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TOWARDS DEMOCRACY IN THE HUNGARIAN SCIENCE OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL-SYSTEM

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Through the developments of the education sciences and the education system, this study presents two major historical changes of the post World War II period in Hungary – hopes regarding democratic reconstruction and their quelling after 1945, and the aspirations of the years of political change in the 1990s following the collapse of the communist dictatorship to restore and develop a pluralised, democratic society and education system. Through the changes to the conditions surrounding education sciences, the first part of the study displays the consequences of the political dictatorship taking over power, regarding the development of scientific institutions, professional journals, the professional sphere and the lives of individual researchers. It introduces the illusions of the post-war years, the hope of constructing a democratic Hungarian society, the revival of various schools of pedagogy (human sciences, cultural pedagogy, nation-education, popular movements and reform pedagogy trends), and the realisation of pluralism in professional literature. This is followed by the ‘results’ of the communist takeover – establishing political control over scientific institutions, steeping professional manifestations in politics, persecuting civil pedagogies, and sidelining their representatives, regardless of whether their views were opposed or closely related to socialist ideals, and whether they chose political opposition or varying degrees of conformism in their individual behaviour. Pointing to the political, economic and social reasons for the collapse of the dictatorship, the second part of the study lays out the background of the different views concerning the construction of a democratic society – the concepts building on Hungarian precedents and stressing continuity, the efforts calling for copying the examples of western democracies, and finally the proposals drawing on a trusted and particular Central and Eastern European way. The results of the three political and social approaches are three different school systems, education governance systems that are based on different sets of values. As a result of political preferences, these differences on the professional level turned into ammunition in the fight between parties, and

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consequently raise serious barriers in the way of carrying out democratic change. The final part of the study summarises the changes required that are the basic conditions for decentralising and democratising the education system – accepting pluralism in pedagogy, a new approach to the role of the school and teacher, to understanding freedom and responsibility in pedagogy, to schools open towards society and the parents, and to the necessity of new procedures in the training of teachers.

Keywords: pedagogy, Hungary, communism, state socialism, dictatorship, history, retrospect, helping profession, school system, education reform

Der Weg in die Demokratie in der Erziehungswissenschaft und im Schulsystem in Ungarn: In der Studie werden am Beispiel der Entwicklung der Erziehungswissenschaft und des Schulsystems die beiden großen historischen Umbrüche in Ungarn in der Zeit nach dem 2. Weltkrieg dargestellt: die Hoffnungen auf einen demokratischen Wiederaufbau nach 1945 und deren Vernichtung sowie die Bemühungen um die Wiederherstellung und Weiterentwicklung einer pluralistischen, demokratischen Gesellschaft mit einem ebensolchen Schulsystem in den Jahren der Wende nach dem Zerfall der Diktatur 1990. Der erste Teil der Untersuchung zeigt am Beispiel der Entwicklung der Lage der Erziehungswissenschaft die Folgen der Machtübernahme der politischen Diktatur für die Entwicklung des Systems wissenschaftlicher Einrichtungen, von Fachzeitschriften, des akademischen Lebens und des Schicksals einzelner Wissenschaftler. Behandelt werden die Illusionen der Nachkriegsjahre, die Hoffnung auf den Aufbau einer demokratischen ungarischen Gesellschaft, die unterschiedlichen pädagogischen Strömungen, die Wiederbelebung von geisteswissenschaftlicher Kulturpädagogik, Volkserziehung, nationalen Bewegungen und reformpädagogischen Richtungen und die Realisierung eines Pluralismus in der Fachliteratur. Darauf folgt die Darstellung der „Ergebnisse“ der kommunistischen Machtübernahme: der Schaffung einer politischen Überwachung des wissenschaftlichen Lebens, der vollständigen Politisierung fachlicher Veröffentlichungen, der Verfolgung jeglicher bürgerlicher Pädagogik und der Ausschaltung ihrer Repräsentanten, unabhängig davon, ob ihre Anschauungen den sozialen Ideen eng verbunden waren oder im Gegensatz zu ihnen standen, ob sie für ihr persönliches Verhalten den politischen Widerstand oder einen bestimmten Grad der Anpassung wählten. Der zweite Teil der Untersuchung zeigt mit Hilfe der Darstellung der politischen, wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Gründe für den Zerfall der Diktatur die Hintergründe der unterschiedlichen Anschauungen über den Ausbau der demokratischen Gesellschaft: auf der Vorgeschichte aufbauende Vorstellungen, die die Kontinuität betonten, Bemühungen um die Übernahme von Elementen der westlichen Demokratien sowie die Überzeugung, die auf einen eigenen mitteleuropäischen Weg vertraute. Die Konsequenz aus diesen drei politisch-gesellschaftlichen Standpunkten sind drei unterschiedliche schul- und bildungspolitische Systeme, die auf verschiedenen Wertsystemen basieren. Diese Unterschiede auf Fachebene wurden entsprechend der Präferenzen der politischen Parteien für Parteikämpfe instrumentalisiert und bedeuten daher ein schwerwiegendes Hindernis für die Realisierung des demokratischen Umbaus. Abschließend werden die notwendigen Veränderungen zusammengefasst, die grundlegende Voraussetzungen für die Dezentralisierung und Demokratisierung des Bildungswesens darstellen: das Akzeptieren eines pädagogischen Pluralismus sowie eine veränderte Auffassung über die Rolle von Schule und Pädagogen, über die Interpretation von pädagogischer Freiheit und Verantwortung, über eine den Eltern gegenüber offene Schule und die Notwendigkeit einer Erneuerung der Lehrerbildung.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Pädagogik, Ungarn, Kommunismus, Staatssozialismus, Diktatur, Geschichte, Rückblick, helfender Beruf, Schulsystem, Bildungsreform

