

EXPERIMENTAL CATCHING-UP PROCESS IN FACULTATIVE
SUBJECT GROUP SECONDARY EDUCATION

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In three secondary grammar schools in Csongrád county an experiment was started to try a possible variety of facultative subject-group education in 1974. The model was worked out by Dr. György Ágoston, university professor and Dr. Sándor Orosz, university senior lecturer. The teachers' staff of the Szeged Radnóti Miklós Secondary Grammar school, and that of the Szeged Ságvári Endre Practising Grammar School, as well as the Makó József Attila Secondary Grammar School undertook to carry out education according to the experimental plan under the guidance of the Pedagogical Department of József Attila University, Szeged, in altogether 16 forms in two grades during the school years 1974/75 and 1975/76.

The following main issues are to be resolved by the experimental model:

- a/ to put an end to the uniform concept/ion/ of general education for everybody, and, at the same time, to provide also a high level general education to fulfil the double task of secondary education.
- b/ to implement catching-up
- c/ to solve clarify career choice policy
- d/ besides continuing general education in the 3rd and 4th forms, to bring about special education in two directions: preparation for academic studies and partly, or totally, for certain professions.

According to the experimental model the main tasks in the 1st and 2nd forms, besides the implementation of a high level general and practical education, are catching-up and career orientation. During the years of the experiment the teachers gained a lot of beneficial experience. In the following, on the basis of this experience, we are going to study the task of catching-up, its organization, the applied methods, the results obtained and the problems to be solved.

1. The necessity of catching-up

Secondary education has a double task: to prepare the pupils for higher educational studies, and to help those youngsters not wishing to continue their studies with preparation for practical life. The tasks ahead of us can be fulfilled with success only if, in the first phase of study /in the 1st and, 2nd forms/, a high level general education is ensured, and a basis established on which, in the second phase /forms 3/ and 4/, in accordance with the orientation, the whole system of specialisations can be built. In the first phase of study the fact should be taken into account that at present pupils with great differences in their level of knowledge are enrolled in the first form of secondary grammar schools. It is true that only the best pupils from general schools seek admission, but for several reasons there are great differences in their knowledge and their exam results. This is verified by the practical experiences of the teachers involved.

Numerical data from the enrolling statistics of the Makó József Attila Secondary School in 1974/75 and 1975/76. provide proof.

School year 1974/75

Number of pupils enrolled : 90

Average result	Number of pupils	%
5.0	12	13.4
4.9-4.7	12	13.4
4.6-3.7	58	64.3
3.6-2.7	8	8.9

School year 1975/76

Number of pupils enrolled : 108

Average result	Number of pupils	%
5.0	24	22.2
4.9-4.5	26	24.1
4.4-4.0	33	30.5
3.9-3.5	15	13.9
3.4-3.0	6	5.5
2.9-2.5	3	2.8
2.4-2.0	1	1.0
	<u>108</u>	<u>100</u>

Academic averages were calculated on the basis of marks received at the end of the 8th form of general school. Experiences in the previous years- and in the school years mentioned-prove that similar marks received in different general schools do not reflect a similar level of knowledge. On the other hand, another thing should be taken into consideration and that is that there is no agreement on a system of requirements between general and grammar schools - and consequently none on marking. This is proved by comparing the academic average of the 8th form and that of the first term in the first form of grammar schools. In the first term of the 1974/75 school year in the first form of the Makó József Attila Secondary Grammar School

pupils' achievement

improved	2.2 %
unchanged	3.3 "
worsened 0.1-0.4	23.4 "
0.5-0.0	51.1 "
1.0-	20.0 "

/The decline in the academic average was seen - not to the same extent - in the Radnóti Miklós Secondary Grammar School, in Szeged, where the results of one of the facultative forms worsened by 0.53 %/

The study of these results unequivocally shows that the first forms are of a heterogeneous composition. The composition is not homogeneous from other points of view either. In the school year 1974-75, 90 pupils enrolled in the Makó József Attila Secondary Grammar school had received their primary education in 16 general schools /6 schools in Makó, 10 in villages or farm centres/. Out of them the parents of 39 pupils were manual workers. A similar situation could be found in the first forms in 1975/76 school year, too./ of 108 pupils enrolled in the first form of secondary school from 7 general schools in Makó, 12 village schools and farm centres, 62 pupils were the children of manual workers./

So the pupils in the first form differed from one another in their pre-conditioning, family circumstances and geographical -settlement conditions. This means that they do not

start their studies in secondary school with equal chances, a section of the pupils being in a disadvantageous position compared with their class-mates, and, in a lot of cases, not performing according to their ability. If all these factors are not taken into consideration in our educational work, with a considerable number of them later on accumulated disadvantages occur.

Secondary schools cannot undertake to eliminate the social reasons for this disadvantageous situation /hostel accomodation, scholarships, enlightenment and education of parents, methodical assistance for general schools/, but they can undertake, at any rate, to compensate the unequal chances by educational and methodical means. Even in the present circumstances much can be done to decrease the differences in academic level and the failure resulting from the disadvantageous situation /but the lessening of the disadvantageous situation has not /yet/ become an essential part of the educational process/. Secondary schools were willing to do so - preparatory courses for secondary schools, tutors, group work, etc., 1 There are experiments to bring about catching-up possibilities, but these possibilities are almost non-existent in the upper forms of general schools. This task is to be fulfilled by secondary schools. /It is probable that even if the catching-up in general education is brought about, secondary schools will have such a task, as fresh disadvantages may appear independently of pupils/.

