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Summing the Difficulties and the Results of the Public Education in Hungary

1. Introduction

Every person in Hungary would like to see the country as a prosperous land with a secure economy where people are satisfied, employed, and assured that they can see their children and grand-children grow up in a politically and economically balanced system. This vision of the future may be imaginary, however the future of the next generations lies in the plans and measures, which are currently being and developed and implemented. The efforts made now will have their consequences in the near or further future. The responsibility for the possible welfare of our prospective society rests with the decision-makers of today.

Several factors have their impact on society and employment for the next decades: demographic changes, globalisation of economies and societies, new information and communication technologies, changes in the labour market and its structure, and according to the research, education.

Education is a fundamental area of life, both from the individual's and the society's point of view. It is a special field where national and personal interests can and should meet. The future prospects of the domestic economy, the quality of work, and the welfare of the country are based on this sphere. That is one of the reasons, why the questions of education-policy are always in the foreground.

This paper introduces the main periods of the Hungarian educational policy from the era immediately before the Second World War until today. It recalls some elements of the socialist past of the country, which is essential in understanding the present economic and educational situation. It also sums up the political and economic changes in Hungary, how these factors and their consequences influenced the labour-market, and the difficulties our country has to face due to the political and economic changes of the past eleven years. This section illustrates the new challenges in employment in general and its effect on Hungary and the Hungarian work force.

After the Second World War there was a 40-year-long period when the Western countries continued their development both in terms of economy and education. There were approaches which determined the educational policy of the different countries but which could not reach our country behind the Iron Curtain. After the changes in 1989 and 1990, Hungarian education had to reintegrate into the western- and global

mainstream. The current processes in the global and European trends of education cannot be understood without knowledge of the roots from which the present educational approaches stemmed. These trends are also mentioned in this paper.

Hungary and the European Union are currently negotiating about the future membership of our country. There are many obligations in connection with the vocational training policy of the Union (among the *acquis*), that Hungary has to achieve. The Union has a very sophisticated regulation in this respect, aiming at a better-educated work-force in order to reach high value-added production in the economy. This is the reason for a longer chapter devoted to this topic.

II. Changes in the Economic and Political Attitudes of Hungary after 1989

Describing the effects of the economic and political changes in Hungary – which are rooted in the past –, in a nutshell is rather complex. Without the intention to be exhaustive, I am going to attempt to give a picture of these changes as they bear crucial importance in understanding the present state of the labour market and the educational system. We cannot find such a mixture of ideological, political and economic conditions in the West-European countries as we have here in Hungary. It is known that these conditions determine the future development of the country.

The society of present Hungary consists of many people, who lived in the communist era for many years and are bound by various experiences and memories to the past. This fact has far-reaching consequences for the general political and economic attitude of the society.

We carry a problematic heritage, the communist-socialist past of the country. As the change of the political system took place only 11 years ago, the past, with all of its positive and negative consequences, is still with us. That atmosphere can still be felt, as it is encased in the memory of the people. It is something concealed, a phenomenon, that we have to deal with if we want to understand the present Hungary.

Searching for one attribute to characterise the period of socialism, we find: predictability. Regardless of whether it was beneficial, it is obvious that the whole of economic and political life operated in a predictable way. This is missed by many people. This predictability conveyed a feeling of safety for the whole society. People were confident that the following day they would have work, a workplace and would receive a "reasonable" salary from which they can live at a desirable level. There were no significant inequalities among members of the society. This safety provided tranquillity for people in their every-day lives from a financial point of view. But, naturally, the situation in its entirety was not that clear; for example – as it is well-known – information about happenings in the western part of the world was held back from the population; there were no foreign television channels, newspapers, periodicals, there were no foreign (western) products to illustrate the life of the western countries, and as the opportunity to travel abroad was very limited [the possibility existed only to the Comecon (*Council for Mutual Economic Aid*) -countries], it was impossible to gather personal experience in the Western countries.

Nevertheless, from certain channels, e.g. from the few people (mainly artists, scientists) who had the chance to visit the "bourgeois countries", people developed the

impression that in those lands, on another economic basis, a quite different social system existed, which provided a higher living-standard, a more leisurely life than what existed here, behind the Iron Curtain.

The secret-mongering of the state, the strict penalty for any relationship with the "enemies of Socialism", the moles of the state/Party at every workplace and every segment of life caused mistrust in the people towards the state/Party. It was impossible to identify with these restrictions and the members of the society kept a sceptic watch over the events. Consequently, the citizens gradually became estranged from the state/Party in terms of people not being able to identify with the state. It was not 'their' state; it was an organisation which had to be tolerated. This point is important because of its effect on the present. The sceptical thinking of society can be very useful even today, (it helps the government to shape its self-critique). However, in a democratic country, where parliament is elected by the citizens, this thinking can make life quite difficult. This feature differentiates Hungary from the Western states in terms of the "legitimacy" of the state as seen by the inhabitants.

Hence, on the one hand, people possessed a safety in their material-existence, due to predictability, though there were many people, who could not work what they wanted to or had talent for. On the other hand, there was continuous political pressure through instruments, which – using present terminology – were against fundamental human rights and violated human dignity.

The common desire was clear and understandable: a will to change this political and economic system, though no one would have thought that it would be so hard and painful. The first – hopefully the hardest – years are over, but the country still has to face several difficulties.

The real difficulty for Hungary as a country in transition was to cope with a number of challenges simultaneously. The challenges can be divided into three categories: the first category consists of the special problems for the post-communist countries; in the second, there are those, which constitute challenges not only for the post-communist countries but for the western countries, as well. The third category is derived from the special circumstances of Hungary, and the possibility to join the EU. It is very difficult to separate these elements from each other, but in order to clarify the whole situation, this categorisation may be useful.

I. Post- socialist difficulties:

- economic difficulties;
- living-standard (social) difficulties.

II. General challenges (using mostly Blanpain's classification):

- globalisation of the market economy;
- information technology;
- demographic changes.

III. The challenges, resulting from the developments the country achieved until now:

- joining the European Union.

Economic difficulties

Before the political system changed, Hungary was an isolated country in terms of the influence of the Soviet Union and it was the member of the Comecon. As it is known, this organisation was an economic interest-based community operating in accordance with certain rules with minimal or no relation to the capitalist world.

Due to the political system the economy could be characterised by the domination and ownership of the state/Party. So the economy did not function according to the principles of a market economy, it was a state-driven economy. The (quality and quantity of) products the firms produced were determined by the state, not following existing demand for that product.