1. Introduction

1945 and 1990 were both turning points in Hungarian history. They both closed down an era and opened up a new one with new vistas in terms of the further development of the economy, society, and culture, which together determined the framework of people's personal lives as well. In 1945 a slowly emerging democracy was obliterated by the installment of a Soviet backed Communist Party dictatorship, while in 1990 the reverse process took place: the dictatorship was dismantled and democracy was established. The dictatorship which ruled in between the two dates was destabilised for a brief period in 1956, leading to reforms and changes in the system, the nature and essence of which, however, remained essentially unchanged. This statement especially holds true for such a comprehensive and complex system as the system of education, whose importance every regime is aware of. In our study we present how the changes of the post World War II years and the changes after 1990 impacted on the system of schooling and on the science of education in Hungary. Apart from presenting the changes that took place in the institutional framework of education, we also try to explore how the political context determined different people's responses to the political pressures of the era.

2. Pedagogy and pedagogical beliefs after World War II

After World War II the central issue facing pedagogues was what kind of pedagogy might emerge in the completely transformed international and Hungarian context. More precisely, which trends of pedagogical thinking will survive and thrive, which trends will be eliminated and which will be transformed and adapted to the new circumstances. After 1945, for a shorter or longer period of time, the population of Hungary had great expectations and illusions as to the future of the country. In the beginning, the modernisation of the economy and the introduction of societal reforms, coupled with a democratic political transformation, meant attractive and meaningful objectives for most people. A flourishing, rich and varied post-war intellectual life also aroused high hopes, in spite of the considerable losses caused by the war. Historical research since then has found that such hopes and expectations were mostly unfounded: in fact, Hungary's freedom was severely restricted (STANDEISKY 1998). Here are some historical facts to substantiate the aforementioned statement: Soviet troops were stationed in the country, and the Soviet Union, which headed Central Control Commission of the Allied Powers, had a decisive say in the political life of the country. This resulted in a left-wing dominance in both government and municipal authorities, while the parliament was forced to play a secondary role (ROMSICS 1999; GYARMATI 2005; UNGVÁRY 2002). Post-war illusions are also well reflected in post-

war pedagogical professional literature as well: experts in their writings stress that the new democratic society needs a new pedagogy, which, however, must preserve the best traditions of the past and build on them. A radical change of direction in pedagogy was seen as neither needed, nor possible: after 1945, most pre-war experts resumed their work, and the old institutional framework started to function again, though in a somewhat restricted way. Different schools and trends that had already been present in pre-war Hungary were revived, such as the religious trend that had played a decisive role before 1945, a trend of pedagogy based on cultural philosophy, the nation-educational views of Sándor Imre, Sándor Karácsony's school, the peasant authors and their educational principles, and different alternative pedagogical trends. This means that pluralism, which had been present in the pre-war professional literature, was revived.

Between 1945 and 1949, however, Hungary was slowly being transformed from a restricted democracy into a dictatorship; it was turning from pluralism to monolithic Stalinism. By the end of this transition period, the intellectual pluralism of pedagogy was eliminated and its organic development was discontinued. The institutional framework of pedagogy was partly revived in the post-war years, but in some areas certain changes were introduced and restrictions were imposed. Continuity can be best demonstrated by the fact that the pre-war institutions of the profession and their personnel remained in place, while changing the names of the institutions heralded the new era. At the same time, new institutions were established, and new pedagogical journals were published, both developments clearly indicating that the slow squeezing out of the old elite had already been underway. By restricting or banning the activities of pedagogical societies, the number of professional journals was also considerably reduced, which limited the publishing opportunities of professionals. From 1946 onwards, the institutional framework was being gradually transformed due to several administrative measures of the Communist Party leaders. Communist Party ideology started to dominate the profession. All institutions and professionals whose views were not compatible with the communist pedagogical views were first marginalised, and later eliminated from the profession. In this transition period a decisive role was played by the Hungarian Academic Council (MTT from the abbreviation of its Hungarian name), which was established in December, 1948, by article 1948/XXXVIII. This organisation carried out the measures of the Communist Party, and in the spring and fall of 1949 it actively supported the party's efforts to nationalise, centralise and politicise all academic activities in Hungary. The measures of the MTT transformed academic life in Hungary: while improving the financial situation of scientists and scholars, it dismissed the 'old guard' of university teaching staff and recruited the new, appointed new members to the Academy, re-organised all institutions of academic life, allocated funds for research centrally, centralised publishing opportunities, and elaborated the first 5-year plan of academic activities (HUSZÁR 1995; GOLNHOFER 2004, 2006). Academics were assigned to different political and professional categories, based on their degrees, academy membership, honours, pay (current and recommended), and professional and political profile. Professional categories were as follows: a distinguished academic, a first class academic, 'serious' academic, and an