The necessity of corrective activities is formulated and incorporated as an integral part in the structure of education from the experimental model of facultative subject-group education. "In the first term of the first class corrective, catching-up possibilities should be given to those pupils who have poor results in any subject on the basis of knowledge level assessments at the beginning of the school year. This means intensive activities in smaller groups with the aim of compensating the insufficiencies of general education, and of establishing a firmer basis for secondary education. During these corrective activities it is bound to come out whether a pupil's weak points in a certain subject may be due to

improper general education or to his or her low level of ability. This phase of correction is regarded as an indispensable condition for the orientation at the end of the first term. As certain retarding situations may recur, catching-up, compensating activities similar to those in the first term must be regarded as an integral part of the whole education, so they must be applied, if needed, in the later phase of study" /2/

The teachers in the experiment saw its aim, its way of realization and its methods, but-just because of its novelty - they know only its general outlines. We were aware of the fact that only intensive occupations in small groups could bring results and that special forms of activity should be organized. It was obvious that the pre-training level of pupils enrolled in the first form should be measured objectively in every subject. The experimental plan contains a requirement that in the 1st and 2nd forms during the general education test assessments must be made regularly in every theme unit to see to what level the pupils have learned "core subject" 2, compulsory for everybody. A supposition came from the above facts that in the previous type of catching-up activities, on the one hand, the gaps in general school and, on the other hand, the new ones which are formed in secondary education must be filled. Pupils should participate in activities until the gaps are eliminated, the later activities - for actual catching-up, and compensation - being organized to eliminate the lack of knowledge experienced. As a matter of fact we had to prepare small group activities of a supplementary character providing immediate help. This way of giving assistance was regarded not as a single action but as a continuous, regular work which aimed at raising the level and improving the standard of education.

Already at the beginning of the experiment we had to make it clear that this work is not traditional coaching.

2/ Dr. Ágoston György - Dr. Orosz Sándor: i.b.

Coaching is irregular, spasmodic, the composition of participants is always changing and its aim is to give assistance at a given moment. Mostly those pupils participate in such occupations who for some reason have fallen behind /illness, absence/ and they cannot keep pace with their fellows. Coaching is regarded by a lot of pupils as a substitute for individual learning.

We regarded these catching-up activities as educational, organizational forms which have a regular function in the first phase of education; and whose aim is to complement the insufficient fundamental knowledge of a pupil coming from general school with a certain " handicap, or who fell behind in the secondary school through fault of his own. After clarifying the concepts and ideas we had to make experiments with the organizational possibilities of activities and methods to be applied.

One of our main tasks was, first of all, to change the teachers' standpoint. We consciously roused and cultivated an ambition to make experiments, to search for new ways. We created a concept that the teachers should regard catching-up process as the fundamental task of their educational work and that they should search for new methods which are successful.

2. Information on the pupils' knowledge

To get reliable, precise information on the pupils' pre-educational level, level of knowledge and on possible insufficiency is one of the basic conditions for successful catching-up. It is important that we should receive information on the progress and on the possible recurrence of insufficiencies.

To this end we regularly assessed the level of knowledge. Level-defining test papers were used to assess the level of knowledge of pupils entering the first form, later on at the end of the first and second terms, further assessments were made. The test papers for assessing the level of knowledge were compiled by practising teachers. These assessments were used in every experimental form. Besides subject teachers regularly made assessments by end-of-topic test papers compiled by teams of subject teachers in schools.

The pupils' knowledge was assessed in Hungarian language, mathematics, Russian, history, chemistry and biology. To fill

in the sheets for Hungarian language and mathematics took 2 hours, while for the other subjects 1 hour.

To pinpoint possible insufficiencies is an urgent task, but, all the same, it is unfavourable to carry out level-defining assessments during the first lessons of the school year. In the school year 1974/75 it was done in the first periods. The results were unfavourably effected by this fact, not to mention the unfavourable psychological effects. On the basis of conclusions next year the level-defining assessments were made in the second part of September. This was more favourable, because the pupils had got used to the new environment by that time, and they had the opportunity /4-6 actual periods in every subject/ to revise the fundamental attainments of general school. It had to be taken into account that the majority of our pupils, especially those coming from village or farm schools were encountering test paper assessments for the first time. It was reasonable to acquaint them with simpler assessment papers and sheets, and with the way of filling them in. The experiences of the first school year made us accept the fact that at least 2-3 weeks must be ensured for assessments in 6 subjects and in one day only one subject may be assessed. Assessment in the same subjects in parallel forms should be carried out at the same time, otherwise the reality of results may be doubtful. This kind of coordinating work has to be done by the school management. The pupils were informed about the definite time of assessments in the first week of the school year, so they had time to prepare.

Nor is it certain after such careful preparation that the results give an objective picture of the pupils' real attainments.