While the operation of the economy was artificially maintained, education lost its natural links with economy and became State-commanded like the economy itself.

Through the process of privatisation, the state gradually gave up its position in the economy, and the main part of state-property went into private ownership. (This process is not yet over.)

Competition appeared, with the principles of the market economy. Many ineffective firms and those utilising obsolete technologies (which earlier were financed by the state) were closed and numerous workers were dismissed. People realised soon that living in a market-economy does not mean the Promised Land of Canaan as it also has its disadvantages. The protection of the state belongs to the past, personal problems have to be solved in most cases by the individuals themselves. Many social problems stem from this change. At this point we can refer to the social difficulties (see below).

The borders were opened, the products of other countries could come into the domestic market and a never seen diversity of products and services appeared on the shelves and in the shops.

The firms, the newly founded enterprises had to and have to cope with the competition on the domestic and also on the (globalizing) international market between which there is no significant border anymore.

According to the latest investigations – made by domestic and foreign experts – there are good results in economic development and growth in Hungary, but individuals have not enjoyed the fruits of a better operating economy yet.

Social difficulties

The changes in the political life and in the economy had their effects on society, too. During the 11 years since the change, Hungary gradually won a share in the European market. Since the borders opened life has become more expensive and the country has had to cope with a high rate of inflation.

The price of products and services is gradually reaching the West-European level, however, wages remain at a very low level, especially in the public sector. This results in grave social tension. As it can be observed in other transitional countries as well, the society began to polarise: a thin class of wealthy people are getting richer and the greater part of the society, (the bigger part of the middle-class included) the poor are getting even poorer. It seems that this process will not end in the near future.

The largest difference can be found in public employment in education and health care compared to the wages of the Western part of Europe.

Although political life seems to be successfully democratised, never seen differences have evolved due primarily to the changes in the economy. Many low-skilled workers were dismissed in the former industrial territories of the country and today it is these geographical areas that have to cope with high rates of unemployment. Problems with ethnic minorities are connected with poverty rather than the lack of equal opportunity.

The globalisation of the market economy

Since the fall of the Berlin wall (1989), *Eastern and Central Europe* have opened their doors to a freer market system, and before that *India and China*. Some 3 billion people have joined a world-wide system in which fewer and fewer national borders block the free movement of money, information, technology, goods and services.¹ A freer market economy is a very big challenge for firms, especially for small- and medium sized enterprises. The times of the protected national markets are over, if the companies want profit they have to survive on the global market.

Companies can and do invest world-wide wherever market conditions are best. Obviously, there are many factors influencing investment decisions, but labour-costs are undoubtedly one of them. These differ enormously. International competition means, among other things, the best product-service at the best (often the cheapest) price. Consequently, costs have to go down and this results in massive job-shifts most of the time.²

Globalisation also leads to mergers and massive closures.

Information technology

Blanpain underlines that the spreading of information has very far-reaching and serious consequences. This process which entered into the everyday-life of the economy and individuals through the new information technologies brings a fundamental and radical change rather than a new attitude which can be handled easily as one of the interesting innovations of the 20th century which disappears among the others. " Many decision-makers fail to realise that we have been catapulted, forcefully and brutally, out of the industrial society into what may be termed an information society... In those earlier (industrial) days, we merely moved from one sector to another: from the primary sector to the secondary, from agriculture to manufacturing... Today we are massively stepping into the third sector: the services. This is evidenced by less than 10% of the economically active population left in agriculture, less than 30% in manufacturing and 50% or more in the service sector. "³

Moreover, these sectors are not independent from each other anymore, they are merging into each other. In the end, while information technologies are presented

¹ ROGER BLANPAN: *Social Dialogue – Economic Interdependence and Labour Law*. In: REPORTS to the 6th European Congress for Labour Law and Social Security Warsaw, 1999. p. 43.

² Ibid. p. 4.

³ Ibid. p. 47–53.

during the processes of the agricultural and industrial production, and as the production of these sectors became dependent of these technologies, "products and goods, agriculture and manufacturing, are thus in the grip of "services"." (See further: Blanpain 2000.)

In the 20th century and the following decades the biggest battles for power are not fought on the battlefields but at the "table" of economy. Information in economy was always very valuable. With the rise of new information and communication technologies, spreading of information and knowledge becomes very fast and cheap. Information became a special type of good in itself. A state which has a good information-communication system ensured for the actors of economy, can have a favourable position on the market which attracts further investment. A state, which has only raw material without new technologies will gradually be forced into the background.

These assertions lead once more to the question of globalisation: "Governments of national states, unquestionably, remain "sovereign" over a piece of land. Yesterday, however, they could control the steady economic flows along the roads and rivers, in the air and over the seas. Today and even more so tomorrow, they have no impact on the multitude of information networks overspanning their own land and territories of other nations. Relevant economic and technological decisions are taken over their heads. Governments are reluctantly bowing to what is happening, do not really govern any more, but are forced to endure and can only marginally react, within the boundaries of a blind market, driven by economic and technological forces which certainly in the short run, are socially devastating, especially as regards the world of work."⁴

Hoping that the situation is not so bleak as it was written above, there is evidence that multinational firms expand at a lively pace with a huge amount of money holding in their hands. Neither state has control or impact over this, due to the fact that it was produced on the territory of several.

Also in Hungary we can witness the appearance of various multinational enterprises that oust their small- and medium-sized rivals step-by-step. But naturally, it is not a special phenomenon of Hungary, it is true elsewhere in the world as well.

Demographic changes

It is a well-known fact that the population of the world increases every year and it is predicted to grow 1 billion every 10 years.⁵ At the same time, the population in Europe is declining or stagnating. (See a detailed table showing the number of people at the education in the OECD countries on the next page; m: data not available.)

Another phenomenon connected with demography is that people in the 21st century will live longer (90–100 years or more is estimated) in the developed countries due to better health conditions. This development will cause serious problems for the social security budgets with regard to the pension systems.

⁴ Ibid. p. 53.

⁵ Ibid. p. 47.