'ex-serious' academic. Political categories were as follows: good comrade, loyal citizen (a democrat) or party member, neutral, hostile but passive, enemy. The aim was to select the 250–260 most distinguished academics of the nation. However, since the political categorisation overruled the professional, the ranking was disproportionate and unfair. At the same time, the categorisation provided an excellent opportunity for the Communist state to reward its friends and punish all who were deemed to be disloyal. For example, in the field of pedagogy Lajos Prohászka and Hildebrand Várkonyi, both distinguished professors of the pre-war era, were allocated a monthly salary of HUF 202, while the totally unknown Béla Jausz had HUF 1,800 per month. The ideologically acceptable Sándor Szalai received HUF 3,000/month, while Ferenc Mérei got HUF 3,500/month and Béla Fogarasi got HUF 3,850/month. Categorisation divided and terrorised scientists, while expressing at the same time the good-will of the state to the loyal. Those who accepted their assigned category, inadvertently expressed their loyalty and commitment to the party. Documents in the archives prove that this tactic, which aimed to divide and terrorise scientists was consciously applied by the party and the MTT.

Discontinuity was reflected in the language of the professional literature as well. Revived views were reinterpreted. In the journals, a certain terminology started to dominate the articles: words that started mushrooming included *democracy*, *people's democracy* – this latter term was used for the socialist regime – and *equality*. The terminology indicated that professionals adapted their pedagogical conceptions to the demands of the new era, they committed themselves to a vaguely defined concept of democracy, and reconsidered their views on the structure, operational principles, organisational framework and methodology of education in the light of this concept.

Discontinuity can be perceived in terms of trends and schools of pedagogy. After World War II, most of the professionals turned towards alternative pedagogical thinking, which focused on children's needs, their growth, and on society's needs. French, British and American schools of pedagogy, especially the ones that built on the results of empirical pedagogical research, were in the center of Hungarian experts' interest. By 1946 a definite change of paradigm had taken place compared to the pre-war scene: a child-centred, empirical research-based pedagogy became mainstream in Hungary. This change of paradigm in pedagogy was clearly in keeping with the democratic illusions most people still cherished at that time: the illusion that a democratic society was to be established in which solidarity, equal opportunity and liberty would prevail, and such ideals and values would determine the course of the further development of both public education and pedagogy.

This paradigm change, however, did not take place as a result of the organic development of pedagogy, as it normally does in a pluralistic system. On the contrary: certain views were squeezed out, others tolerated, and others even given central stage depending not on research based on evidence and scientific debate, but on political intentions and relations. First Christian pedagogy and then cultural philosophy-based pedagogy and their representatives were labeled unacceptable by the Communist Party ideologists. Next Sándor Karácsony and the peasant authors' movement, who were in the beginning treated as allies in the fight against reactionaries, were squeezed out.

Parallel with this process, different alternative, child-centered reform pedagogical schools were gaining ground. This latter process was taking place partly due to the fact that a great number of experts, as we have already mentioned, honestly believed that with democratic transformation underway, psychology and sociology-based reform pedagogy schools should play a central role. Partly, left-wing pedagogy and psychology experts who held influential positions in the new establishment supported the reform pedagogy schools, since they thought their alternative ideas could be successfully used to build the new, socialist pedagogy.

From 1947 onwards, pedagogy in Hungary became increasingly determined by politics. The Communist Party, which was taking over power, discredited 'bourgeois' pedagogical schools. Loyal experts subordinated pedagogy to a vulgarised Marxist ideology, and the voluntarist politics of the Party. In an emerging monolithic society professional autonomy and criticism were eliminated, bourgeois professional qualities underrated, and continuity with former Hungarian pedagogy denied.

From 1948 and 1949 onwards 'bourgeois' pedagogical schools were labeled harmful, reactionary, and sometimes even fascist. Socialist pedagogy was identified with Soviet pedagogy, which resulted in the wholesale import of patterns of thinking and behaviour. This meant the negation of past traditions and schools as well as the negation of current alternatives. Discontinuity became the trademark of pedagogy for decades (ZIBOLEN 1983). Negation of the past, however, meant also closing down paths towards the future.