The teachers in the experiments noticed some factors which significantly affect or which may effect the performance of all the pupils or that of a certain number; so the information obtained in this way may be distorted to some extent. Such factors are :

a/ The questions and problems in our level-defining assessment sheets are not always unanimously clear or the questions are not formulated in the way the pupil is used to. Another important factor is that our test papers are not standardized and do not always ask about the most important

attainments. A further task of our research is to produce assessment test papers which will give more reliable information not only about attainments, but about ability and proficiency level as well.

b/ A lot of pupils have not yet worked with test papers, so they often have difficulties in the "technical aspect" of filling them in. Frequent mistakes coming from this are prolix answers without the main point.

c/ Unfavourable psychological factors may affect, in a bad way the reality of results. /e.g. unsatisfactory preparation, or, if the pupils are not informed that the results will not influence their first term marks, the pupils "frighten" one another etc./.

d/ A considerable number of the pupils were noticed not to be able to "economize" the available time, so they do not even start to solve a section of the exercises.

To correct and evaluate the level-defining test papers involves long and tiring work on the part of the teacher. To facilitate this work a correcting key was made. After correction it is advisable to carry out evaluation and summary according to the following points of view:

- a/ a pupil' s performance in %
- b/ performance of the form as a whole in %
- c/ performance of the form in each exercise in %
- d/ in each exercies the name of pupils who failed to answer should be noted.

e/ a summary can be made which gives an exact picture about insufficiencies in the class attainments. In the summary all the elements of every exercise must be taken. So thumbing through the sheets we can write in the corresponding column the number of incorrect solutions. After this it is easy to count the number of pupils who do not know certain elements.

After the evaluation we got the following information:

- a/ which section of the subject is difficult for the class or for the majority of the class?
- b/ who in certain sections parts of the subject, have obvious insufficiencies which greatly prevent advance?
- c/ before dealing with certain themes we know the level of attainments, proficiency and ability we have to build on

After such analyses concerning different subjects - even if not so deep in details - we possess data of an informative character. But we felt that only one assessment to define the knowledge-level without any doubt was not sufficient. The sheets do not contain the circle of all the attainments, proficiency and ability about which we intended to obtain a reliable picture. Therefore it seems to be useful to collect additional pieces of information for which there are some possibilities:

a/ to study the pupils' characterization given by general school /family circumstances, information on the school they came from, intellectual and mental abilities, attitude to work, learning, diligence, will power, achievement in a certain subject, etc./.

c/ Parents' meetings with the teachers, family visits /the pupil's plan about the future, family circumstances, the pupil's difficulties, possibility of studying at home, family ambitions, the pupil's diligence etc./.

b/ Paying regular attention to them during the periods /their participation in collective work, depth of knowledge,, adaptation ability, activity, the pupil's attitude to the subject, speaking ability etc./.

d/ to study the pupil's homework, his written work.

e/ private, individual talks.

Information received about every pupil should be put down. This is important from an other point of view, too: it is impossible to orientate the pupil correctly without reliable data. The subject teacher's notes may take different forms. One of the possible forms is as follows:

Pupil's name:

School he came from:

Parents' profession: father:

mother:

School achievement in

subject

5th form

6 th "

7th "

8th "

Diligence:

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Some more important statements from the general school characterization:

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Level-defining assessments sheets:

First Form

beginning of the year half term end of the school year

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Second Form

half term end of the school year

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Experiences:

a/ assessments

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b/ other sources:

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Causes of insufficiencies:

Way of assistance:

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Orientation: 2nd term 3rd term 4th term

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Experiences of orientation:

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Marks:

First Form

half term end of the school year

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Second Form

half term end of the school year

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Other notes:

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If we write our notes regularly, it is easy to see exact information about change in his or her personality and school work. Possessing other pieces of information, the analysis of the level-defining test papers can be used to reveal the causes of insufficiencies. A general experience is that - except for a few pupils - insufficiencies in attainments cannot be traced back to the lack of ability. The most frequent reasons are:

- a/ poorer ability /but not the lack of it/
- b/ not enough diligence, periodical learning
- c/ undeveloped, in correct learning methods
- d/ low level of self-reliance, shyness
- e/ language self-expression insufficiencies, low level in mother tongue culture
- f/ lack of the pupil's ambition

/The above mentioned - except the first one - can be traced back to unfavourable family conditions. Even nowadays there are a great number of families whose general cultural-demand level is low, they do not check their children's school work at home, they do not estimate properly their children's school achievement, and they cannot get their children to do more sophisticated work./

g/ not every general school makes its pupils exert themselves /sometimes the existing liberal evaluation, and mark-differentiation does not induce exertion/.

Having all this information, the subject teacher can decide about the tasks involved in catching-up. /Of course nobody thinks that the above information can be obtained during the first weeks. This requires regular observations and regular work by the teacher. However, the most important information can be obtained in the first months.