Development of the world's population (%)

	1950	1990	2020
Africa	9,6	13,0	20,0
Asia	58,8	61,7	57,9
European Community	10,1	6,2	4,3
Japan	3,3	2,3	1,6
Latin America	6,6	8,6	9,5
USA	6,1	4,7	3,9

Source: Eurostat, In: European Union ECSC-EEC-EAEC, Brussels. Luxembourg, 1992

Demographic changes in Hungary have other consequences than in the countries of the European Union or in other developed countries. The reason: the life-expectancy of men in Hungary has stagnated, a continuous increase can only be observed in the case of women. (See table.)

Life expectancy at the time of birth

Year of birth	Men (years)	Women (years)
1960	65,9	70,1
1970	66,3	72,1
1980	65,5	72,2
1990	65,1	73,7
1994	64,8	74,2
1995	65,3	74,5
1996	66,1	74,7
1997	66,4	75,1
1998	66,1	75,2

Source: Central Statistical Office⁶

The European Union

The economic and political changes of the country after the Comecon came to end and measures were taken aiming at the establishment of a market-economy. After 1989 the bases of democracy were established and proved to be steady. The possibility to join the European Union became a reality, partly due to the geographical position of the country. There were and are many – mainly economic, but also political – reasons that give ground to the intention that Hungary wants to be a member of this organisation. This paper cannot undertake to deal with these in detail.

In the association agreement, which was proclaimed in 1994, it is required that Hungary achieve:

⁶ In: Magyar statisztikai zsebkönyv 2000. Budapest.

- stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for protection of minorities;
- a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union;
- an ability to take on obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.⁷

This sets serious tasks for the country not only to accept the *acquis communautaire*⁸ but to make the legal and administrative changes for these to be implemented.

Later this paper will deal with the common vocational training policy of the EU as a cornerstone of the solutions to reduce unemployment and to increase employment and employability of youths and adults.

III. The Role of Education in the Market-driven World

We can observe a cut-throat competition in the economy. The advances in technology make it possible to get rid of a car e.g. after 2 or years because after this period a new model has been developed. The whole economy seems to be based on this type of mechanism.

This never-ending circle began in the 19th century supplied by the mentality of the Enlightenment of the 17th century which says that technological developments would make a better world and happier people. After some time, it turned out that successful business can be made out of this idea and some end up winning enormous sums.

We have to define the function of education under these circumstances. Education has a dual role in our society. One is bounded to the economy: serving the economy to operate more effectively, and the other is a moral role: trying to transmit moral values and trying to make people discover and understand their place in the world. The latter role of education is not the objective of the debates connected with education at an international level. But the former role, that education has to do with the economy is a basic point of view in every country because the youths in education will compose the "personal raw Material" of the future. This is the link between the two spheres of society – education and economy – which has a crucial importance in every state's policy. The higher the level of education provided for students, the better qualified employees will apply for jobs tomorrow.

Education and work are intimately connected, with education having two obvious effects on economic productivity. First, education can contribute to the development of knowledge, which translates into technological improvements and aggregate productivity gains. Secondly, education can increase the skills and knowledge of

⁷ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: *An Age of Learning vocational training policy at European level*. CEDEFOP 2000, Thessaloniki, p. 29.

⁸ *acquis communautaire*: The entire body of Community law, including Directives, Regulations, Recommendations, Decisions and judgements of the European Court of justice, which impose obligations on Member States or individuals and non-binding policy statements - conclusions and resolutions of the Council of Ministers - communications and white and green papers from the European Commission and joint options of the social partners. (STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: *op. cit.*)

individual workers, allowing them to accomplish particular tasks better and to adapt more easily to changing job requirements.⁹

Vocational training and later, education was also a central topic of the debates within the European Union because of two very significant reasons. The first: the Union and the Member States want to maintain the competitiveness of their economy, and secondly, at the same time, they want to maintain and increase the rate of employment.

There are many countries, especially the developing Asian countries where the workforce is very cheap and many firms – also from Europe – move their premises there to exploit the advantages of employing low-skilled workers.

A big question arises, and not only in Europe: what to do with the low-skilled and expensive labour-force. One solution might be to extend the frame of education to give the opportunity for more people to study and with this bigger amount of human capital the proportion of high-skilled workers and high skill-demanding jobs, firms and branches can be increased.

IV. Economy and Education in the Western Countries after the Second World War

After 1945 the Western-European, and the other non-socialist countries had a quite different economic and social development from the countries which fell under the influence of the Soviet Union. We can formulate this sentence in another way: after the reconstruction, the Western countries continued economic development and in the countries of the Eastern side a new economy and society was built on the basis of the ideology of socialism and communism.

It is important for us to see what happened in the Western countries, during that forty years of our isolation, in terms of education. It is important because the globalisation of the market economy was a *process* for the Western countries, they witnessed the development of the new market. After the economic and political changes, Hungary had to jump into the market-driven world without experience, looking for principles which link education and economy, to deal with effects which were unknown to Hungary but known to others.

Let us see what happened in the Western world in politics and economy related to education.

In the post-war period, education came to assume a key role in the political economy of nations, contributing to the unprecedented sense of economic and social progress. ... Underlying the sense of progress was a spectacular period of sustained economic growth. ... The key to post-war economic success lay in the development of the doctrine of *economic nationalism*, in which social progress for workers and their families was advanced through the pursuit of national economic growth.¹⁰

For the first time in the post-war period, education took a central position in the functioning of the advanced industrial societies, because it was seen as a key

⁹ *Education at a Glance OECD indicators*. Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2000 Edition OECD.

¹⁰ PHILIP BROWN, A. H. HALSEY, HUGH LAUDER and AMY STUART WELLS: *The Transformation of Education and Society. An Introduction*. In: Education, Oxford University Press 1999, Oxford, pp. 1–44.

investment in the promotion of economic growth as well as a means of promoting social justice.