Unfortunately, from the end of the 1940s onwards, due to the developmental route imposed on Hungarian pedagogy, it lost its lessons learnt from historical continuity, which could have helped it to preserve its professionalism (FALUDI 1975). As all traditions were discontinued, master and disciple relationships were broken up, too. Wholesale negation of past traditions not only ruined continuity in pedagogical thinking, but also resulted in uncertainty and confusion of identities and values among Hungarian teachers, the impact of which has up till now only been partly assessed. Different experts of the profession, just like the different groups in society, have responded to the rather confused post-war transition period in varied ways. Though the professional journals of the era shed light on only a limited selection of these responses, and thus cannot serve as a comprehensive source, some characteristic responses can still be clearly perceived and highlighted. For example, Lajos Prohászka's uncompromising personality and high ethical standards are clearly reflected in the literature. As a result, he became increasingly marginalised both professionally and socially. Many professionals were naïve, and though they clearly saw the shortcomings of the post-war democracy, they still hoped that the power relations that had been forced on the country might change, or they simply lacked an in-depth understanding of the political predicament of the country. The mindset of this latter group is reflected in the following extract from Árpád KISS's personal diary:

We started out in 1945. We were completely uneducated. We had no idea how a state administration works, and failed to grasp the real controls of the state machinery. We did not have the faintest idea about the decisions that had already been made about us, without us. We worked under the illusion that we did have firm control over our lives. The real

nature of the occupying superpower and the Party were both hidden to us. We wanted to create a new course for History, without having the slightest idea about the direction and the irresistible force of the stream whose flow we wanted to influence. It took no less than five years of feverish activity to finally realise that our efforts had all been wasted.

(KISS 1999, 376, *our trans.*)¹

Many felt forced to accept the new order from among those who were naïve as well as from among the ones who had a clear understanding of the situation, and knew that the country was to live for a long time under Soviet influence and was to accept the presence of the Soviet army. They learnt to accept the political pressure and adapted to it. In a 1988 interview Endre Zibolen recalled a few incidents from this period of his life, to prove that his instinct for self-defense had worked well. For example, this is what he said about his party membership:

There was a certain period in 1948 when the Head of the Institute . . . told me that it was expected of everybody to take sides and join one of the ‘democratic’ parties. So I joined the National Peasants’ Party. Then, in 1949, the secretary of the local party organisation approached me and declared that they (the comrades) thought it was time for me to join the Hungarian Workers’ Party (i.e. the Communist Party). Therefore, in 1949, I joined them and even became the secretary of the local organisation for a while.

(SARKADI 1988, 152–53, *our trans.*)²

To defend his professional freedom he adopted a certain tactic which he described in the interview as follows:

In 1948, a decree was issued that banned the teaching of children’s studies and pedagogical sociology, since these were both labeled suspicious. However, by that time I had already removed these from the curriculum, because I had sensed the direction of the changes. I taught what I was required to teach, but . . . in a few years’ time I mastered the Marxist terminology and jargon well enough to be able to express my own views and opinions in Marxist disguise.

(SARKADI 1988, 140, *our trans.*)³

¹ ‘1945-ben elindultunk. Nagyon tanulatlanok voltunk. Nem ismertük az államhatalmat, és nem ragadtuk meg annak valódi fogantyúit. Nem tudtunk semmit a rólunk már meghozott döntésekről. Abban a meggyőződésben terveztünk és cselekedtünk, hogy magunk alakítjuk életünket. Tájékozatlanok voltunk a minket fokozatosan hatalmába kerítő nagyhatalom és mozgalom valódi természetéről . . . A történelem folyamának medrét kezdtük ásogatni, és sejtelmünk sem volt annak az áradatnak az irányáról, ellenállhatatlan erejéről, amelynek útját befolyásolni kívántuk. Öt cselekvő esztendőre volt szükség ahhoz, hogy felismerjük fáradozásaink hiábavalóságát.’

² ‘Jött egy bizonyos időszak, valamikor 1948-ban, amikor szólt . . . az akkori igazgató . . . , hogy már elvárják attól, aki egyértelműen tisztázni akarja a rendszerhez való viszonyát, hogy lépjen be egy demokratikus pártba. Akkor beléptem a Parasztpártba. 1949-ben ismét szólt az MDP alapszervezet titkára, hogy a vezetőség foglalkozott az ügyemmel, és úgy látják, itt volna az ideje, hogy kérjem a felvételemet . . . Tehát 1949-ben kértem a felvételemet, egy időben alapszervezeti titkár is voltam.’

³ ‘Jött a rendelkezés (1948-ban), hogy be kell szüntetni a gyanús gyermektanulmány, a nevelésszociológia stb. oktatását. Én gyorsabban figyeltem fel bizonyos jelekre . . . Ezeket a kollégiumokat már töröltem. Tanítottam a szabványpedagógiát, de néhány év alatt . . . már megtanultam annyit a szakirodalomból, hogy a marxizmus fogalomrendszerében is ki tudtam fejezni saját véleményemet.’