3. Possibilities for catching-up

The tasks of the teaching staff and subject teachers are varied. If we want to achieve success, we have to create an atmosphere at school /in the class/ which will not promote a

sense of "handicap" developing through unsatisficence, a
 "sense of shame" will not appear, and pupils struggling with
 their backward position will not be branded. In this way we
 may avoid the possibility of the formation of permanent failure,
 as "... the formation of permanent failure is due-besides the
 poor performance - to a social environment in which rather
 the class mates nor the adults appreciate the self-implemen-
 tational ambitions of the pupil or his performances of compen-
 sational character produced in another field." /3/
 This is an especially important task for teachers in the
 first forms which start their community life. "From pedagogi-
 cal and psychological experiments and research it is known that
 the pupils' falling behind in their learning may have a lot of
 reasons. One of them - and perhaps not the least - the break
 of personality development which is caused by failures at the
 beginning and which may be fixed by the teacher's repeated ne-
 gative evaluation. If this negative, repeated evaluation is
 not connected with effective help, it may decrease the pupil's
 self-evaluation and spoil his social situation in the class
 community". /4/

Which care should be taken that this help was not in an
 "off-hand manner", humiliating, hurting human feelings, because
 practically it will not yield any results. The KISZ organization,
 which with its own means supports our pedagogical ideas, can give
 valuable assistance in creating a favourable atmosphere.
 At an earlier time, but also during the experiments the
 establishment of regular, close contact with the parents, and
 their pedagogical enlightenment were considered to be especially
 important tasks. At school meetings with parents, at receptions,
 during family visits we have, at all costs to deal, with ques-
 tions such as the following: instead of abusing the pupil at
 home because of his poorer performance and insufficient knowledge
 and instead of extreme requirements towards him, patient, helpful

3 / Tibor Gáldor: On reasons of learning failure, Pedagogiat
 Szemle 1975/3. 213 p.

4 / Erdel-Gruz Tibor: Teachers' role in the age of scientific-
 technical revolution. Pedagogiat Szemle 1974/6.
 491 p.

parental behaviour, and encouragement are more useful.

To introduce economical and utilizable learning methods is regarded as a permanent task. This has to be done, at all costs, in the first term of the first form. Good occasions are provided, besides during the lessons, by the formmaster's lesson, individual or group talks and family visits, too.

On the basis of our experiences the following possibilities can be used for catching-up:

- a/ a part of the periods /first of all revision at the beginning of the school year/
- b/ differentiated homework
- c/ group occupations during the periods, practising periods
- d/ to organize pairs of pupils for learning
- e/ independent catching-up under the teacher's control
- f/ catching-up lessons besides periods in the curriculum
- g/ other possibilities /coaching at school, at hostels/

After taking into account the results of level-defining assessments, the different sorts of information, the reasons for falling behind, and the possibilities for catching-up, the subject teacher may decide about other methods of compensation. In our opinion we have to see clearly which pupils have insufficiencies that may essentially influence their progress. In our experiment one of the fundamental ideas was: if some element of knowledge /idea, rule, etc., and their practical application /was not known by more than 20 % of the form or they did not know it correctly, it had to be compensated for during revisions at the beginning of the school year. However, this solution could not be realized because of the lack of time, as from October the secondary school material had to be taught. The new first form curriculum to be introduced in 1978 ought at all costs to ensure, this possibility, too. According to the present curriculum, first of all, the practise periods give a good occasion for catching-up; of course, only if differentiated exercises are given to the pupils.

In our experience the possibilities of teaching periods are not utilized to a proper extent. The frontal occupations nowadays in the majority /yet/ are not favourable for pupils with insufficiencies or unstable attainments yet. They are

unable to join perfectly in the work of the period; the teacher - to ensure progress - relies on pupils with firm attainments and he cannot always be certain whether everyone in the form can understand him. If there are possibilities, it is useful to organize group occupation. Our attempts proved that heterogeneous groups are better to organize, because in case of homogeneous groups - at least in the first and second forms - an inferiority complex can be induced in some poorer pupils, their backward position is further increased and they may lose heart. This was experienced even in cases when they had the chance of getting into a better and stronger group. In heterogeneous groups particular attention should be paid to the fact that the problems were solved not by the best pupils, but in collective work. Now and then the least capable pupils were asked to summarize the collective work so they were given an opportunity for individual performance.

Among pupils enrolled in secondary schools with insufficiencies but which do not influence their progress essentially there may be some who are able to do corrective work under the teachers guidance, with his help. It is useful to give them differentiated homework /oral or written/, answers have to be checked regularly or new instructions can be given to them during the consultation-like situation.

During the experiments there were no attempts to organize pupils into study pairs but this possibility should not be rejected.

In the case of more serious insufficiencies which endanger the advance and the requirements of the curriculum, catching-up occupations were organized outside the periods. The level-defining and other assessments verified that 20-30 % of the pupils have insufficiencies which can be abolished only during well-organized, helping and corrective activities. /From this point of view there were no essential differences in the three experimental secondary schools, although the enrolling conditions in the Radnóti Miklós Secondary school and the Ságváris Endre Training Secondary School were not much better than in the Makó József Attila Secondary School. This phenomenon can be explained by the lack of a coordinated, single basis on which to judge

what can be regarded as a fundamental insufficiency. / Our situation was made even more difficult by the fact that there were rather a lot of pupils who needed regular corrective activities in several subjects /sometimes 4-5/. There were classes where 5-6, in others, 2-3 pupils had a rather poor result in every subject in their level-defining measurings. /The experience of the two years' brought us to the conclusion that no more favourable conditions can be expected in the future either. /

To organize these corrective activities demands a high level of coordination work in the school. After summarizing the measuring assessment it is necessary for the subject teachers to have a short talk with the charring form-master. In this session the subject teachers' statements concerning the knowledge-level of the class as a whole have to be summarized, then the experiences in the different subjects must be evaluated concerning each of the pupils. In this way a unique, perfect picture can be built up of every pupil - of their personality, attainments, insufficiencies and their reasons. This talk has the aim of deciding who must, at all costs take part in corrective activities. It has to be decided here what to do with pupils who had severe insufficiencies in 4-5 subjects. In our opinion, it is worthwhile for a pupil to participate in only 2-3 catching-up activities a week. /This means 2-3 hours, for in the experiment we gave one corrective activity a week in every subject. / We have to reach a decision on another question, too, : which occupations should be attended by the extremely poor pupils. /There are reasons for suggesting starting first with the Hungarian language, mathematics or Russian to catch up with the others. There problems are settled mostly after serious talks among the subject teachers.

