009 assessment, there is a relatively small number of students with outstanding abilities in the Hungarian student population. The decline in outcomes in 2012 could be explained with the greater number of students with poorer outcomes. Research confirmed that this decline in outcomes can be associated with the predominantly theoretical knowledge of our students and the low efficiency of their ability to apply knowledge. Due to a lack of practice and the employment of ill-matching learning strategies, a more thorough processing of the enormous amount of lexical knowledge taught at school does not take place. All this is further confounded by the fact that our students' sincere interest in sciences decreases with age. Investigations performed over the past years have confirmed that, in order to increase interest in knowledge taught and to improve outcomes, changes need to be introduced in science education.

**Keywords:** science education, student outcomes, learning strategies, interest in subject

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## **Introduction**

There have been significant changes in achievements of the Hungarian scientific education in the past few decades. Ever-worsening student outcomes, the low-efficiency level of applicability of students' primarily theoretical knowledge and a decline in the popularity of science subjects (Nahalka, 1999; Csapó, 1999, 2004; Géczi, 2001; D. Balogh, 2002) have become not only generally felt in everyday pedagogical practice but have also manifested themselves measurably in the results of domestic and international research. Analysis of these investigations reveals that the present situation is a consequence of a process that started earlier. Single, as well as short, longitudinal studies reflected only a momentary situation. The ongoing monitoring of the change that had taken place was made possible only through regular international investigations carried out over several years. The assessments did not only verify the changes in student outcomes but also made it possible to compare our students' outcomes with those of learners in other countries. They also provided information about the factors influencing performance (Nahalka, 1999; Csapó, 1999, 2004; Géczi, 2001; D. Balogh, 2002). The joint results of domestic and international investigations called for an exploration of the causes of the changes that had taken place in Hungarian science education and for finding possible solutions.

## **Changes in students' outcomes in science subjects**

In the 1970's and 80's, Hungarian science education was internationally recognised (Vári et al., 1998; Géczi, 2001; Csapó, 2015). This was partly due to the features of the Hungarian educational system. Learners were taught science subjects fairly early on in their studies, in several lessons a week (Báthory, 2000; Géczi, 2001; Szakály, 2001). However, 1995 TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study) indicated a decline in student outcomes (Revákné & Máth, 2002). Except for the 1995 assessments, during IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) assessments the results involving the entire test suggested a high degree of knowledge, but the subtests examining scientific thinking did not live up to expectations. The investigation aimed to assess ability to apply acquired knowledge as well as problem-solving ability (Vári et al., 1998; Géczi, 2001; B. Németh, 2003; Vári, 2003).

PISA assessments started in 2000 (Programme for International Student Assessment) aim to assess to what extent 15-year-old learners can apply their knowledge in „real-life” situations (B. Németh, 2003). The assessment aimed to study three domains: reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy PISA is a triennial survey and provides information about the features and achievements of the various countries' educational systems. Each year, one of the domains is given more emphasis compared with the other two (Géczi, 2001; B. Németh, 2003; Vári, 2003; Balázs et al., 2007, 2010;

Csapó, 2015). Between 2000 and 2006 there were no significant changes in the outcomes. Hungarian students' outcomes in scientific literacy were on a par with the average outcome of the students of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (Balázs et al., 2007).

The 2006 assessment focussed on learners' ability to apply scientific knowledge. Among the issues investigated were identification of problems in sciences, reasoning behind the phenomena and students' ability to apply scientific evidence. In that assessment Hungary ranked 13-17th in science among the 30 OECD countries. Since averages could be calculated only with a certain margin of error, no exact order was set up among the countries. There is no ignoring the fact that Hungarian students' ability to apply experiments and measurements in practice lags behind that of students in other countries (Balázs et al., 2007). In the 2009 assessment Hungarian students' outcomes still corresponded to the OECD average. However, a closer examination of the outcome revealed that, behind the „facade” of the average outcome, there was a much more nuanced picture. Six levels of ability were identified during the examination. Learners who reach level six can identify, reason for, and consistently apply their knowledge in various life situations. Their thinking and reasoning skills are outstanding and they are able to solve unknown problems in science (Balázs et al., 2010). In 2009, this level of ability was reached by 1,1% of children in OECD countries. This rate was considerably lower in the case of Hungarian students: 0,3%. If we examine the two highest levels of ability (levels 5 and 6), a similar difference can be observed between the OECD average and the Hungarian outcomes. One of the causes of this phenomenon is a feature of the Hungarian educational system: overshadowed by a focus on teaching enormous amounts of lexical knowledge, there is hardly any time left to devote to the practical application of students' theoretical knowledge, making Hungarian students' knowledge primarily theoretical in nature. Our learners have few opportunities to study tasks taken from or relating to everyday life. There is hardly any relationship between things taught at school and everyday life (B. Németh, 2003). The PISA assessments also find the rate of those learners who do not reach the second level of ability important as this is the level necessary to enter the labour market. In this respect the Hungarian results were better (14,2 %) compared with the OECD average (18%). Behind the average-looking overall performance lay the fact that there were relatively few low-achievers and students with outstanding abilities in the Hungarian learner population (Balázs et al., 2010).

The PISA assessment of 2012 showed a decrease in Hungarian students' outcomes. Their average performance was lower compared with both their 2000-2009 results and the OECD average. All this came despite the fact that in education a process had begun which had tried to compensate for earlier flaws. Research as well as everyday practice called for increasing interest in the subject and employing more varied ways of

processing teaching material (Csapó, 2004). Our students were among those within EU member states who performed poorer: Hungarian students ranked 19-26th among the 34 OECD countries. Only 0,5% of Hungarian students reached level six of ability compared with 1,2% of OECD countries. Although the rate of students with exceptional abilities did not decrease, the number of students with poorer abilities increased: their number had grown to 18% compared with 14,2% three years before. Thus the decrease in performance in the field of science subjects was related to an increase in the number of students with poorer performance. The question whether this change is transitory or permanent will be adequately answered only by the outcomes of the 2015 assessment (Balázs et al., 2013; Csapó, 2015).

Similar changes in the science knowledge of Hungarian students were born out by domestic reports, too (Géczi, 2001; Revákné, 2001, 2010; Revákné & Máth, 2002; B. Németh, 2003; Máth & Revákné, 2007). The assessment „Science in everyday life” (B. Németh, 2003: 507.) contained tasks similar to those in the PISA assessment. Some of these were based on knowledge acquired in class but they required students to apply that knowledge to real-life situations. The assessment had two important conclusions. One: Hungarian science education is not particularly effective when ability to apply knowledge to everyday life is considered. Two: tasks are performed with better results by those students „who possess more knowledge and more efficient problem-solving skills and patterns of reasoning” (B. Németh, 2003: 523). Similar results were highlighted by the results of investigations of the problem-solving thinking of secondary school students, too (Revákné, 2001, 2010; Revákné & Máth, 2002; Máth & Revákné, 2007). The relationship between successful task solution, the amount of acquired knowledge as well as the application of effective problem-solving and reasoning strategies proved to be decisive (Revákné, 2001, 2010; Revákné & Máth, 2002; B. Németh, 2003; Máth & Revákné, 2007).