Then again, there were groups who became the allies of the Communist Party. This was a rather varied group: all who were committed to democratic values, and believed for a short period of time that a democratic transformation was still possible; the peasant authors' movement, which stood for a 'folk' democracy; the left-wing and mostly Jewish intelligentsia, which had been stigmatised in the Horthy era; and large disadvantaged social groups which had previously been denied the opportunity for upward mobility. Being an ally of the party meant that the pedagogy of the ally was also accepted and supported as long as the alliance lasted. (This was what happened to Sándor Karácsony and the peasant authors' movement.) Some allies ended up as party members and committed themselves to the new ideological and professional paradigm. For example, due to the traumas suffered by him in the course of World War II (forced labour service in the army, hiding, being a civil prisoner of war), L. Faragó, a student of Prohászka's, ended up as a representative of a child-centred pedagogy, rooted in psychology and sociology. The inner struggle that preceded his paradigm change did not appear in the public discourse, apart from rare hints (FARAGÓ 2001). Béla Tettamanti also underwent a similar kind of paradigm change: after discarding Sándor Imre's 'nation-educational' ideas, he became committed to 'socialist' pedagogy. The list could be continued, but further examples would fall beyond the scope of this study, as it would lead us into discussing the details of pedagogical and political life in the 50s.

Very few experts who were committed Marxists and party members held high positions and played an active role in the institutes and organisations of the profession (e.g. Gizella Berzeviczy, Gábor Kemény, Ferenc Mérei, Ernő Béki, Sándor Lukács). They were all politicians, scholars and researchers in one, whose ambition was to both explore and transform the social reality of the country. From among them in the field of pedagogy and psychology Ferenc Mérei was the most decisive figure, since he had a central role in politics. He contributed considerably to preparing and implementing the party directives which aimed to carry out political and ideological selection in the profession. After the transition period of the late 1940s, by the beginning of the 50s, however, all the professionals independently of their responses to political pressure, ended up in the same predicament: they were monitored and controlled by the party. For example, both Árpád Kiss and Ferenc Mérei were monitored by the State Security Department. (From the Hungarian name, the acronym is: ÁVH.) Therefore, the feelings of a great number of professionals are reflected in the following extract from Árpád Kiss's diary.

Those in power are loyal to their party without any regard for the facts. They know no mercy when they expropriate or re-interpret or eliminate the achievements of previous generations, forgetting the centuries-long struggle and labour that had been invested into these achievements. They are aliens in this land, and we are aliens to them. They honour their own works only, and write their own history, and only they have a history. Their censorship excludes us; their critique annihilates us. They do not speak our language, and they do not speak to us. They have a large following recruited from those miserable people who type revolutionary texts on our typewriters in our absence and then hide these texts in our own drawers. In these writings they include all that will land us in prison for long

years to come. And they write anonymous letters and abusive articles in which they spell out every single time again and again that we are the enemy; the enemy whose mere life is a burden for the progressive world. So, we had better be grateful that they tolerate our presence and let us work; we had better work and keep our mouths shut.

(KISS 1999, 379, *our trans.*)⁴

Research carried out so far shows that there were no clear types in terms of responding to the political pressures of the era: people's responses varied depending on the circumstances and their situation, and so did their motives for adapting to the regime (fear, ambition, career-building, true commitment, forced acceptance) and the solutions they opted for. There is not one single cause that could account for an individual's decisions, since political pressures, individual interests, values, commitments, ambitions, attitudes and life history all played a role. The varied combination of these factors resulted in each person choosing a different path. The changes of the regimes in the 40s determined the course of the lives and the professional careers of all professionals. They experienced several changes of regimes in an extremely short period of time, in the course of a few years. The dramatic developments deeply influenced their private and professional lives. There is every reason to say that some people's lives were tragic. Among them we will find representatives of all categories: those whose careers were broken into two; those who adapted to the regime and had a decisive role for a short period of time; and also those who were committed Marxists, but were later excluded by the party; and those who became disillusioned. In the dictatorial system of the 50s, the life histories of these professionals sank into oblivion, or only the official versions of their stories were preserved. However, the events of 1956 clearly showed that the memory of the profession preserved the patterns and achievements of both their private and professional life.

Pedagogical research in Hungary has still to explore those who were ignored in this era, who adapted and transformed their views. Another direction for research could be to explore how the ruling dogmatic and voluntarist pedagogy influenced both theoretical experts and in-service teachers. It should also be explored how the standards and quality of Hungarian pedagogical research was influenced by the crushing of the individual careers of a whole generation of academics, reducing the teaching material and the influence on new curricula. Those who wanted to stay in the profession had no choice: they were forced to accept these directives – at least seemingly –