Two assumptions existed about the nature of education at that time but both of them were confounded by empirical evidence. Firstly, economic efficiency in advanced industrial societies depends on getting the most talented people into the most important and technically demanding jobs, regardless of their social circumstances. ... Secondly, educational opportunities needed to be extended, given that the vast majority of jobs were predicted to become increasingly skilled, requiring extensive periods of formal education. Hence, everyone would eventually become middle-class, as semi-skilled and unskilled jobs were replaced by machines, and workers became technicians, managers or were appointed positions in the expanding professions.¹¹

During this period, education was also seen as contributing to the foundations of democracy. ... The type of school which, it was argued best contributed to this form of 'associated living' was the common or comprehensive school. Here students from all types of social backgrounds, ethnicity, gender and ability could mix and develop tolerance and mutual respect for each others' point of view, dispositions considered essential in democracy. ... It could be seen and still can be defended as a major advance in breaking down the barriers of class, gender and ethnicity.¹²

Consequently, the education systems of the western world expanded to perform their new role of providing human capital. ... However, despite the expansion in middle-class jobs and an increasingly educated work-force, the guiding idea that everybody would eventually get a middle-class job and that occupation and status would be determined according to merit were myths. ... Working-class jobs did not disappear, and the privilege of the already-privileged remained. Universities were still dominated by those professional and managerial backgrounds; and even when intelligence was taken into account, social background remained a significant factor in individuals' life chances.¹³

The first 'oil shock' in the early 1970s marked the breakdown of economic nationalism. ... The world recession which followed the escalation in fuel prices was accompanied by an increasing awareness that in a global economy mass production of standardized goods and services ... was no longer able to support the economic livelihood of workers and their families. ... If the work to be done is relatively low-skilled, such as in the mass production of standardized goods and services, a key factor will be labour costs, and multinational corporations are likely to move standardised mass production to the newly industrializing countries where these are significantly cheaper than in North-America or Western-Europe.¹⁴

In the early 1970s western societies experienced a social, political, and economic transformation, according to Braun and Lauder, due to the appearance of three factors.

Firstly, the rules of eligibility have changed. This means that the formerly walled domestic economies have started to shift away towards an open or global economy. Through this change, domestic economies have been exposed to greater foreign competition. Secondly, in America and Britain there was a breakdown of the Fordist

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 1-44.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

rules of engagement between government, employers and workers. The rapid improvement in economic efficiency which accompanied the introduction of mass-production techniques necessitated the creation of mass markets for consumer durables, including radios, refrigerators, television sets, and motor cars. In order for economic growth to be maintained, national governments had to regulate profits and wage levels to sustain the conditions upon which economic growth depended. Hence, the development of the welfare state in western industrial societies was seen to reflect efforts on the part of national governments to maintain the Fordist compromise between employers and organised labour. ... However, over the last 20 years America and Britain have introduced 'market' rules of engagement. Here the nation-state is charged with the role of creating the conditions in which the market can operate 'freely'.¹⁵

Thirdly, new rules of wealth creation appeared on the scene. The belief that the only way for profit maximizing is to employ unskilled or semi-skilled workers at the assembly-lines based on the principle of detailed division of labour, is mostly over. In the new rules of wealth creation economic prosperity will depend on nations and companies being able to exploit the skills, knowledge, and insights of workers in ways which no longer are delivered according to Fordist principles.¹⁶

Consequently, there is a standard view in the literature that the changes in the nature of global economy since the early 1970s has led to a weakening of the powers of the nation state.¹⁷ (See further: BLANPAIN 2000.)

The breakdown of economic nationalism has equally undermined post-war ideas about educational opportunity and social mobility. But paradoxically, whereas there has been increased political conflict concerning the funding, control and organizations of education, there is a new international consensus which recognizes education to be of even greater importance than in the past to the future of individual and national economic prosperity.¹⁸

V. Education and the Global Economy

The new consensus is based on the idea that as the 'walled' economies at mid-century have given way to an increasingly global economy, the power of a national government to control the outcome of economic competition has been weakened. Hence, at a time when severe limitations are being imposed on national governments in the sphere of economic policy, education assumed even greater political significance. Indeed, the competitive advantage of nations is frequently redefined in terms of the quality of national education and training systems judged according to international standards.¹⁹

¹⁵ PHILIP BROWN and HUGH LAUDER: *Education, Globalization and Economic Development*. In: Education.

¹⁶ These factors can be followed also in the countries of the European Union except the second one; the EU traditionally lays great emphasis to maintain a relatively high level social security system.

¹⁷ PHILIP BROWN, A. H. HALSEY, HUGH LAUDER and AMY STUART WELLS: *Op. cit.* pp. 1–44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

All western nations, in their domestic economies and foreign affairs, have had to look at their own social institutions and human resources to meet the global challenges they confront. ... Advantage is, therefore, seen to depend upon raising the quality and productivity of human capital. Knowledge, learning, information, and technical competence are the new raw materials of international commerce.²⁰

Therefore, if nations are unable to win a competitive advantage through investment in new technology, upgrading the quality of human resources or reforming industrial relations policies as a way attracting foreign inward investment to create new employment opportunities, there is little national governments can do to prevent a precipitous drop in living standards, stagnant economic growth and increasing unemployment.

The new education consensus has led to what in many parts of the world amounts to dramatic increases in post-compulsory education.

There is little doubt that the new consensus maintains a long-standing trend towards a tightening bond between education and the economy in the twentieth century.

However, whilst there is now widespread agreement that a high-quality general education is more appropriate to conditions of rapid technological change than a narrowly specialised vocational education, the exact relationship between 'vocational' and 'general' education remains unresolved.

Ashton and Sung remark that in the new economic competition there needs to be a much tighter relationship between education and work than anything that we have yet witnessed in the West.²¹ The implication of their argument is that the almost total subordination of the education system to economic utility is becoming a necessary condition for economic property in the twenty-first century. Whether this will become the model relationship between education and the labour market in all post-industrial economies is a moot point, but there is a little doubt that in such economies there is an increased demand for more highly educated labour.²²

VI. Educational reform in Hungary after the Second World War²³

After the Second World War Hungary fell out of being part of the world-economy due to the political changes in the country. It was not relevant what happened in the world-market any more (at least for 40 years), the globalisation of the economy, the changing factors in the area of work, which tested the governments in the Western world had no impact on our country. Instead of getting experience in the increasingly sharpening competition in the world, without taking part in the debates about how education can contribute to expand the productivity of economy, the Hungarian society had to cope with the introduction of a new system based on a new ideology, socialism.

²⁰ PHILIP BROWN and HUGH LAUDER: Op. cit.

²¹ DAVID N. ASHTON and JONNY SUNG: *Education, Skill Formation, and Economic Development: The Singaporean Approach*. In: *Education*, Oxford University Press 1999, Oxford, pp. 207–219.

²² PHILIP BROWN, A. H. HALSEY, HUGH LAUDER and AMY STUART WELLS: Op. cit. pp. 1–44.

²³ RÚZS MOLNÁR KRISZTINA: *A magyar közoktatás fejlődése a századfordulótól napjainkig, különös tekintettel a kisiskolák helyzetére*. Kézirat, Szeged, 1999.