### **The role of learning strategies and interest in the subject**

Based on research results it can be concluded that changes need to be introduced in order to improve the efficiency of Hungarian science education. Among the factors affecting outcome special attention should be paid to increasing interest in a subject and finding more efficient ways of mastering knowledge (Nagy, 1999; Csapó, 2004).

Among the causes of the situation described is the fact that although our students learn the teaching material and, if necessary – during written and oral tests – can even recall it, there are very few who can, in fact, apply this lexical knowledge to practice. Students often encounter difficulty even in mastering the material. Most students cannot use learning strategies most befitting the special features of the material. Research has proven that mechanical rote-learning, ever so popular with Hungarian students, is also



rather strong. Based on the results of a PISA assessment, it was with Hungarian students that memorisation was the most popular in 2000 (Revákné, 2001; B. Németh & Habók, 2006; Környei, 2008). This can give rise to concern since applicable knowledge can only be mastered using in-depth learning strategies that promote understanding. Without proper strategies a more thorough processing of knowledge does not take place. Important and not important elements of knowledge do not become distinct; new knowledge does not connect to previous knowledge, it becomes fixed in isolation and lack of coherence makes later recall and application more difficult (Nagy, 1999; Csapó, 2004). Due to a lack of time and practice, the enormous amount of information taught by schools does not form a unified system in the students' minds. The relationships and correlations between the various parts are scant and imprecise. No conceptual system is formed that is „both vertically and horizontally accessible” (Nagy, 1999: 263.). This prevents knowledge from becoming real, applicable knowledge (Nagy, 1999).

Interest in the subject strongly affecting performance gradually decreases with age. The PISA assessment of 2000 reported that the instrumental factor was exceptionally high among Hungarian students even by international standards. It is not genuine interest in the material being learnt but rather some external reward or reaching a goal that is the primary purpose of these students. The 2006 PISA assessment tried to explore students' attitude to science subjects not only in a questionnaire but also through the tasks they had to solve (Nagy, 1999; Csapó, 2000; Géczi, 2001; Revákné & Máth, 2002; B. Németh & Habók, 2006; Balázsi et al., 2007; Máth & Revákné, 2007; Környei, 2008). Luckily, there are still subjects among sciences, such as biology, that are not entirely rejected by students. According to a domestic survey (Géczi, 2001), eleventh graders find biology more tiring and difficult than younger students, but they still think it is interesting and important. This can be a starting point for arousing our students' interest in science subjects, if carefully chosen pedagogical methods are used (Csapó, 2000; Géczi, 2001).

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*Research Paper*



**Changes in the environmental attitudes of secondary school students brought about by a project for sustainable development**

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**György Kónya<sup>18</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Developing students' environmental attitude is being given more and more emphasis related to all generations. It was done the changes in secondary school students' environmental attitudes using the big project „Our Environment in the 21st century”. In my study my aim was to find answers to the question what effects the subprojects in the field of the environment have on shaping students' ecologically caring attitudes. There were ten sub-projects within the great project, with an environmental issue in the centre of each, such as air and soil pollution. At the beginning and end of the 12-month project the students were asked to fill in a 36-item questionnaire on attitudes. The questions belonged to one of three groups and twelve blocks. Evaluation of the answers led me to conclude that there were significant differences in several of the experimental blocks compared with the control group. As well as the control groups saw a positive change. Among the three components (emotional, behavioral, environmental) the highest means were measured in emotions, and the lowest in behaviours. Significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) was observed in two cases in the experimental group. The data also shed light on the fact that students' long-term development in environmental awareness requires longer developing work.

**Keywords:** environmental education, project based learning, self-assessment, education for sustainable development

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## **Environmental Awareness and Environment-Related Behaviour**

Teachers who are heavily involved in environmental education have recognized that environmental awareness has become part and parcel of education. Environmental education has a great role in developing students' relationship with nature and their awareness of the environment and in familiarizing them with the concept of sustainability (Dopico & Garcia-Vazquez, 2011; Bonett & Williams, 1998). Results of international and Hungarian surveys suggest that school qualifications are decisive in shaping people's interest in environmental issues. Sensitivity and attention to environmental issues rise with the level of school qualifications (Valkó, 2003).

Finding the causes of the problems is not sufficient. We need environmentally conscious citizens who want to do something to solve these problems and are committed to them (Major, 2012). The most susceptible age for shaping environmental attitudes is school age. Both primary and secondary schools need to take every opportunity to make interested and extremely receptive children learn as much as possible about nature, different types of pollution, and prevention. Thus, the main aim of environmental education is to create a value system where development of environmental awareness, and eco-friendly attitudes, as well as shaping this attitude are decisive (Thiengkamol, 2011; Lükő, 2003). A very important tool of teaching eco-friendly attitude and sustainability is the title of "Eco-school". In order to win this title, the institutions need to teach serious environmental education not only in class but also in the entire institution.

Defining the concept of environmental awareness is a complex task. According to Shrum et al (1995) environmental awareness means caring for the environment. The adjective „green” suggests that a person cares about their environment (air, water), and a green consumer is a person whose consumer behaviour is affected by considerations for the environment.

Kerekes and Kindler (1997) studied environmental awareness from the point of view of consumption and consumption patterns. An eco-friendly consumer is a person who „is really interested in using environmentally-friendly products” (Kerekes & Kindler, 1997: 130). The eco-conscious shopping meets people's needs to a similar degree, with the obvious advantage that the amount of waste can be reduced, thus eco-conscious shopping contributes to lowering environmental burden.

These days more and more eco-friendly products and packaging can be found in shops, however, these are often considerably more expensive than traditional ones. In order to reduce environmental burden and the amount of waste, prices should be made affordable for everyone.

Berényi (2009) defines environmental awareness as a behaviour whereby an individual or an organisation acts in an environmentally responsible way and takes an active part in solving environmental problems. He thinks that, in addition to the issues of the environment, those of the social and economic environment are also components of the concept of environmental awareness. From the aspect of environmental marketing, environmental awareness manifests itself in different consumer habits (shopping habits).

Environmental awareness is not only instrumental in understanding the causes of environmental damage, it also urges people to act against dangers. It integrates knowledge necessary for the understanding of relations between people and the environment. Kovács (2007) gives the following definition of environmental awareness: „It is a scientific way of thinking which combines the long-term interests in environmental issues that are most appropriate for a society and its members with a clear purpose and a behaviour based on that attitude”. Its practical aim is to create harmonious relationships between man and nature.

The increase in the spread of environmentally conscious attitudes is proved by the increase in the number of eco-conscious consumers in Hungary, too. People are beginning to recognize the importance of saving the environment, and its vulnerability, but in many cases active intention (e.g. buying more expensive environmentally-friendly products rather than cheap products) is still absent.