⁴ 'A hatalom birtokosai pártosak a tényekre való tekintet nélkül. Könyörtelenül sajátítják ki nemzedékek sorának meghasonlások és harcok árán elért eredményeit, durva kézzel értékelik át vagy semmisítik meg évszázadok apró munkával létrehozott, gyermekségüinktől fogva szívünkhöz nőtt létesítményeit és alkotásait. Idegenek és idegenek vagyunk számukra. Maguk méltatják művüket, azonnal könyvbe foglalják történetüket – és csak nekik van történetük. Cenzúrájuk elutasít, kritikájuk megsemmisít. Nem a mi nyelvünkön beszélnek és nem velünk beszélnek. Nagy táboruk van azokból a nyomorultakból, akik távollétünkben írógépünkön fogalmaznak lázadó szövegeket és nyitva hagyott íróasztalfiókunkba rejtik: elmondják bennük mindazt, amiért sokéves rabság jár, ha nyomozás közben írásainkat átvizsgálják. És írnak névtelen leveleket, gyalázó cikkeket, amelyekben mindig újból bebizonyítják, hogy olyan ellenség vagy haladó világban, akinek élete teher. Légy hálás, hogy elviselnek és dolgozni engednek. Dolgozz és hallgass.'

and adapt to the party's expectations, or they were forced to leave the profession. This is how the 'unification' of the Hungarian school system took place. The unified system basically remained unchanged till the mid-80s.

3. Educational policy and pedagogical reforms from the mid-80s

In the 1990s Hungary and the other Central Eastern European countries experienced such changes and challenges that they had never gone through before. They had to meet the conditions of modernisation, build a well-functioning social network and economy in the modern society, and at the same time face the postmodern challenges and problems of the Western World. The changes are rapid; the tasks of rebuilding each segment of the society and the economy are extremely complex: to transform the existing economic system into a market economy, to create the conditions for privatisation, to liberate the foreign trade system, prices and wages, to transform the structure of ownership, to upgrade the accounting and taxation systems and bankruptcy laws, to modernise the monetary, banking and employment systems; to replace a society based on a monopolistic ideology with a civil society that welcomes and values diversity and that recognises the need to restore confidence in a democratically-elected government, a multi-party parliamentary system and a democratic decision-making process; to regenerate social life, clubs, associations, organisations and networks which are essential parts of a Western-type democracy (HANKISS 1990).

To some extent, the process of changes is different in Hungary from that in other postcommunist countries. The political leaders, fearing the repetition of the 1956 revolution, were forced to make concessions in all domains of life. The reform process evolved from the late 1960s. The most important slogans of this reform were: decentralisation and liberalisation in all walks of social, cultural and economic life.

With respect to political pluralism, the real change began in 1985, when there was a general election in Hungary. It was still controlled by the Communists, but as a result of a huge popular movement, independent candidates won 10% of the parliamentary seats. This was something quite new in Eastern Europe at that time, where all the parliaments were controlled 100% by Communists and their collaborators. Three years later, in 1988, the one-party system came to an end with the foundation of the first Hungarian opposition party. During the next year, about twenty parties were founded. In the autumn of 1989, the Communist Party was dissolved, and as its successor, a Socialist Party with a clear commitment to parliamentary democracy, was created (HANKISS 1990).

The reform of education evolved at a very slow pace, compared to the economic changes. In the 1970s, political power aimed at modernising the curricula and the content of teaching, but postponed the actual reform of the school structure and educational administration. Decentralisation of the education system did not begin until the mid-eighties. In 1985 the parliament passed a new Education Law, which aimed to define the relationship between the ministry, local authorities and schools in the governance of education. Its main objectives were to achieve a degree of administrative

and professional decentralisation, a transfer of supervision and responsibility from the ministry to local authorities, and the promotion of a greater degree of professional autonomy within schools. It proposed:

- the setting up of County Pedagogical Institutes, with new functions of support and advice instead of the traditional supervisory function,
- to give the right to schools to elect their own headteachers,
- to grant parents the right to choose their child's school,
- to set up an institution of school councils for the purposes of establishing stronger links with local community organisations,
- to grant schools the right to resolve issues of internal organisation and management autonomously.

These reforms were initiated 'from the top' with the tacit approval of the political leaders, but based on the centralised political power of the Communist Party and a collapsed economy. As a result, people sometimes expressed their skepticism and negative attitude towards the changes. For example, many were of the opinion that the state had given more freedom to institutions simply because it did not want to invest more money into them, or teachers perceived the changes only as an increase in their responsibility and not in their autonomy (NAGY 1987). But in 1988, when the legitimacy of the whole political system broke down – including the public administration – these reforms were regarded as a positive experience and thus became the basis of the new political, economic and education policies.

Besides the comprehensiveness and the drastic pace of the changes, another important feature of the transition is that it does not originate from an organic development, and no similar process has ever taken place in the course of history. The conditions of a market economy have to be rebuilt from the state-controlled economy; the new basis of democracy and the constitutional law must be created from dictatorial totalitarianism; and a non-violent attitude towards the changes must be developed in the minds of the people. The political parties of each and every country involved in the transition process agree as far as the aims and the further direction of the changes are concerned: parliamentary democracy, the creation of a market economy and European integration are common slogans in nearly all political speeches. In the field of education new keywords have been introduced such as decentralisation, pedagogical innovation, multicolour school-system, independent initiatives, professional autonomy (LUKÁCS 1994). However, their views wildly differ as to how to achieve these goals (FALUS & KOTSCHY 1999).