The present status of education is rooted in the past. To see clearly the weaknesses and virtues of the system, to know precisely how to transform it to the demands of these days, we have to rediscover the roots.

The aim of the home leftist after 1945 – with the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP) – was creating the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this socialist-communist social system only one principle could exist: "unified school-system – unified education". Hungary stood before a radical social-communist school-system reform. The experts of the HCP tended to carry it out in two phases.

Firstly, establishing the unified public school-system was inevitable without taking the clerical and private schools into public ownership. Secondly, the internal – curricular – modification of the school-system should be resolved, on the basis of communist ideology, which serves the building of the communist-socialist society in all respects.

In accordance with the plans in 1948, the Hungarian Parliament carried the new legislation of taking the non-public schools and their property into public ownership and their staff into public service. This meant the forcible taking away of the clerical and private schools from the previous preservers.

Taking these schools into public ownership was not for pedagogical reasons but communist-policy motivation. This was clear for the experts of the time, too.

But let us stop here for a while and have a look at the main characters of the educational system existing in Hungary before the world war, between the 1921–1945 period.

If we want to find only one word to describe that system, it would be: diversity. The government had a strong influence on determining the main goals of education – which of course at that time was not independent of the prevailing ideology – and the focuses of the curriculum.

The system characterizing diversity can be understood in two ways. Firstly, if we count all the possible choices, it can be seen, that 10 kind of educational institutions were given for the 10–14 years old children.²⁴

Secondly, the diversity was enhanced by the preserver of the school: the public schools, the schools of the cities, the schools of the single church districts were different; the catholic educational institutions diverged from each other due to the different religious orders having their specific features.

But this diversity of course did not mean free alternative options in a sense as we use it nowadays. In the 20s and 30s the importance of the birth-status (which layer someone was born in) was undoubtedly significant. So the aristocrats formed the traditional élite of the society. Education for them evidently was not a financial burden.

²⁴ These possibilities were the following after completing the four classes of the common primary school: (for the boys) two kinds of secondary grammar schools – with latin or with modern languages without latin –, secondary grammar school for the sciences, two kinds of secondary schools for sciences – with or without latin –; (for the girls) Secondary grammar school for girls, secondary school for girls, collage for girls. These schools and collages had eight classes, from the age of 10 to 18 and depending on the type one completed, She or he could enter into the tertiary education. We have two more choices, one is the civil school, which had only four classes (between the ages 10–14) and was very popular among the children of the workers and the peasantry but accessing into the the above mentioned institutions for continuung education was hardly possible because it have no certificate inthe end. The other, the tenth way to learn was opened from the 1930s and was compulsory from 1940, it was the eight-class common primary school from the age 6 to 14.

Looking at the other layers of the society, the system was created in a way that it granted advantages to the middle class, which had political ground. According to Klebelsberg, the leading minister of education of the period, if the middle class – "in accordance with its traditions" – cannot take part in building the society, it can join the proletariat because of its state of being ignored and can become the opposition of the political system.²⁵

The government and the parliament were hundred percent against the possibility of giving any kind of political role to the working class. But as we know, our history took a different direction.

The education-system was developed to impede the children of the lower classes in acquiring higher education levels. It was almost impossible for them to complete grammar school or obtain a diploma because of their social position.

As a conclusion we can remark that before the war a well-organised, fruitful, high-quality oriented, modern educational system existed, complying the requirements of the era.

After 1945 this system was cut down. One of the main arguments: the need for a unified system. The endeavour for such a system was clear from the end of the 17th century. Unification was not broken by the special scholar profile, the specific internal attitude encouraged by the several kinds of preservers.

As we referred to earlier, the higher level qualification of the children of the working class were deliberately hindered. The demand of this layer not to be precluded from the acquisition of the higher level education is rightful. It was fulfilled with destroying the existing, colourful school-net and create another unified system, which was also unified in its curriculum and ideology instead of supplying the existing institutions with others, which have the level and ideology adequate to the demands of the working class.

During the decades, the ideology-based unification became more and more intensive without leaving any place for the smallest difference.

In 1948 the churches gave their schools with no resistance to the representatives of the state institutions. Huge material values: fields, buildings, libraries, equipment stores, laboratories entered into the possession of the state without any compensation.

The damage in material goods was serious, but there was another loss, which has a strong, indelible consequence for the present existence of the Hungarian society as a whole: losing the values of the European Christian morality-mentality. From this time, the education within the frameworks of the nearly thousand-year-old catholic and the other churches came to an end.

The task of education became a fundamental requirement to train the reliable builders of socialism in a materialistic-atheistic spirit. This way the pupils became useful citizens of our socialist society, who have to "fight against the deformation of the sciences, against the bourgeois, clerical and chauvinist remains" as the biggest periodical, the Public Education wrote in its leading article.

The organisation of the eight-class system was kept, but the subjects to be taught were totally changed in content, and dimension. The curriculum in every class was

²⁵ MÉSZÁROS ISTVÁN: *Hungarian education: 996–1996*. Eötvös József Press, Budapest, 1997. p. 86.

politicised as much as possible and with the Marxist-Leninist parts of the staff its size was increased enormously.

In public education the eight-class primary school became general and compulsory: unified school-system, unified curriculum – with no alternatives.

After the difficulties of the transformation, the new conditions were stabilised as the political system itself, and it was successful in its own manner, especially in the 70s. The results were embodied in the performance of the pupils in the international school contests.

In the areas where political ideology had little or no influence, the sciences and the achievements were of very high quality but development had stopped in the field of social sciences.

While the non-socialist countries in the world had to face the interdependence of economy and education, in Hungary these two did not have much to do with each other. As the economy operated in a non-market-economic way and the nation economy was built on the execution and over-execution of the plans – which were not demand based – and on the division of labour among the Comecon countries, education lost its links with the world of work or at least these links became very obscure. Competition did not exist in the traditional meaning of the word, as the Comecon countries had a mutual agreement declared that if any of these countries had an innovation they would assume an obligation to share it with the others. Outside the Comecon these countries had no relationship with others. With the possible exemption of raw materials there was no incentive, there were no challenges to face.