### **Domestic and international studies**

In 1992, the international The Health of the Planet Survey examined environmental attitudes on the environment measured by surveys of citizens in 24 nations, including Hungary. The Hungarian Gallup Institute repeated the study in 1994 with the title „Zöldülő Magyarország” Környezeti attitűdök 1994 őszén („Greening Hungary; Environmental attitudes in autumn 1994). The results showed that Hungarian people thought that, besides social problems, the issues of the environment were also important. The first international survey authorised by the European Union targeting people’s environmental awareness took place in 1995. The researchers’ main objective was to find out about people’s knowledge about the environment, their worries and involvement. The results revealed that 80% of the population found environmental problems pressing to solve. In 2002 Eurobarometer carried out another study in the EU member states. The study showed an increase in people’s concerns especially in the fields of natural disasters and water pollution (Kovács, 2007).

A body of Hungarian research (Fischer, 1994; Kerekes & Kindler, 1994; Szirmai, 1999; Lányi, 2001; Nagy, 2012; Mayer, 2015) has investigated the characteristics of

environmental awareness and environmental sensitivity (Havas, 1995; Havas & Cziboly, 2000), respectively.

In 2005, the Institute of Environmental Science of Corvinus University studied the opinions of Hungarian secondary school students and adults formed of environmental issues. The research found that those who had received education on environmental issues showed a more positive attitude to the environment. According to the study of the "Waste Working Association" (HuMusz – Hulladék Munkaszövetség), this attitude became stronger among secondary school students and people in higher education. People with higher qualifications showed significantly greater environmental awareness (Kovács, 2007).

When examining changes in individuals' environmental attitudes we also assume that it keeps growing with age. A study performed among secondary school students in Hungary in 2004 showed interesting results: environmental attitudes of students who had received (1 year of) environmental education did not improve, in fact, they became more negative. This might have been caused by the fact that adolescents' social compliance decreases from year to year. Researchers have concluded that social desirability may determine attitudes on the environment (Gulyás & Varga, 2006).

In 2004, the Hungarian Gallup Institute investigated environmental issues on a sample of 1000 adults 18 years old or older and concluded that the majority of the population expect others to come up with solutions but are ready to make some sacrifices. Only a small proportion of the population think that, in addition to their government and local government, they, too, have a role in solving environmental problems (Kovács, 2007).

In his study Széplaki (2004) found that there was no significant difference between the scales of attitudes and knowledge on the one hand and scores of the action and emotional attitude components across eco- versus traditional schools on the other. In other words, students participating in direct environmental education do not possess significantly better attitudes and greater knowledge. This can be explained by the fact that eco-schools do not yet have a tradition in Hungary.

Examination of the older generation and the two sexes revealed (Schäfferné, 2007) that people over 40 focus more on saving energy than do younger people and that women have more pronounced eco-friendly attitudes than men.

### **Objective of the study**

One of the objectives of the great project „Our environment in the 21st century” was to examine the extent to which children's environmentally conscious attitudes developed.

The project was executed in the secondary grammar school of Diósgyőr in the academic year 2011-2012. Ten sub-projects were processed in the great project in groups of three people. Each sub-project had some kind of environmental problem as its centre (water pollution, noise pollution, waste, etc.) Students in their 11th and 12th grades worked on these issues on their own. Their teachers helped them with their work a period a week.

During the investigation we sought answers to questions like "How does a project for sustainable development affect the changes of attitudes on the environment?" Our hypothesis claims that the great project "Our environment in the 21st century" has a positive effect on the development of secondary school students' environmental attitudes. In the course of the study the students acquire a great amount of information about the factors damaging the environment, which changes their attitudes to saving the environment. We also examined how components of environmentally conscious attitudes change.

Several theories have emerged in connection with breaking down attitudes into components. Cialdini, Petty and Cacioppo (1981) stress the „one-factor” evaluative nature of attitudes compared with their three-factor structure advocated by others. Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) claimed that there is a cognitive, an affective as well as a conative component. The cognitive component of attitudes shows the knowledge individuals have about attitude objects and how they judge those objects. The affective component covers individuals' emotions concerning attitude objects. These emotions can be positive or negative. Emotional values (bad - good, beautiful – ugly, approval – disapproval) provide the motivation for the behaviour concerning attitude objects. The cognitive component provides us with information about how the person under investigation would behave in the presence of the object and not about how they would actually behave (Smith & Mackie, 2004). In my study I also investigated this three-factor division. Finally, I examined the effect of the great project on the changes in attitudes in the various fields.

### **Sample and methods**

The study, including 119 students, was performed between September 2011 and June 2012. Assessment was carried out in two stages: the first at the beginning of the project, and the second, at the end of it. Of the 119 students 30 participated in the great project "Our environment in the 21st century". Figure 1. shows distribution of the responders according to their gender.

*Table 1. Distribution of the sexes in the study*

| Sex   | Experimental (N=30) | Control (N=79) |
|-------|---------------------|----------------|
| boys  | 13                  | 44             |
| girls | 17                  | 35             |

Project efficiency was demonstrated using longitudinal measurement, during which I made assessments at the beginning of the project (null hypothesis) and at the end of it, to demonstrate the changes. A survey containing 36 items about age-adjusted attitudes was filled in. The survey was completed in class time at school and the learners were given 45 minutes to fill it in. The 36 items were followed by options represented by numbers from which the students chose the one that best expressed their opinions. Only the study leader stayed in the classroom while the students were completing the survey. The students worked on their own but could turn to the study leader for help. The questions fell into one of three groups: 12 investigated environmentally conscious attitudes, 12 aimed at emotions and the last 12 targeted environmental awareness. The survey was based on Leeming, Dwyer and Bracken's Environmental Attitude and Knowledge Scale (1995). Besides, the 36 items were also classified into different blocks, each belonging to a particular topic. In order to avoid predictability of the solutions, the questions of the blocks were mixed not only within the blocks but across them, too.

*Table 2. Questions of the 12 blocks*

|                                                                 |                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Concept of the environment, protection of the environment       | 1, 2, 3, 15, 22, 24, 25, 34, 35 |
| Environmentally conscious shopping and consumption              | 4, 5, 6                         |
| Energy management                                               | 7, 8, 20, 23                    |
| Drinking water. water pollution, water environmental protection | 9, 11, 16                       |
| Nature protection                                               | 10, 12, 13, 21, 33, 35          |
| Air pollution                                                   | 14                              |
| Healthy way of life and environment                             | 14, 19                          |
| Waste management, waste processing, eco-toxicology              | 17, 18                          |
| Sustainable development                                         | 26, 27, 28, 32                  |
| Demography and sustainability                                   | 29, 31                          |
| Ecological footprint                                            | 30                              |
| Environmentally conscious architecture and transport            | 13, 19                          |

The questions needed to be answered based on a five-point Likert scale, which had the following options. In the first 24 items: never; seldom; usually; often; and always. For questions 25 to 36: do not agree at all; mostly do not agree; more or less agree; partly agree; and totally agree. In all 36 items the most environmentally friendly answer was awarded with 5 points while the least environmentally friendly one received 1 point. The attitude scale contained questions where the direction of the wording was reversed and answers „never” and „do not agree at all” were given 5 points.