3.1. What could be the basis for the changes?

There are three answers to this question, all of them placing emphasis on another source.

- Taking into consideration the national character and the positive historical traditions, the general direction should be to continue the development of a bourgeois mentality, which was broken off in 1948–49. In the education system the 8-grade

secondary grammar school system must be re-installed, in the administration of education there is a need to re-establish the pre-World War II situation, similar to the old regional pedagogical centre with their traditional controlling function; the mother tongue, national traditions and national cultural values have first priority in the modernisation of the content of education; and, in the youth movement, the Scout movement should be revived with its strict moral rules, after a four-decade-long forced silence. Going back to the national traditions is often accompanied by an emphasis on Christian culture and ideology. Supporters of the changes, based mainly on conservative values, see the strengthening of moral values and reinforcing the national identity as the most important human conditions for Europeanisation.

- The changing process must follow the example of Western European development; the characteristics of Western democracies must be observed and adopted, keeping in mind the domestic relations. If there exists a Hungarian model in the globalisation of education and schooling, it can be nothing but the improvement of the European model (KOZMA 1992). In the education system: either the introduction of comprehensive schools or a 6+6 school structure has to be reinforced; a central examination board should be set up which designs, implements and operates a system to assess the quality of school work, the two-level examination system has to be created, the definition of the scale of values of the establishment and the pedagogical program must be placed under school autonomy, based on the needs of the consumers; the enforcement of Children's Rights is a major task and the students must be given more opportunity to choose.

For the modern, often radical and liberal education experts, the basis of development is the formation of citizens who are tolerant of other opinions and who can use their own freedom.

- In the Central Eastern European countries the 'third party' solution is the only way to a successful change. There is no chance to go back to the old traditions which worked half a century ago because for most people it is only a past which they know about through negative associations. At the same time, if we adopt the Western model, it does not lead to any results. First of all, there is no unified Western model, and the elements adopted from here and there will be eclectic and difficult or impossible to incorporate into an up-to-date system. The development can only succeed if it is based on the present system, by taking into consideration the subjective and objective conditions. In the field of education: the traditional 8+4 school structure should prevail and all education policy should originate from this structure; the established system, for example the County Pedagogical Institutes should be fully exploited to develop the administration of the education management, with a greater degree of professional autonomy in the schools, attention is drawn to the unpreparedness of the teachers, to their lack of experience and its limiting effects; in the inner renewing of education, planning of the modernisation can only be realistic if it originates from the present teacher training system; and by broadening children's rights, attention is drawn to the lack of ability in using the available freedom and to the development of this ability as a privilege.

Unfortunately, the three different approaches were objects of political battles and not of professional discussions. Since there were bitter political debates among the different political parties, and there was strong political influence everywhere, especially in education, it led to an 'act quickly while I'm in power' attitude. Nowadays, instead of considered progression, denial of the antecedents and confusion are the characteristic features of the field of education. This does not help people to be more responsive to changes. It only fuels doubts and cynicism, instead of motivated and responsible participation. Many think it is the centralised and standardised school practice that can only work effectively (GAZSÓ 2001).

Teachers focus only on the strategy of surviving. The central directive tries to force the institutions and people to fulfil its own ambitions. Nowadays, this cannot be done through applying political pressure and issuing decrees. But it is easy to influence people indirectly through the allocation of the central budget, and the tender system also helps to keep the course of development in a desirable direction. If the major aim of calling for tenders is to implement the central education policy, then the institutions in both higher and lower education will be guided by the financial opportunities, and, for extra money, they will engage in implementing the reforms. This system works especially well in a situation in which the institutions can fund their functioning only through the tender system. However, the effectiveness of this approach may be questioned: in the long run, would it not be a more effective policy to base the reforms on conviction and on the realisation of a need for change, even if this is more time-consuming?

3.2. Decentralisation of the Education System

There is a need to transform the values of society in the interest of modernisation. Some of the values change, and old categories are filled with new meanings. The changes in the scale of values also require a considerable transformation of people's mindsets. Such changes are very slow, and therefore they are the worst obstacles in the way of transformation. Their braking effect is increased, and because of the global changes, the scale of values of the old system is endangered. They cannot be implanted into the new systems, and therefore they are lost. The democratisation of the education system means the decentralisation of the system. First of all, the state monopoly of education must cease, then participation rights must be widened, the tasks of decision-making must be shared, and institutional autonomy must be established.