The above questions, and problems can be rediscussed later on at the half term or second term evaluating conferences, as well as during talks concerning orientation.

Corrective activities are coordinated in the timetable by the headmaster /timetable, classroom capacity, coordination with other activities etc. /. To decide the exact

time certainly depends on the school conditions. Having these activities in the morning from 7 to 8 or connecting them with the last period of the day was considered to be good. But this could not be done in every case, so catching-up periods were held sometimes in the afternoon /generally from 2 to 4/. We /kept/ strictly in mind not to cut, without reason, the pupils' time for homework, therefore we took much care about pupils commuting from the country to ensure a favourable time for them. /Otherwise it would have happened that our well-intended assistance would have had the opposite effect: these pupils would be unable to do properly their days homework because of going home late./

Catching-up activities must be held exactly according to the time table. A pupil's weekly extra period of this kind cannot exceed 2 or 3 hours. Another solution may be possible - if conditions are ensured - that in a subject a short course of 2-3 weeks and 8-10 corrective periods is organized. We have not tried this solution, it is probable that its organization is rather difficult because of the many-sided afternoon programmes; however, in contrast with sporadic activities it has some advantages.

In creating the groups we experimented with three solutions:

a/ On the basis of the level-assessing sheets at the beginning of the school year permanent groups were organized of pupils who obviously had to attend the activities for half a year or for the whole school year. We strived to have groups of no more than 3-5 pupils. The main task was to eliminate insufficiencies derived from the general school.

b/ Non-permanent groups were organized of pupils who needed catching-up only in a certain theme. These activities resembled the traditional co-repetitions. Those pupils were in the majority those who failed in the end-of-topic test papers. So here, first of all, insufficiencies arising in the secondary school were compensated for.

c/ Theoretically it is possible - but in practice it was rare - that the majority of a class attended catching-up activities if a certain area of the subject caused trouble

for all of them. To deal with the theme again during the periods was regarded more useful. A part of our curricula /Hungarian language, mathematics, Russian/ gave opportunities of this kind. In some subjects - because of the great amount of material in the curriculum - we had to apply catching-up periods for the whole class /history, chemistry, biology/.

4. The most frequent insufficiencies in pupils' attainments

The result of level-defining assessments give a rich list of insufficiencies coming from general schools. To make it clear, we are going to summarize the most important ones in two subjects - a verbal and a non-verbal one.

Hungarian language

There are some pupils enrolled in the secondary school who have significant language cultural insufficiencies. There are forms where the ability in oral and written expression of 6-8 pupils is at a rather low level. This is often accompanied by stuttering and unintelligible reading. The level of correct spelling ability is not promising: mostly the use of j-ly, the spelling of nouns /first of all, geographical names, titles/ verbal suffixes, assimilation, misuse of the sign of the Past Tense, and the genitive suffix caused a lot of trouble. There are some pupils who make a surprisingly great number of mistakes in spelling. Ugly, sometimes totally illegible handwriting is frequent.

The command of descriptive grammar learnt in general schools, the knowledge of categories, definitions, and the recognition of the fundamental connections of certain grammar units were not satisfactory. From the first tests it turned out that constructing ability is poor, and to realize consciously the proportions of construction units was difficult for them.

Every problem mentioned above cannot come to light from the level assessment test papers answered early in the school year, as the ability in oral and written expression the ability in construction and reading ability can hardly or not at all be measured by test papers. Therefore it is especially important to get additional information in this subject.

The results of assessment test papers - as they give no suitable information about the most important abilities - generally were satisfactory /during the two experimental years all three schools had a 60-70 % performance/.

Insufficiencies in the mother tongue essentially have an effect on the performances in other subjects, so to correct the mistakes experienced is an important and urgent task.

Mathematics

From the level-defining assessments it can be concluded that the pupils' calculation ability is generally poor /both in mental and written arithmetic/; a lot of pupils have trouble mostly in operations involving fractions and numbers with signs. Some of them do not know exactly the use of parantheses. The first term report of the Makó József Attila Secondary School reflects general concepts characteristic for the pupils of all three experimental schools: "There are insufficiencies in calculation with fractions, they are poor in defining a number from a fraction, they are unable to deduce, they are unable to apply correctly the fundamental operations in textual problems. Besides, the ability to solve textual problems is rather poor, but, its is especially bad that the solution of proportional exercises- which have a very important role in everyday life - is a guess for a lot of pupils.

Mostly in solving equations and simultaneous equations, the poor reasoning, logical ability, judgement, the explanation of solutions, and the non-checking of solutions are badly felt.

In geometry the knowledge of basic geometrical constructions and some geometrical ideas is correct /phase, angle, circumference, surface, perpendicular, parallel/. Only few pupils can see relations, theorems and do not feel the necessity to verify. Only a few pupils can dispute well and precisely." /5/

The results of level-defining assessments was 40-50 %.