The three groups of questions (environmentally conscious behaviour, emotions, and environmental awareness) were covered by 12 questions each. The lowest number of points given to any one group of questions was 12 while the highest was 60. The complete attitude scale was obtained from the points awarded to the answers of all 36 questions. Statistical analysis of the data was performed using SPSS 17.0 statistical evaluation programme two-sample T-test, independent T-test.

I calculated the mean scores of the first and the second tests and their difference in the experimental group, and the significance of the difference. This was repeated in the control group, too. Then I calculated the difference of the means of the experimental and control group as well as the difference and the significance of the difference. When there was a significant difference between the scores, the component of the second assessment showed an increase in the difference between the first and second performance, it showed improvement.

I compared the differences in the scores of the experimental and control groups in terms of the two assessments. If development in the experimental group was significantly better compared with the control group, the programme had obviously exerted a positive effect on development. (If the experimental and control groups both showed development, but the experimental group's development was significantly weaker than that of the control group, the programme did not bring about any detectable positive change.)

## **Results**

A body of Hungarian (Szalay & Szepesi, 2009; Balázs et al., 2012; Török & Rausch, 2015) and international research (e.g. Leeming, Dwyer & Bracken, 1995; Rickinson, 2001) has investigated students' environmental attitudes. The examinations revealed that students' environmental attitudes were generally positive.

Comparison of the values gained from the two assessments in the experimental as well as the control group revealed that, in terms of the mean scores, both groups saw a positive change (Figure 3). It is interesting to note, though, that in the control group the change was greater (0,14 (SD 0.56) for the experimental and 0,28 (SD 0.62) for the control group). No significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) was revealed in the mean scores of the two assessments.

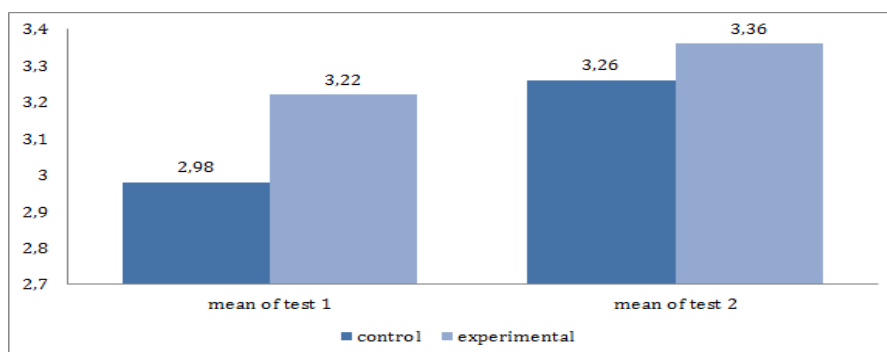


Figure 3. Changes in environmental attitudes in the experimental and control groups

In the next step, I examined the development of the emotional, behavioural and environmental awareness components of environmental attitudes. None of these showed any significant changes ( $p > 0.05$ ) brought about by the influence of the project in the experimental group. Earlier studies (Széplaki, 2004) have also pointed out a difference between the emotional and behavioural components, namely that students' emotional attitude was a great deal more significant than their behavioural attitude. Among the three components the highest means were measured in emotions, and the lowest in behaviours (Figure 4). The highest means in the experimental group belonged to emotions (3.67), which means that in the short run the most significant changes can be achieved in the fields of conceptual thinking and emotional development. In order to achieve long-term changes in behaviour longer development work is necessary. Hence we need to make sure that our students are told about the options that could make ecologically responsible behaviour more effective (Jensen & Schnack, 1994).

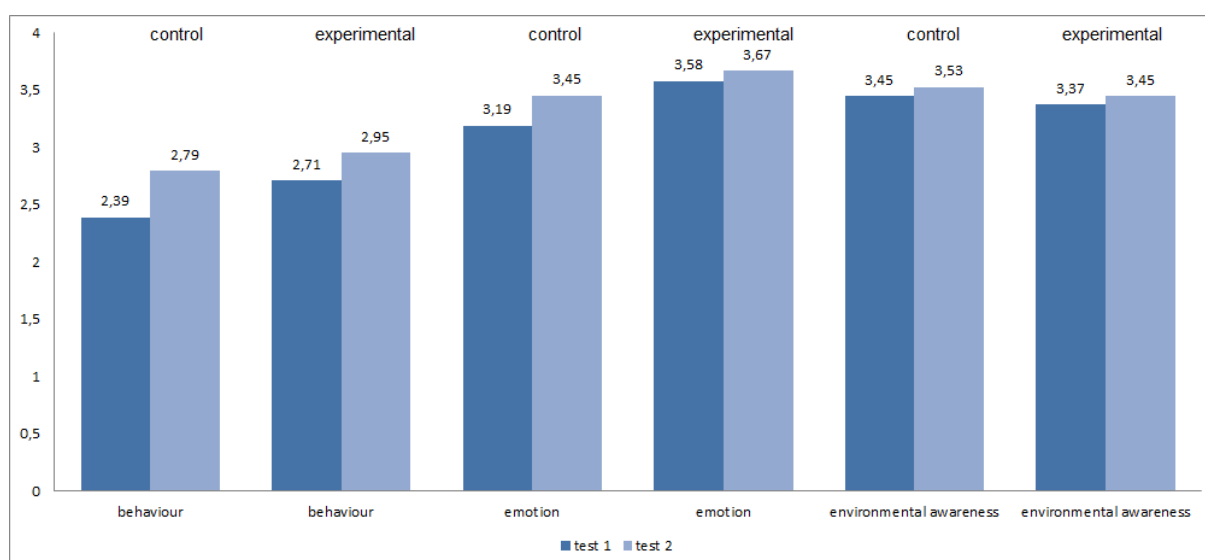
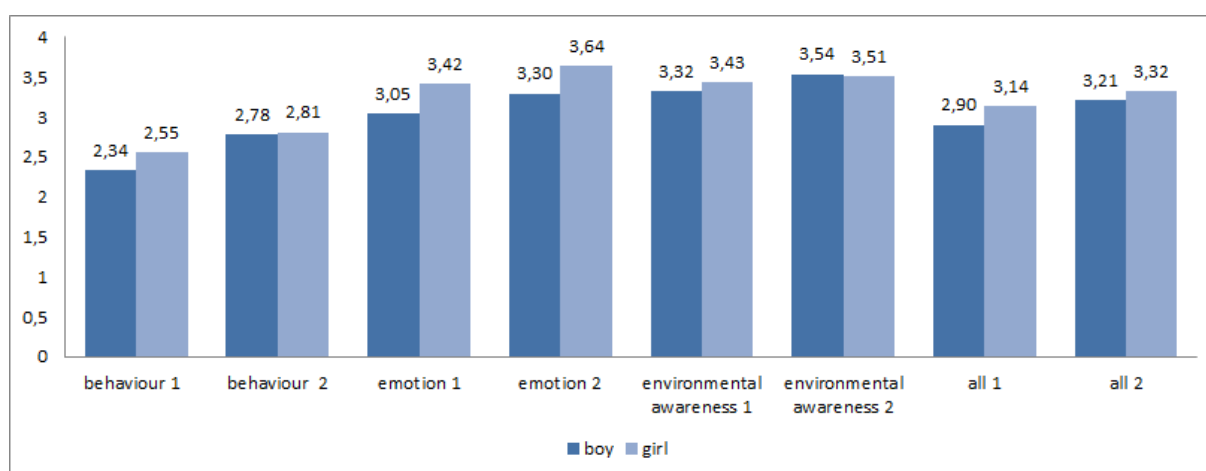