Employment in this period due to the principles of the economy was around 100%, so the government was not forced to think about changing anything in the system. Everyone could find a workplace generally for a long term. The structure of the education at this time was the following: there was an eight-class compulsory primary school – with a unified syllabus as it was mentioned – the same for everyone. Completing primary school where uniform ways were given: secondary grammar school, which collected the children who later wanted to study in the tertiary education. The second way was the vocational secondary school where youths could learn a profession but they also had the chance to get a certificate and after finishing this school they had the chance to enter the tertiary (mostly vocational tertiary) education. The last option was the industrial school from which it was not possible to continue education. These three ways also meant a hierarchy among the schools and the system was not permeable (?) at all.

Education (tertiary education included) in this system was free of charge, though the entrance into the tertiary education was hindered especially for the children of intellectuals. In theory, and in most cases in practice, they were excluded from tertiary education.

There is one more phenomenon linked to the post-war period which has crucial importance on the present condition of education. It is the change in the social position of the teachers. Compared to the previous period, the most conspicuous difference is the decrease in the social reputation and prestige of the educators. This prestige-decrease was not confined to teachers, but became general.

Being an outstanding teacher in the profession was not a guarantee for further teaching because there was another, a previous assumption: loyalty to the existing

political system. Many left the country or the profession because they did not feel secure enough. This factor contributed most to the fact that the teaching profession started to lose its value.

The intention was to increase the level of education but the system reached just the opposite. Many "teachers" filled the empty places without any qualifications. The social respect of a profession is mainly determined by the standard of the work performed during a given time. This process had far-reaching consequences for the future with very strong impacts nowadays, too.

Later, the achievement of the pupils declined and according to several experts it was due to the changes in the political system in 1989 and the consequence of the new educational policy. But this decrease appeared earlier, in the middle of the 80s.

VII. Education in Hungary from 1989 till 2000

The changes characterising our current educational system began in the mid-80s. Beyond the existing ones (8-year-long primary school and then three types of secondary schools, the pupils can choose from – see previous chapter) two new types of secondary schools were established in the early 90s: the 6 and 8-year-long secondary grammar schools. With this decision, the unified structure of the system was over. The unified structure of schools did not mean that the level of the schools were unified, too. They were differentiated according to the demands or rather according to the natural diversity of the abilities of children. During the years of socialism this educational system was formed, and perfected. Therefore the supply of schools was diverse. (E.g. there were primary schools specialised in the education of music or sports, there were classes specialised in mathematics, literature, Russian – although everyone had to learn Russian – and later, in the 80s English and German appeared.) Many teachers were afraid of the structural change in the system though everybody wanted to see innovation, modernisation. In practice these new secondary grammar schools operated and are operating in the buildings of the existing ones, and there was only one group per year that started within the frameworks of the new regulation. The teachers were also more or less the same as in the 'normal' secondary grammar schools. This new structure, was advantageous for the formerly 4-year-long secondary grammar schools, because this system assured them of the most talented children for 6 or 8 years.

There was a large societal demand to establish the 8 and 6-year-long secondary grammar schools though the curricula and the books did not change. Children who left their primary schools after completing the fourth class, learned the same as the others who stayed in the old schools. Due to this, it was largely a formal change. The curricular changes followed years later if the staff of the school had the intention to elaborate a new curriculum. It cannot be said that it was general.

There were other changes in the educational structure which made it diverse or, according to some experts, chaotic. Later, the industrial schools transformed into secondary level schools or introduced secondary level classes. As the obligatory school-age became 16 years the ever more unpopular industrial schools made it possible for children after completing the first eight years of primary school to finish basic schooling (two more years) in their institutions. The secondary level schools

transformed the first and second year of education or vocational training into general education-courses, the four-year-long primary level vocational training schools completed their vocational education with a complementary year, technician training.

There were two main opinions about the structural change. A part of the teachers said that the possibility to choose the right school for the children, adequately based on their abilities was given. The other part argued that this change was the natural expression of the public demand, therefore it could not be wrong.

We should not forget to mention an undoubtedly valuable change in this period: the establishment of bilingual secondary grammar schools. These schools are for 14–18 years old pupils and they contribute significantly to the improvement of the language-skills (typically English and German) of youths.

Beyond the structural changes, new preservers appeared: the churches and private school preservers. Diversity came into education again.

From 1990, parents take part in the discussions which are related to the life of the school. This was a very big step towards the democratisation of schools.

In 1990 there was another regulation which had and still has corollary. The schools inspectorate was transformed into schools consultation and then it was ceased. Hence, at the moment, there is no organisation dealing with consultation. Education is incorporated in new, comprehensive Acts, measures; there are many thousand (!) sorts of textbooks, a range of new teaching methods, the teachers can choose from; therefore, there is demand for such an organisation.

The local authorities are responsible for the maintenance of primary schools and the regional (county) authorities are responsible for the maintenance of the secondary-level schools that can be found on their territory. Maintenance in this respect means to provide the material conditions for schools: ensuring the earnings and the instruments needed. Both the regional and the local authorities are largely dependent on the state in terms of financial position. (The municipal representatives are certainly elected according to the rules of a democratic process.) Although municipalities have their own income (e.g. from local taxes) but this covers only about 6–8% of their budget. The bigger, significant part is given by the state according to predetermined principles. The local authorities decide about the appropriation of the money. Effective involvement of the local or regional authority in elaborating the curricula is not in practice, but the local authorities have to agree to it, because they have to follow the courses and supplementary courses with attention to whether these courses require extra expenses from the local budget or not.

While the local budget has only a very moderate proportion of own income, the municipalities do not have a closer relationship with the local economy. The contacts among the two real and two potential local actors: the local authorities, the organisations or representatives of the employers' and employees' and the education- or training providers is weak or does not exist.

Innovation which appeared in the individual educational training institutions was largely motivated by demographic changes: the number of births declined and the institutions began to compete for children. (See table.)

Life-births in Hungary

Years	Number of Births
1980	148.673
1990	125.679
1995	112.054
1996	105.272
1997	100.350
1998	97.301
1999	95.000

Source: Central Statistical Office

A kind of competition was always present for the most talented children, but nowadays, as we live in the age of school-closures and -mergers, institutions are fighting for their survival. Some secondary-level institutions still have the chance to select from the best children or pupils but there are many others which admit as much pupils as possible just to get enough material resources to support the school. The speciality of financing Hungarian education at all levels is that the individual institutions get the budgetary subsidy from the state according to the number of the enrolled children or pupils. This creates a source for tension in the educational system, which leads to several conflicts between schools. (This goes for tertiary-level education also. The expenses of acquiring the first degree are financed by the state, so in this respect, the autonomous tertiary-level institutions get the subsidy in accordance with this tenet.)