The picture in the other subjects is not more comforting. The great amount of what we must do can be seen in the assessments at the beginning of school years 1974/75 and /5/ The first term report of 1974/75 in Makó József Attila Secondary School, JATE Department of Pedagogy

1975/76 for the first class pupils in the Makó József Attila Secondary School:

Subject:	1974/75	1975/76
history	31.9 %	51.55 %
Russian	42.1 "	43.72 "
biology	35.5 "	66.90 "
chemistry	58.0 "	65.28 "

The programme of catching-up periods and applied methods

The programme of catching-up periods is determined by the quantity and quality of insufficiencies, the number of available lessons, time necessary for correction, the number of pupils, their individual insufficiencies etc. A plan with a longer outlook can be made only for permanent groups, but these plans should be flexible and within a framework. We have to compile even for occasional groups some kind of ideas, but these may comprise in accordance with the occasional character of the group only the main lines of the tasks to be done.

The school management did not ask the teachers to prepare plans in written form, nevertheless it was obvious that a syllabus for permanent groups had to be put down. To prepare a plan for corrective periods for the whole class may be reasonable only if catching-up requires several lessons /independently of whether during school lessons or outwith them/.

If insufficiencies were determined individually, we could make plans individually, too. This concerns especially the planning of some corrective lessons. There were occupations where the same topic was discussed with every member of the group /e.g. everybody in the group had difficulties in spelling proper nouns/, in other cases even within a topic some differentiation had to be done /e.g. a member of the group had problems in recognizing adjectives, another pronouns/. In groups of non-permanent character mostly the same theme was dealt with by everybody, as the setting up of the groups was made on the basis of insufficiencies. The situation is similar when

catching-up for the majority of the class or for the whole class takes place at the same time. In defining the topics it is useful to determine the tasks and methods to be applied.

The activities differ from school periods in the quantity and quality of the subject-matter of instruction to be used /attainments, proficiencies, abilities to be compensated for/ in the number of the group etc. They differ /or may differ/ in the methods to be applied, too. It is clear that we have to adapt ourselves to the individual. An important requirement arises from this fact that the subject teacher is expected to possess a high level of pedagogical and methodical culture, psychological knowledge, to do his work resolutely, regularly and steadily.

Practising teachers experience most of their problems in the new, particular methods of how to solve the new tasks. The experiment has proved that only the methods applied in school periods - which are, of course, needed in the catching-up lessons as well - are not sufficiently effective. In addition to the general methods special ones are needed. We know that less is achieved in this field. Further methodological researches have the task of assisting practising teachers to arrive to a better and more successful solution of this new task. This does not contradict the fact that the subject teachers and headmasters in their reports raise a lot of new ideas in connection with the applied methods, but these methods are of a general character. Now we are going to quote from the headmasters' reports of the experimental schools:

"The methods of activities depended on the special character of the subject, on the insufficiencies, on the number of group members, etc. ... In different subjects there were different methods dominating. In Hungarian language, first of all, exercises in correct spelling, in good Hungarian; in history, the analysis of sources, the explanation of basic concepts; in Russian, the explanation of some grammar rules, collective listening to recorded tapes, to answer programmed grammar exercises, answers to questions, situational dialogues, etc. There were some attempts to have activities of a

consultative character, but they did not fulfil expectations" /6/

"of the methods applied in corrective activities individual activity with a 3-6 member group proved to be the best: after a collective explanation of a problem every participant gets an individual task; in the meantime, the teacher, walking about, helps wherever necessary; then they discuss or correct the mistakes collectively. Differentiated homework is frequent enough for a corrective lesson. It is essential that these periods are activities involving talk in a free atmosphere, where the pupil has an interest, too, - opposed to common periods in revealing his weak points, so that he can be helped. /This developed gradually, but from the time the pupils get used to it, the efficacy of occupations increases greatly". /7/

"we were not able - but nor did we want - to create a new method for catching-up activities. Our primary aim was to gain information about the pupils' failure in a subject and to reveal at the same time, the reasons for failure. During the course of the methods followed afterwards explanation, checking and practise predominated. In checking pupils both oral and written methods were used, depending on the pupil's weak points. Special attention had to be paid to drill in catching-up activities as well, to the solution of mathematical problems, to the training in spelling rules, to mastering fundamental attainments through practice etc. - first of all because we saw that a lot of pupils failed in learning the general school subject-matter because of the lack of drill.

Activities with a small group always ensured liveliness. In every case we considered it important that during catching-up activities the pupils' progress should be evaluated /in a small group individually/. Praise and encouragement were essential, as well as the fact that, due to the activities, the pupil should succeed. We were particular about the good

/6/ First term report of 1974/75 in the Makó József Attila Secondary School, JATE Department of Pedagogy

/7/ The first term report of 1974/75 school year in the Szegec Ságvári Endre Secondary Training, School, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy

atmosphere of the activities, and that pupils attending corrective activities were not ensured.

Close attention was paid to another fact, namely that the pupils came to understand the new things by relying on their own by attainments, and that they saw and realized the facts, independently etc. This was done so that the pupils did not get used to accepting ready-made "attainments" i.e. that they did not become "pupils always requiring assistance", that they did not get used to attending catching-up activities, doing it only if they needed it.