Figure 4. Changes in the components of emotion, behaviour and environmental awareness within environmental attitudes

| Block                                                                  | group        | mean of TEST 1 (SD) | mean of TEST 2 (SD) | Difference between the mean of the two TESTS (SD) | Significance of the difference | Difference between and significance of the means of the development between the two groups |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Concept of the environment, protection of the environment              | experimental | 2,90<br>(0.38)      | 3,02<br>(0.44)      | -,12<br>(0.50)                                    | ,228                           | 0,14<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 2,70<br>(0.44)      | 2,96<br>(0.45)      | -,26<br>(0.65)                                    | ,002                           |                                                                                            |
| Environmentally conscious consumers and consumption                    | experimental | 2,63<br>(0.70)      | 3,01<br>(0.64)      | -,38<br>(0.87)                                    | ,031                           | <b>0,09</b><br><b>p&lt;0,05</b>                                                            |
|                                                                        | control      | 2,51<br>(0.80)      | 2,80<br>(0.75)      | -,29<br>(1.05)                                    | ,028                           |                                                                                            |
| Energy management                                                      | experiment   | 3,65<br>(0.66)      | 3,57<br>(0.63)      | ,07<br>(0.96)                                     | ,693                           | 0,26<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,40<br>(0.77)      | 3,59<br>(0.68)      | -,19<br>(0.95)                                    | ,123                           |                                                                                            |
| Drinking water, Water pollution, environmental protection of the water | experiment   | 3,04<br>(0.75)      | 2,96<br>(1.06)      | ,07<br>(1.23)                                     | ,756                           | 0,38<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 2,43<br>(0.93)      | 2,80<br>(0.61)      | -,37<br>(1.18)                                    | ,015                           |                                                                                            |
| Environmental protection                                               | experimental | 2,53<br>(0.46)      | 2,76<br>(0.50)      | -,23<br>(0.72)                                    | ,105                           | 0,11<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 2,57<br>(0.54)      | 2,91<br>(0.49)      | -,34<br>(0.76)                                    | ,001                           |                                                                                            |
| Air pollution                                                          | experimental | 3,37<br>(1.00)      | 3,22<br>(1.12)      | ,15<br>(1.32)                                     | ,565                           | 0,25<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 2,98<br>(1.22)      | 3,08<br>(1.00)      | -,10<br>(1.48)                                    | ,611                           |                                                                                            |
| Healthy way of life and environment                                    | experimental | 3,33<br>(0.95)      | 3,37<br>(0.70)      | -,04<br>(1.10)                                    | ,862                           | 0,03<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,00<br>(0.95)      | 3,07<br>(0.72)      | -,07<br>(1.26)                                    | ,653                           |                                                                                            |
| Waste management, waste waste disposal, eco-toxicology                 | experimental | 3,72<br>(1.06)      | 3,87<br>(0.83)      | -,15<br>(1.38)                                    | ,583                           | 0,66<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,08<br>(1.09)      | 3,59<br>(0.88)      | -,51<br>(1.33)                                    | ,004                           |                                                                                            |
| Sustainable development                                                | experimental | 4,12<br>(0.49)      | 4,08<br>(0.54)      | ,04<br>(0.69)                                     | ,784                           | 0,22<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,82<br>(0.73)      | 4,00<br>(0.63)      | -,18<br>(1.01)                                    | ,168                           |                                                                                            |
| Demographics and sustainability                                        | experimental | 4,09<br>(0.68)      | 4,30<br>(0.74)      | -,20<br>(0.91)                                    | ,256                           | 0,23<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,82<br>(0.93)      | 3,85<br>(0.94)      | -,03<br>(1.17)                                    | ,830                           |                                                                                            |
| Ecological footprint                                                   | experimental | 3,85<br>(1.03)      | 4,56<br>(0.97)      | -,70<br>(1.23)                                    | ,006                           | <b>0,19</b><br><b>p&lt;0,05</b>                                                            |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,57<br>(1.21)      | 4,46<br>(0.80)      | -,89<br>(1.43)                                    | ,000                           |                                                                                            |
| Eco-friendly construction                                              | experimental | 3,41<br>(1.18)      | 3,63<br>(0.87)      | -,22<br>(1.36)                                    | ,404                           | 0,01<br>p>0,05                                                                             |
|                                                                        | control      | 3,09<br>(1.04)      | 3,30<br>(0.89)      | -,21<br>(1.39)                                    | ,226                           |                                                                                            |

Table 1. Changes in the means of topics and their significance in the experimental and control groups

In the experimental group, improvement was observed in the means in eight out of twelve blocks. Significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) observed as a consequence of the project was found in two cases in the experimental group: ecological footprint and environmentally conscious shopping and consumption (Table 1). These two fields showed the greatest development during the project. In the fields of air pollution, water pollution, and energy management there was no development over the one year of study. This suggests that more attention should be paid to these topics if we are to develop students' environmental attitudes. In the experimental group positive changes were observed in the means in eight cases whereas in four cases negative changes were observed. In the control group the means showed positive changes in all twelve blocks.



*Figure 5. Distribution of means of the components of environmental attitudes by sex in the experimental group*

In terms of distribution by gender positive changes were observed in the components of environmental attitudes. Examination of the sexes revealed positive changes in most cases both with boys and with girls. The means showed a decrease only in the item of environmental awareness in the boys' group. This also attests to the success of the project.

In the experimental group the boys and the girls showed significant development in fewer components compared with their counterparts in the control group (Table 2). In the experimental group the boys showed improvement in two components: ecological footprint, eco-friendly construction, while the girls showed improvement in three components: ecologically caring shopping and consumption, ecological footprint and behaviour. In these five topics the experimental group's development was significantly better than the control group's, suggesting the positive effect of the programme. The data distributed by the sexes also reflect well the categories which showed improvement in the overall sample as well. The unity of the overall sample and the values for the sexes confirms the categories that the project had positive effect on.