This can lead to a deterioration of quality in education, moreover, there are a range of schools, with a constant fear in the teachers of whether they will be dismissed or not depending on whether enough children will enrol or not. This permanent uncertainty also has affects on the quality of education.

Till 1998, curricula were determined by the state. From 1998 legislation devolved the elaboration of the curricula to the individual institutions. A common framework was provided within which the providers of education, vocational education and training have to operate. These institutions worked out the curricula alone or with the help of the Ministry of Education without the help or participation of the social partners.

The introduction of the new legislation, which entered into force in 1998, divided the teachers. The goals mentioned by the legislation are mostly in tune with the principles of the EU, aiming at the decentralisation of the decisions in connection with the content of teaching, giving more choice for pupils and giving more possibilities to change the routes. A big proportion of teachers doubt that the aims can be reached with the instruments formulated in the Act.

The implementation of the new 1998 regulation (National Core Curriculum) was/is not coherent, it did not fit into the legislation at some points²⁶ and does not fit into the

²⁶ See further: RÓBERTNÉ BARLAI: *NAT-problémák*. In: Tanulmányok a közoktatásról 1997. Országos Köznevelési Tanács–Oktatási Minisztérium. p. 172–179.

current educational structure (many teachers consider this character of the new system the most problematic one).

The main protests against the introduction of the new legislation were the following:

- it is very questionable that it brings 'order' into the educational system;
- it is incompatible with the present school-structure;
- its introduction was too early this way, the society is not ready for such fundamental changes.

The next generations will testify to the efficiency of the innovations of today.

1. The lack of social partners in education in Hungary

The role of the social partners differs in Hungary from that of the Member States of EU.²⁷

It is a criterion of social partnership that the employers' and employees' organisations take part in it as equals. Representation of employers is new in Hungary, it is as old as democracy in politics. Representation of workers' interests existed already in the era of socialism but not with the same weight as in West-Europe. It was an artificially established formal organisation and, as every organisation at that time, the Trade Unions were politicised, based on the ideology of socialism. The members and especially the leaders were close to the Party. Despite its mere formality, the Trade Unions' organisation was very wide: from plant-level up to national level and had big fortune. A big proportion of the workers were trade union-members because membership was obligatory or at least strongly offered. After the democratic changes participation in these organisations became voluntary, depending on the free-will of individuals. Due to this, many of the union members left the organisation. The structure of the trade unions more or less remained, but now there are other, new trade unions organised at plant-level. (There are firms in which two trade unions operate: one based on the old membership and another newly organised from new members.) At national level trade union kept its political line, hence, it represents political interests rather than the economic interests of workers. (Although, according to the legislation, trade unions can be established in Hungary with the aim of representing the economic and social interests of employees.)

In a tripartite social partnership it is obvious that the relationship between the government and the trade union – due to the latter's political line – alters when there is a change of cabinet, as we could experience in Hungary. But the political attitude of the trade union is not helpful even in a bipartite social partnership.

It would be delightful if Hungary had such a social partnership as in the Member States. The precondition of reaching this goal mainly hinges upon the trade union, to recognise the difference between policy and education; political interests and economic interests and to represent the latter.

²⁷ About the European social partnership in connection with education see more in the next chapter.

2. The position of teachers

There is an everyday problem in Hungary which does not appear to present any difficulties in the Member States of the EU: the position of teachers in society. The social respect for teachers has never been so low as nowadays. The decline of social respect began after the Second World War, as many without any qualification or with no adequate qualification were appointed to be teachers. This is one of the heritages of the Party system. From 1996, lack of respect was accompanied by a steep reduction in wages. According to the OECD indicators (See table next page; /m: data not available; n: magnitude is either negligible or zero./) teachers' salaries are the lowest in Hungary and in the Czech Republic. The salaries in the countries of the OECD (and in the EU Member States) are generally three times higher than in Hungary. (Although comparative data are not available connected to the tertiary education, the proportions can be similar.) It is interesting to see that teachers in Hungary, Central-Europe earn less than teachers in Argentina, Chile and Malaysia; they earn approximately as much as teachers in Brazil and in Jordan. The numbers show that in Hungary not only the salaries are the lowest but also the salaries in GDP per capita.

Teachers' salary levels can affect both the desirability of entering the teaching profession and the ability of schools to retain the most skilled teachers. Ensuring that there will be enough skilled teachers to educate all children is an important policy concern in all OECD countries.²⁸ This argument is correct and if we look at the results of investigations in this topic at Hungarian universities, it is evidence that not a big part of the university students intend to be teachers and only a fraction of them will really be one. Among the students who study teaching (beyond their other subjects) at the 8th semester, only 55% want to be teachers. Other experiences show that this rate might be a bit overestimated. Most of the students attend the given faculty of the university and studies teaching because they were not admitted into other – more popular – faculties or tertiary-level institutions e.g.: law student, doctor, actor. The answers, given to the following question by students in the last (!) semester: is it sure that you will work as teacher, give food for thought. Only 7% of the students were sure that they would work as teachers, 38% will probably be, 54% do not know and 1% surely will not be teachers.²⁹

It is obvious that such low salaries cannot retain the most skilled teachers. On the other hand, according to the OECD statistics, the ratio of students to teaching staff is the lowest in Hungary. (11 in primary education 10,8 in secondary education and 11,8 in all tertiary education.³⁰) A corollary of the demographic decline is that in 1995 the increase in the number of teaching staff stopped and even started to decline. Dismissals, unemployment appeared among teachers and if the ratio of students to teaching staff should be reduced, more teachers will have to face being unemployed. The number of unemployed increased in the teaching profession:

²⁸ *Education at a Glance, OECD indicators 2000*, p. 208.

²⁹ ANETTA ÁDÁM: *Nem ismeri és nem is meri megismerni*. In: *Educatio 1998/3 Oktatókutatató Intézet*, p. 606–611.

³⁰ *Education at a Glance OECD indicators 2000*, p. 15–16.

1995	1996	1997 ³¹
2837	4696	5226

The reduction of staff was carried out in four forms: teachers who were above the retirement-age, were retired; who had only a few years to the retirement-age, were discharged with a pension; the third form was dismissal; the fourth: leaving the school voluntarily.³² The proportion among these four forms depends on the obtained qualification of teachers.