... In spite of their usefulness, however, talks with the subject teachers suggest that in the future we shall have to find special methods of catching-up activities and more analytical evaluation of the activities. /8/

Our description would not be correct without informing about those methodological attempts going on even at present. Our teachers researching for new methods would like the following questions to be answered:

a/ How can modern teaching aids /TV, radio, taperecorder, language lab., films slides etc./ be used most effectively in corrective activities?

b/ How is it possible to develop more effectively than hitherto the ability of self-control, self-evaluation?

c/ How can we ensure progress at individual pace?

d/ Which methods could be used to make general activities of a consultative character which are not applied widely?

e/ Is it possible to work out programmes and sheets which can be used with result in other groups, too?

f/ Which are the best methods of incorporating the compensated and drilled attainments in the system of teaching periods?

g/ Which are the methods most suitable for the pupils' personality, and ability?

Many kinds of method of the corrective periods have developed or are developing. The situation is similar to the construction of activities. It is impossible to give a gene-

/8/ The first term report of 1974/75 school year in the Szeged Radnóti Miklós Secondary school, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy

ral scheme for it, because every catching-up period has its own solution. One thing is sure, however; i.e., that they are more informal than teaching periods.

6. Results, experiences

Even if our methods have not crystallized in every respect, the catching-up method of the experiment is effective and successful. The teachers and pupils of the three Csongrád county secondary schools unanimously approved and accepted its necessity after finishing the first phase of the experiment. Of course there are different opinions: in one secondary school they do not consider it justified to go on with catching-up in the second form; another one, on the contrary, consider it necessary in the third form, too. Similar different opinions can be seen on the question of which subjects corrective activities must be organized in. The reasons for these differing opinions can be found in the fact that the enrolling areas of the school in the experiment are different, consequently in their pupils' knowledge - level there are great differences. Let us quote some opinions from the headmasters' summarizing reports!

"According to our experiences corrective activities are needed in mathematics; chemistry, Hungarian language and Russian, ... in the other subjects /geography, history, literature, foreign languages/ when needed - and can be used in some subjects less frequently /biology, practical work, drawing, singing/ or they are totally unnecessary." /9/

"It is a general statement that it was necessary, at all costs, to organize catching-up activities. Its result is that some of the pupils succeeded in diminishing their falling behind, and the differences in knowledge-level also decreased. It is especially important that pupils enrolled from village schools had organized possibilities for overcoming insufficiencies in their attainments." /10/

/9/ The first term report of 1974/75 school year in the Szeged Ságvári Endre Training Secondary School, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy

/10/ The first term report of 1974/75 school year in th Makó Sec. School, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy

"Our teachers have a good opinion about the activities. Some of them say: an important phenomenon can be attributed to them that at the end of the school year nobody, in the form failed in any subject, and the pupils were not afraid of the subjects." /11/

"The system of corrective, catching-up activities is one of the cardinal points of the experiments, which was unanimously recognized by both pupils and teachers." /12/

"Regular catching-up activities are considered by the teachers indispensable in some subjects /mathematics, chemistry, the mother tongue /and the pupils are of the same opinion/." /13/ It arises from the above opinions that both the teachers and pupils consider catching-up occupations not only as necessary but successful. Because of the objective assessment development it is difficult to give numerical results, so, first of all, we have to see the experimental facts. It is worth noticing the study-average of the first forms in the 1974/75 school year of the Makó József Attila Secondary school in, Hungarian language, mathematics and Russian.

	Hungarian language	mathematics	Russian
Enrolling average:	4.27	4.10	4.11
Level-defining assessments:	68.70 %	47.60 %	42.10 %
Half term assessment:	3.14	2.85	2.78
Half term subject average:	3.37	3.57	3.66
Second term assessment:	3.59	1.97	3.58
Second term subject average:	3.51	3.31	3.61
Number of catching-up periods:	38	69	41

/11/ The second term report of 1974/75 school year in the Radnóti M. Secondary training School, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy

/12/ The second term report of 1974/75 school year in the Szeged Ságvári E. Secondary Training School, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy

/13/ The second term report of 1974/75 school year in the Makó József Attila Secondary School, JATE, Dep. of Ped.

The study-average in Hungarian language increased, in mathematics decreased, in Russian stagnated inspite of the considerable number of catching-up periods. It is obvious that the elimination of insufficiencies was not successful, therefore corrective activities had to be continued in the second form, too. But the number of periods considerably decreased. This is well seen in the following table;

Subject:	1974/75 school year		1975/76 school year
	1 st form	1 st form	2 nd form
Hungarian language:	38	31	11
history	18	7	7
Russian	41	47	4
mathematics	69	76	10
biology	13	8	-
chemistry	72	24	10
geography	<u>34</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
Altogether	285 periods	197 periods	46 periods

The following statements were made by the Makó József Attila Secondary School management on the basis of the above data: "In the 1975/76 school year the number of activities for the first class pupils decreased considerably. ... The most remarkable feature is that in spite of this in mathematics, Russian and Hungarian language catching-up increased stightly or remained almost on the same level. Maybe because in the subject metnioned compensation is most justified. However, in the second forme even in these subjects the number of actual activities dropped greatly. This phenomenon can be explained if we carry out a content analysis of the data beyond the figures.