Table 2. Differences between and significance of the components of attitudes on the environment across girls and boys in the experimental as well as the control groups

| Components                                                             | boys         |                                               |                  | girls        |                                               |                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|
|                                                                        | group        | difference between the means of tests 1 and 2 | signif. (p)      | group        | difference between the means of tests 1 and 2 | signif. (p)      |
| Concept of the environment, protection of the environment              | experimental | -0,05                                         | >0,05            | experimental | -0,18                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,33                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | control      | -0,11                                         | >0,05            |
| Environmentally conscious consumers and consumption                    | experimental | -0,45                                         | >0,05            | experimental | -0,38                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,43                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | control      | -0,03                                         | >0,05            |
| Energy management                                                      | experimental | 0,18                                          | >0,05            | experimental | -0,10                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,18                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,15                                         | >0,05            |
| Drinking water, Water pollution, environmental protection of the water | experimental | -0,03                                         | >0,05            | experimental | 0,07                                          | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,46                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | control      | -0,16                                         | >0,05            |
| Environmental protection                                               | experimental | -0,15                                         | >0,05            | experimental | -0,29                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,34                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | control      | -0,33                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  |
| Air pollution                                                          | experimental | -0,29                                         | >0,05            | experimental | 0,40                                          | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,13                                         | >0,05            | control      | 0,03                                          | >0,05            |
| Healthy way of life and environment                                    | experimental | -0,54                                         | >0,05            | experimental | 0,27                                          | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,02                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,09                                         | >0,05            |
| Waste management, waste disposal, ecotoxicology                        | experimental | - 0,00                                        | >0,05            | experimental | -0,34                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,37                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,62                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  |
| Sustainable development                                                | experimental | 0,09                                          | >0,05            | experimental | -0,02                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,12                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,11                                         | >0,05            |
| Demographics and sustainability                                        | experimental | -0,02                                         | >0,05            | experimental | -0,37                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,01                                         | >0,05            | control      | 0,05                                          | >0,05            |
| Ecological footprint                                                   | experimental | - 0,62                                        | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | experimental | -0,8                                          | <b>&lt;0,005</b> |
|                                                                        | control      | -1,10                                         | <b>&lt;0,005</b> | control      | -0,62                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  |
| Eco-friendly construction                                              | experimental | - 0,63                                        | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | experimental | 0,00                                          | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,13                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,26                                         | >0,05            |
| Behaviour                                                              | experimental | -0,16                                         | >0,05            | experimental | -0,34                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,44                                         | <b>&lt;0,005</b> | control      | -0,26                                         | >0,05            |
| Emotions                                                               | experimental | - 0,23                                        | >0,05            | experimental | -0,04                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,25                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,22                                         | >0,05            |
| Environmental awareness                                                | experimental | 0,05                                          | >0,05            | experimental | -0,18                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,22                                         | >0,05            | control      | -0,08                                         | >0,05            |
| All                                                                    | experimental | -0,12                                         | >0,05            | experimental | -0,18                                         | >0,05            |
|                                                                        | control      | -0,30                                         | <b>&lt;0,05</b>  | control      | -0,18                                         | >0,05            |
| All components developing as a result of the programme                 | experimental | 2                                             |                  |              | 3                                             |                  |
|                                                                        | control      | 7                                             |                  |              | 3                                             |                  |

## **Summary**

Based on our examination of the data of the great project „Our environment in the 21st century” we concluded that the 12-month-long work of the students was fruitful. The attitudes of all the secondary grammar school students (both in the experimental and the control groups) examined showed an overall positive change. Separate examination of the components of environmental attitudes revealed that the students had formed strong emotional attachment to the environment and its problems. In contrast, in the fields of behaviour and environmentally caring consciousness there is room for improvement. Great emphasis needs to be placed on making sure that children are aware of the possibilities through which they can and want to do something to protect their environment (Jensen & Schnack, 1994). The data of the various blocks reflect the fact that children do not relate to the various topics on the environment in a uniform manner. Children have a more positive approach to the topics of ecological footprint, eco-friendly shopping and consumption, as well as environmental protection. This may suggest that these fields are easier to develop. In contrast, their attitudes in the topics of air pollution, energy management, drinking water, water pollution, water protection, as well as sustainable development were extremely unfavourable. More work is needed in these topics if we are to develop more appropriate environmental attitudes in students.

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*Book Review*



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**Yeping Li and Janet Hammer (Eds.) 2015.  
Teaching at Work. Rotterdam (The  
Netherlands). Sense Publishers**

***Reviewed by Rita Bencze***<sup>19</sup>

The two authors, Li and Hammer start the introduction of their book with an apparently general still everlasting statement about the role of teaching which according to them "provides us opportunities to learn from others including parents, friends, and of course our classroom teachers."

The book is structured in three main parts including 13 chapters: Part 1: Introduction and Perspectives (3 chapters), Part 2: Selected Approaches and Practices in Teaching and Teacher Preparation (9 chapters), and Part 3: Commentary.

The volume's 13 chapters written by 35 researchers in the United States, as a result of close collaboration of them working at the same department at Research Tier I University, mainly focus on innovative teaching practices and approaches as well as provide new insights into the different aspects of teacher training which may be interesting to teacher educators, researchers, and also graduate students who wish to learn about various teaching approaches and good practices for advancing their professional development.

The first chapter, Teaching at Work deals with not only the importance of effective teaching in K-12 classrooms but also how to advance teacher preparation and strengthen innovative ideas in pre-service training of student teachers.

As the main motto of the book is that an effective teacher is one of the most crucial factors that influence students' achievement and outcomes (Research-based Approaches

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for Identifying and Assessing Effective Teaching Practices)<sup>20</sup>, the authors explain in what different ways the title may be interpreted related to the concept mentioned above:

(1) good teaching makes a difference in students' learning, referring to different types of classroom activities;

(2) teaching can be taken as a platform to discuss what defines good teaching;

(3) teaching helps to prepare pre-service teachers through teacher preparation programs for different roles in the classroom (Teaching at Work).<sup>21</sup>

If we take a closer look at the book it becomes evident that the volume is a thematic collection of chapters on the important topic of teaching and teacher education. But there is another feature that makes the book even more exciting and unique at the same time, lending an overall central concept to the whole book which interweaves every single chapter, namely the fact that America is still like a melting pot where people come from different cultures bringing varied customs along with them and this results in a diverse society and teachers must be prepared to work in such an environment.

Several authors of the book highlight the importance of preparing student teachers to be able to find their voice and place in a global teaching environment and make use of the "melting pot feature" of American education, underpinning this thought by dealing with different aspects of teacher preparation.