The 1993 law – incorporating the good points of the 1985 law – created the legal conditions for this process. The new education law, which was introduced after three years of professional and political debates, includes the following:

- the provision of school education has been defined as a local task: the responsibilities of the central government and local authorities have been specified and the maintenance of schools by agencies other than the state or the local self-governments has been regulated;

- the old central curriculum has been formally invalidated and a two-level system of curriculum regulation has come into force, i.e. apart from the central frame curriculum, the learning process will be directed by a detailed school-level curriculum;
- each school will be obliged to develop a document called a pedagogical programme, which has to be approved by the local authority maintaining the school; and
- each school will be obliged to set up a board consisting of representatives of the provider, parents, teachers and students (the latter only in secondary schools).

The freedom of schools to choose their specified profile set off an unexpected explosion from the beginning, from 1989–90. Because of the inspiration of innovative teaching staffs, a great variety of individual state schools, alternative and reform pedagogical schools and renewed church and foundation schools for different social circles emerged, with a colourful variety of different structures and contents.

The municipalities took control of their schools, and within a few years' time, 5% of all primary school students and 19.94% of all secondary school students attended church, foundation or private schools. Out of this 5% at primary level 3.98 opted for a church school. Out of the 19.94% on secondary level 15.97 opted for a religious grammar school (HALÁSZ & LANNERT 2003, 443).

Alongside the positive aspects of this freedom and multicolouredness, its negative aspects have also emerged: changing schools has become difficult; the antidemocratic tendencies have become stronger, because most parents cannot understand the different options available; and because they cannot recognise the needs of their children, they cannot benefit from their right to choose. The other parents, especially the intellectual ones, try to put their children into an 'elite school', or because of the selective entrance system, into a more homogeneous one as soon as possible. This violates the principle of equal chances and increases the danger of social segregation.

Pedagogical practice has seen other distortions, too. Partly because of the reduction in the number of school-aged children in Hungary, the schools have an existential force to make themselves more attractive through their programmes. Secondly, with the transformation of the centralised system, the old supervisory system disappeared and the new one has not yet been formed. It made possible the presentation of school programmes which were not professionally acceptable or were unrealistic to carry out. This raised the question of creating an expert team and the necessity for in-service teacher training, so that new programmes could be advertised only with acceptable quality and skills. Writing pedagogical programmes became a most important issue after the 2003 upgrading of the National Core Curriculum, which provided complete freedom for teachers in terms of the content of their school curriculum. Teachers needed adequate support so as to be able to benefit from their newly acquired freedom. To satisfy this demand, the education administration decided to create up-to-date but heavily prescriptive educational material packages in pedagogical development centres. This again provoked heated arguments amongst both teachers and experts, since using these packages seriously constrains pedagogical freedom.

Increased responsibility, which comes with autonomy, causes problems for most schools. Their problems originate from two sources: first, from their uncertainty in their professional competence, and, second, from the inadequate funding of schools, which renders the realisation of the modern concepts hopeless. The other challenge in the modernisation of schools is the new idea of a school as a provider of a service, and the importance of parental rights. Although the schools' own governing body has a long history in Hungary, the communist system made education the responsibility of schools, neglecting the families' own ways of upbringing, their values and tasks. Although the teachers and parents were provided with the possibilities and forms to contact each other, such contacts rarely fulfilled their real purpose. Instead of collaboration, mutual fear was created between parents and teachers. Therefore parental rights, which were accepted in 1985, and broadened later in 1993, do not require the creation of a formal framework, but rather a change in the attitudes towards collaboration. The market mechanisms and the service provider attitude, coming into the limelight of education, have a double effect on this process. Parents are using their rights more often. Some of them with responsibility, taking part in the school's life, putting help in first place. But the majority view their critical comments as most important in this new system. If this latter attitude becomes ever more common, teachers will feel more defenseless, and with the deepening of conflicts, this may lead to the rejection of the democratic forms, the whole democracy. All these changes characterising the education system set up new demands on teachers, and hereby on teacher training, too. New teacher-training systems should be built, reflecting the needs of social pluralism. These systems should be run democratically to ensure the success of the practical experiments and democracy for future teachers. A training system should be set up suitable for the structure of the school system. By modernising the content and methodology of the training, novice teachers should be helped to develop new qualities required to change the attitude of teachers and their conception of their roles. They should accept the school's role as a provider of service and should pursue a balance of social and individual interests, to undertake responsibility for pedagogical freedom, and to accept the importance of the pupils' autonomy.

4. Conclusion

The post-communist countries were in a very controversial situation. The socialist states created, from their own point of view, effective educational systems. These systems worked well under the circumstances of a monolithic society. The societal changes needed, and still need, the reconstruction of the whole system so that it can become more flexible, more pluralistic and more democratic. At the same time, the GDP is much lower in these countries than in Western Europe. The governments would like to break down the welfare state, which means spending less and less on health services and education. Reconstruction of the school system would need more and more funding, but, instead, because of the dismantling of the welfare system, the

state provides less and less financial support for schools. After attaining freedom and democracy this is the new contradiction and the new problem which needs to be resolved.

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