According to the original concept the catching-up activities should have been held for relatively stable groups until the end of the second year. Experiences obtained so far suggest a modification of this concept. The reason is that a group of a relatively stable composition - except in mathematics - worked only in the first months, until primarily the compensation of general school fundamental insufficiencies was taking place.

After this, as the stable groups give way to the unstable ones, the catching-up occupations change into compensating for the falling behind in the daily material, and this is needed occasionally by this or that a pupil. In a considerable part of the first year the priority of the catching-up function dominates /for the longest time in mathematics, Hungarian language, and Russian/, but in the second year its catching-up function becomes absolute. Probably this empirical factor led to the formation of the numerical results mentioned above."/14/

7. Problems, conclusions.

The operation of the catching-up system needs substantial organizational work. For the extremely busy teachers and pupils agreement on a time means a frequently unsolvable problems. The data from the experimental school years concern a considerable number of the pupils. To illustrate this we are going to quote data from one school year of the Makó József Attila Secondary school:

Subject	pupils attending catching-up periods	
	regularly	occasionally
Hungarian language	23 %	16 %
history	12 "	40 "
Russian	20 "	47 "
mathematics	24 "	50 "
biology	8 "	20 "
chemistry	20 "	50 "
geography	15 "	30 "

For a smoother realization of catching-up in the future there are two organizational possibilities. One of them - not without any problem - would be if corrective periods were included in the syllabus. The other one, the more suitable one is: "In the orientation phase the curriculum must give possibilities for recognising thoroughly the

/14/ The second term report of 1975/76 school year in the Makó József Attila Secondary school, JATE, Dep. of Pedagogy.

differences arising from the differences between general schools and to compensate for them in an organizational framework. Therefore, the core-material should be less; it should ensure, besides mastering it well, revealing insufficiencies and compensation for them, the development of ability and the catching-up of pupils falling behind."/15/

In this case the fundamental tasks of correction would be achieved in teaching periods. /Probably, it would be necessary to organize a small number of activities of this kind outwith the periods./ In this way the question not yet clarified would be explained: can we compel a pupil - in his own interest - to attend the corrective activities?

/15/ Otto Welker: On facultative education in grammar schools, Köznevelés, 1975/35. 7.1.

Компенсация знаний учащихся в условиях экспериментального
обучения факультативным учебным предметам

Имре Чисар

Под руководством кафедры педагогики организовано факультативное экспериментальное обучение с 1974-го года в 16-а классах 3-х гимназий. Разработанная Д. Агоштоном и Ш. Оросом модель эксперимента предусматривает два взаимосвязанных этапа обучения: общеобразовательно-ориентировочный (I-2 классы) и дифференцированный (3-4 классы). Важным элементом обучения в I-2-х классах является организованная компенсация отставания в знаниях отдельных групп учащихся. На основе экспериментального опыта данная статья подытоживает результаты дополнительных компенсирующих занятий в аспекте их значения, возможностей организационных форм, и применяемых методов. Автор анализирует причины отставания учащихся по венгерскому языку и по математике. Автор показывает те организационные возможности, которые в условиях нынешней структуры школьного обучения способствуют компенсации знаний учащихся, находящихся в невыгодном положении с точки зрения успеваемости. В заключение автор подводит итоги эксперимента, оформляет соответствующие выводы и дает рекомендации для проведения компенсирующих занятий.

PROZESS DER AUSGLEICHUNG DES WISSENSTANDES IM VERSUCHT
DER FAKULTATIVEN BILDUNG NACH LEHRGEGENSTANDSGRUPPEN IM
GYMNASIUM

Dr. Imre Csizsár

Mit der Leitung des Pädagogischen Instituts an der Universität Attila József geht - in zwei Lehrgängen insgesamt in 16 Klassen - eine fakultative Lehrfachgruppenweise Bildungstest in einem Gymnasium vonstatten. Das Modell wurde von dr. György Ágoston, Universitätsprofessor und Dr. Sándor Csoz Universitätsdozent ausgearbeitet. In dem Versuchsmodell sind zwei, miteinander organisch eng verbundene Phasen zu unterscheiden: orientierende, allgemein bildende Phase der I-II-ten Klasse und die differenzierte Bildungsphase der III-IV-ten Klasse. Ein bedeutendes Bildungselement der I-II-ten Klasse ist die organisierte Kompensierung der Studiennachteile. In der Abhandlung sind die Notwendigkeit, die Möglichkeit, die Organisationsformen der Stunden für die Ausglei chung des Wissenstandes, die angewandten Methoden und Ereignisse nach den Erfahrungen des in 1974/75 angefangenen Untersuchungslehrlahres überwiegend nach den Daten des Gymnasiums József Attila in Makó zusammengefasst. Er untersucht die Gründe der Nachteile im Studium, die wichtigeren Mängel bei den Schülern in ungarischer Sprache und Mathematik und versucht die Organisierungsmöglichkeiten zu entdecken, welche auch in der jetzigen Struktur der Schule für die Beiseitigung der Mängel des aus der nachteiligen Lage gegebenen Wissenstandes und für die Nivellierung des Wissens der Schüler, die Lösung bedeuten können. Auf Grund empirischer Erfahrungen enthält der Aufsatz die Ereignisse der kompensierenden Studien, die notwendigen Schlussfolgerungen ziehend stellt einen Antrag für die zukünftige Lösungsmöglichkeiten des Aufschlusses.