Eslami et al (Changing Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes) emphasize the essence of enhancing the awareness of student teachers' linguistic diversity in the classroom<sup>22</sup>, whereas Boettcher et al point out that in today's teaching and learning activities the global perspective cannot be disregarded as the American classrooms are "growing increasingly diverse..." (Subtracting Stereotypes through Studying Abroad).<sup>23</sup>

When the authors deal with the issue of what content should be included in pre-service teacher education, related to the problem of preparing student teachers in a diverse teaching environment, Eslami et al (Changing Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes) among others conclude that it is absolutely crucial to develop such teacher training programs

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<sup>20</sup> P. 3

<sup>21</sup> p3

<sup>22</sup> p95

<sup>23</sup> p106

that prepare would-be teachers for a society that is facing a growing rate of immigrants and this produces a large variety of cultures, customs and languages.<sup>24</sup>

The authors also draw our attention to how much responsibility lies with the American education system to recognize the trend of increasing diversity, otherwise pre-service teacher training will fail to meet the requirement of endowing pre-service teachers with the right skills to feel comfortable and being accepted in a culturally diverse classroom.<sup>25</sup>

Another aspect of the same issue that Williams & Carter highlight in Chapter 7 (Preparing Pre-service Teachers for Diverse Urban Classrooms) is the fact that both "White teachers and teachers of color have gaps of understanding...interracial discourse."<sup>26</sup> It follows from this that teacher training programs must deal with showing anti-racist behaviour models to student teachers as well.<sup>27</sup>

Related to this, in the same chapter we get to learn about the Urban Student Teacher Education Preparation (USTEP) model, described by the two authors. The main difference between the traditional teacher training programs and the USTEP model is that in the previous one students tend to spend some hours classrooms which are mainly in White middle class settings<sup>28</sup>, while the new model gives prospective teachers the opportunity to fulfil their lesson observation in diverse urban classrooms.<sup>29</sup> The model aiming to prepare students to gain a high level of cultural sensitivity provides a strong collaboration among different actors of the training: university as teacher training institute, district support and urban specialist support.<sup>30</sup>

Since the two McKinsey reports<sup>31</sup> all experts who are concerned about education have been well aware of the fact that effective teachers are key elements of the teaching-learning process. It is also considered as evidence in different literature that advancing teacher preparation and mentoring pre-service and novice teachers are crucial in creating a successful learning environment.

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<sup>24</sup> p85

<sup>25</sup> p100

<sup>26</sup> p127

<sup>27</sup> ibid

<sup>28</sup> p128

<sup>29</sup> ibid

<sup>30</sup> 133

<sup>31</sup> McKinsey Company (2007): *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Have Come Out on Top*. <http://www.smhc-cpre.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/how-the-worlds-best-performing-school-systems-come-out-on-top-sept-072.pdf> and Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber (2010): *How The World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*.

Not surprisingly, in this volume several chapters put these issues in focus. Binks-Cantrell and Malatesha, after pointing out the important role of teachers, sum up the main requirements that teacher preparation should meet to provide suitable and efficient training for student teachers, mentioning among others curricula or standards for students (Connecting Research and Practice through Teacher Knowledge).<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, in chapter 11 (The Examined Life: Using Digital Stories to Develop the Reflective Capabilities of Pre-service Teachers about Culture and Diversity) the authors dealing with the issue of teacher training highlight the role of reflection which has become a central concept in teacher preparation.<sup>33</sup> The use of digital storytelling approach, as presented in this chapter by Walters et al., shows another promising method that can be used to develop pre-service teachers' global competence and consciousness related to culture and diversity through reflection and writing.

Once getting over pre-service training and entering the everyday teaching routine of schools, teacher assessment and evaluation may be a device for improving teachers' competences and skills and also providing continuous feedback on their work, and as the Watmen et.al refer to, several evaluation checklists have been worked out different universities (Research-based Approaches for Identifying and Assessing Effective Teaching Practices).<sup>34</sup>

One of these approaches of assessment mentioned by the authors is, classroom observation and the so called walkthrough instrument. According to the authors this aims to " obtain multiple snapshots of classroom practices... that focus on specific teacher behaviours...".<sup>35</sup>

The whole book and the chapters are centered around one main topic, that is what makes teaching successful. Several elements have been mentioned already but there is one more aspect that is gaining more and more ground in teacher training without which 21<sup>st</sup> century's education systems cannot really be efficient and this is mentoring student and novice teachers.

This explains that present volume deals with this issue in different chapters, pointing out the different benefits of the mentoring process: such as collaboration in a multi-tiered mentoring system (Minding the Gap: Mentoring Undergraduate Pre-service

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<sup>32</sup> p35

<sup>33</sup> p211

<sup>34</sup> p12

<sup>35</sup> p15

Teachers in Educational Research),<sup>36</sup> the positive impact of mentors on mentees<sup>37</sup> or how mentoring works in an open classroom program (Mentoring Viewed through an Open Classroom Experience).<sup>38</sup>

Each author of these chapters listed above point out the beneficial elements of the mentoring process from which both mentors and mentees may gain a lot. They highlight the main factors that can possibly help develop effective and respectful relationship between the actors of the mentoring process. It is also noted by Wright et al (Minding the Gap) that not only pre-service teachers can learn from their mentors but this may work the other way around as well and the mentors or other faculty members of the school might benefit from the mentoring process as a way of collaborative working and get new ideas from the younger generations.<sup>39</sup>

As a conclusion we can say that the whole volume is a thought-provoking and extremely informative reading at the same time. Consequently, this book is a perfect reading not only for experienced researchers and those who are experts of the issues of education and teacher training but also for beginner researchers.

And why could this book be an instructive and useful reading for Hungarian researchers, teacher educators and graduate teachers? All the chapters succeed in dealing with the different issues of education and teacher training from a fresh aspect showing fairly new or less known potentials of teacher preparation. Moreover, those chapters dealing with the mentoring process may put the question in new perspective for Hungarian education experts since Hungarian Public Education has been undergoing several significant and so to say controversial changes recently: a completely new teachers' life career model came into force whose one key element is the qualifying and assessing procedure of teachers at each stage. Along with the new model a new mentoring system has been introduced as well in order to help new teachers get over their first praxis shock. However, the new system is full of question marks, good practices of already working mentoring systems are highly needed. If Hungarian public education really wants to transform their institutes into modern learning communities, then ideas of decreasing the research-practice gap between teacher training institutes and schools or applying collaborative, multi-level mentoring models described by Wright et al.<sup>40</sup> should be worth of consideration.

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<sup>36</sup> p173

<sup>37</sup> p175

<sup>38</sup> p238

<sup>39</sup> p174

<sup>40</sup> p173

Book Review



**Shifra Schonmann (ed.), 2011. Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education. Rotterdam (The Netherlands): Sense Publishers**

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**Reviewed by Edina Kovács<sup>41</sup>**

Why can teacher learn drama only in their in-service period, or postgraduate courses? This question was written by John O' Toole, an Australian professor, but we can ask it in Hungary either. On one hand, the situation of drama education is good: the first few schools started to use it 30 years ago, there have been excellent workshops and trainings since then. On the other hand teacher can learn drama only in the frame of postgraduate specialization. It had worked this way before the Bologna-system, and it is working this way now. During the Bologna-system there was Hungarian literature Bachelor (BA) with drama education specialization from the beginning. For the accreditation of drama education Master (MA) we had to wait until 2012 – and a year after the Bologna system was abolished.

The most important conclusion of the book *Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education*, that we are losing the sensitive and valuable period of pre-service training this way. Drama education gives teachers articulacy, confidence, oracy and performance skills necessary to be a good classroom teacher. Drama also helps become aware of the cultural and sociological contexts of classrooms. The interaction – as defined in a dialogical or reciprocal relationship – is crucial between teacher and learner, and drama can help become a mastery of this connection.

However, it should be mentioned that this book is not for pre-service teachers or beginners. The title promises concepts, and the book gives concepts. But drama is always learning by doing therefore some examples would have been great in every section. After a lot of theoretical question it was refreshing to read Debra McLauchlan's

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study. She examined students' motivation, and wrote about this unique analysis. McLauchlan visited six drama classrooms in Ontario, Canada, and asked students about drama education, drama teacher, etc. According to her results, Grade 9 students selected drama as their compulsory arts credit. So drama itself an optional subject, but some students choose it instead of music or visual arts. They said "this is more fun" or "I am not really good with art". Others had good experiences with drama earlier e.g. "We had drama in Grade 7 and I enjoyed it".

Grade 12 students were motivated by four major factors: the opportunity to work with peers, the teacher, the opportunity of public performance and the drama classroom's unique opportunities. By the last one they mean a place of emotional safety.

About the good drama teacher they said: "has to have the right enthusiasm". He/she has to have knowledge about drama education, skills and techniques, and display passion for and commitment to drama and his/her students.

Emotional safety is a key concept in the whole book. Drama education is good way of learning about emotions, inquire and express emotions, in a society which constantly teaches us, how to hide emotions. In general schools should develop students' identity but in many cases there is room only for increasing knowledge. In connection with this in the second study we read Sarason's opinion: "teachers are victims of their training in that they are taught only instruct and not to engage".

In the opening the editor says "the book was created in an evolutionary way". She asked her colleagues who work in the field of drama education to create this book together. The main questions were: "What is the present role of drama education?" and "What is the future of this field?" As she writes the creation was an organic process of identifying, creating, engaging a community of scholars willing to share their wisdom and knowledge in an open process of negotiating meaning. As result there are inter-dependent topics, and the variety of colorful issues.

The book is divided into ten sections. Four of them can be interesting and understandable for almost everyone, the other six rather for experts of a specific area.

The "Narrative and pedagogy" is mostly about theatre and theatre in education. The authors define theatre as competence, as subjective experience, as cultural practice. The second chapter of this section focuses on relationships: with the context, with peers and with the teacher. Theatre in education is democratic and values-based, therefore a good way of working on these relationships.

One section is about Shakespeare and Brecht, and talk about how to use these classics in drama education.

The section “Modes of theatre, expressions and performance” is about methods such as applied drama or forum play. This is the section which really would be required more examples for those who are not so familiar with all these methods.

The section “Theatre for young audience” is about drama education – or more like using dramatic play – for babies, Latinos and children in hospital.

The section “Different populations and their needs” is rather for the specialist too, but there are some important states which we all should consider. Drama education for students with special needs be equated with drama therapy in the most cases. It is based on a specific belief that if a child has some kind of learning disability, the only type of drama for them must be designed to help them. But drama can be a tool not to categorizing children. Drama is always developing more than one sense, so we don't have to narrow its possibilities. The other way of connection of drama and disabilities of course, that young people can learn about disabilities through drama.

The section “Ways of research and methodology” can be extremely interesting for educational researchers in Hungary. The arts-based and drama-based researches were generated in the early 90s. There are various approaches under the umbrella of arts-based research nowadays. Despite of this fact there are only a few researches in Hungary which were done by one of these methods. One form of the drama-based research is examining the presentation of self and models of social drama; another is a way of communication. In this case data collected through traditional qualitative methods, and then the audience learns about them and reflects them in the frame of performance. The self-study inquiry practices can be used in teacher education; it can focus the relationship between the self and the practice.

The section “Learning, teaching, curricula and teacher education” is mostly about the teachers. The second chapter draws our attention the importance of understanding of self. It must be a process, through different experiences, in words and music and moves. It also emphasizes that theatre can be a good inspiration for teachers to expose the professionalism of teaching.

The third study is about a very important aspect of drama education. The individual and the collective aspects are always being present at the same time, which is useful during the learning process. It is also a tool in a problematic situation, e.g. in a conflict. The author cites Gadamer: “[in drama] dialog needs to be characterized by an openness that helps each participant to be freely inspired by other to discuss their own”. In this way,



the final tableau is always a collective creation, in the learning process a collective learning.

The fourth study is also focuses on teachers' role – it says that teachers always have to support and stimulate instead of control. She or he has to model some roles and also has to be in a role.

The fifth study is about the method Mantle of the Expert. This is well known in Hungary too, but this study tells us a lot of curiosity about this from the beginning. In Great Britain this is far more widespread than here. The chapter also emphasize the dialogic way of this method.

The most interesting point in section "Aesthetics and Ethics" is that aesthetic is a discourse, or interpretable as a – cultural and social – discourse. Within the field of aesthetics and specifically in aesthetic education we can learn the relationship of cognition to intuition, negotiations and the hegemonic implications of a dominant cultural aesthetic. Drama educators can give room to multiple perspectives, questions and experiences.

An important part is the chapter about distancing. It says drama can give us a safe space, so our experiences are less threatening. This is associated with protection, but this is also a poetic device.

The last chapter of this section is about ethics. Not the ethics of drama education, but the ways how drama can use in education of environmental ethics. In our global culture this can become more and more important subject, but it would have been great to read about place and role of ethics in drama education either.

The section "Creativity and technology" is a little bit tricky in a similar way. Only the last chapter is about technology: the ways of using new technology in drama education. This is a useful part in these days, when we all have to learn new literacies (digital, scientific, etc.). Teachers have to use new styles of teaching, and involve these new communication platforms to teaching. It combines drama and media, in story creation and understanding. But there would be good to read more about the connection (or the possible connection) between ICT and drama education.

The other chapters of this section are about creativity, try to define it, and emphasize, that children are imaginative by nature, but it needs encouragement.

The section "Identity, culture and community" is about a very important and specific aspect of drama education, especially Forum Theatre. Schools replicate the socioeconomic divisions, and perpetuate the society's problems. To develop students'

identity, schooling should burst constructs of traditional power roles. Drama is a good tool to explore unequal power dynamics, and develop the whole community. Students can be in powerful roles (leaders, experts, etc.) and this enable them to act more effectively as students, both individually and as a group.

In the last century the society has had contradictory expectations towards schools and teachers. They should moderate the gap between rich and poor, people of different gender, color and religion. They also have to select and measure children's qualities in grades. They should develop the person and the community in the same time, which is sometimes almost impossible. This book draws our attention that drama education is capable of both. We only have to use it.