3. *Equal opportunities in Hungarian schools*

Inequality is the concomitant of change. Inequality is the societal "cost" we have to pay for development. The problems begin when the costs we have to pay for development are higher than it is worth. After the changes in 1989, many societal groups have the opinion that the cost of inequality they have to pay for the transformation is not in proportion to the probable results. Inequality and increase in inequality is the necessary concomitant of the social changes. The bearing of this phenomenon in the Hungarian society is limited due to two factors. Firstly, the equality in the communist era was a value which had to be realised. Many people grew up – active workers now – with the belief seeming to be realistic: a society built on equality. This heritage makes the bearing of and handling of inequality more difficult. Secondly, the whole society was made to believe that transformation would not take more than a couple of years and would be painless. The enthusiasm owing to the change inevitably turned into disillusionment.³³

Kozma conclude that since 1990 inequality has grown both in society and in education. The increased inequality in the society directly reflected in the disadvantages of families.

The stratification of society has a strong affect on the formation of educational achievement. Birth into a given societal layer more or less predestines the further achievement of individuals. Growing poverty is accompanied by playing truant. Tamás Kozma draws the attention to the impacts of the restructuring of schools on the problem of equality. He argues that the increase of supply from the schools' side does not mean the growth of capacity, despite the demographic changes. The educational institutions within a given territory started to compete – owing to the financial support of the state – for the pupils. Kozma suggests that this financial force was the reason for the structural changes. Innovators were not driven by the content of innovation but by the economic interest. As a result of establishing the new structure of educational institutions, the equilibrium among the local schools was broken up and this phenomenon has strong affects on the current situation. In a smaller settlement in which there is no alternative choice beyond the only local school, and this only school

³¹ RÓZSA HOFFMANN: *Nevelésügy '97 – belülről*. In: *Tanulmányok a közoktatásról 1997*. p. 48.

³² LISKÓ ILONA: *Bokros-csomag a közoktatásban*. In: *Educatio 1998/2*. p. 77–84.

³³ KOZMA TAMÁS: *Társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek az iskolában*. In: *Tanulmányok a közoktatásról 1997*. p. 133–135.

is reorganised or specialised, the citizens of this settlement might remain without a suitable institution.

As it was mentioned, the difference between the pupils' achievements has increased. These differences can be explained by societal factors. Kozma describes the following factors in Hungary:

- the most important factor of all is still the qualification obtained by the parents;
- the type of educational institution a pupil attends also determines achievement: the upper secondary schools' pupils have better performance than pupils in the industrial schools;
- the type of settlement is another factor which contributes to the differences: the difference between the achievement of the pupils in Budapest and the pupils in the county-cities (there are 22 in Hungary) is becoming blurred but at the same time, the difference between the achievement of the pupils in the county-cities (Budapest included) and other cities, settlements and villages, increases;
- the scholar achievement in term of genders seems to be equalised, even, there is a shift towards the better performance of females;
- the entirety of family is also important: in families where the mother is not with the children, performance deteriorates significantly regardless of age and the subject they perform;
- having many books (over 200) or a computer in the family.

One third of the school-aged population lives in villages having neither enough books nor computers, among an increasing number of conflicts within the family. The question is, how can these social circumstances be handled and remedied. As Kozma drafts: how much can these disadvantages be equalised with more school-types and modern teaching.

At upper secondary level inequality stops gradually and turns into quality-problems. Looking at the expansion of tertiary education and the importance of obtaining a diploma, nowadays, the main goal is entering into and completing the university or other type of tertiary education institutions.

VIII. Hungary and the European Union in the light of education and vocational training

The Treaty of Rome set up the European Economic Community (EEC) to establish a common market and approximate progressively the economic policies of its Member States.³⁴

Although we cannot talk about a Community educational policy within the EU, there are growing efforts towards reaching it as it became clear that education as a whole will have crucial importance in contributing to the economic development of the

³⁴ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: *An age of learning vocational training policy at European level*. CEDEFOP 2000 Thessaloniki. p. 2

Community. Of course, not having a common European educational policy does not mean that the Union did not draw attention to the educational level of the European work-force. In another area – which is bounded with several threads to education - addressed vocational training –, there are measurements and mainly non-binding resolutions, which constitute a part of the acquis, and therefore have a large impact on the educational policy of the Member States and the associated countries.

As every institution, which plays a role in the operation of the EU, vocational training policy also has its roots in the past, and its present state is the result of an organic development. That is why we need to look at the main stages to find the goals of improving the vocational training system of Hungary.

The endeavour for a common vocational training policy was already mentioned in the Treaty of Rome which, of course, had above all economic reasons. The free movement of persons as a keystone of the European development together with the freedom of movement for goods, capital and services raises questions in connection with vocational training policies. If the community aims to establish one common market, where the work-force moves in accordance with the laws of the market, the obstacles impeding employment in another Member State should be abolished. That is a reason for the formulation of Article 128, which stated that the Council of Ministers shall lay down:

general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy capable of contributing to the harmonious development both of the national economies and of the common market.

Over the years, the policy framework, as established by the ten principles of the 1963 decision, was adapted and redefined through various non legally-binding, but strongly supported, political statements, such as Council resolutions, Commission communications and white papers. The social partners also contributed increasingly to the development of the policy framework, through their joint options, in particular.

Driven by forces of economic and social change, the policy framework supported the development of vocational training as a powerful tool of employment and active labour market policy. Important roles for vocational training were defined in improving employment prospects through facilitating adaptation to change, supporting the integration of young people, and other groups, into the labour market and promoting equal opportunities.³⁵

We should not forget the role of vocational training in ensuring the free movement of workers. This role was embodied in mobility programmes on one hand and in the endeavours to mutual recognition of qualifications and harmonisation of training levels, comparability of qualifications and transparency on the other.

The Inter-Governmental Conference opened in 1991 planned the steps towards economic and monetary union, in this way a chance was given for the Member States to revise – among others – Article 128. As they took the opportunity, the common vocational training policy was replaced by a Community vocational training policy to

³⁵ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: OP. CIT. (2000) p. 31.

support and supplement activities of the Member States under Article 127 of the Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht in 1992.³⁶

Action under Article 127 was to be decided in the Council by qualified majority after consultation with the European Parliament and no longer by simple majority. It was made clear that Member States were responsible for the content and organisation of vocational training, and harmonisation of their laws and regulations concerning vocational training was specifically ruled out. Education was separated from vocational training policy and was given a separate legal base in Article 126, upon which future co-operation was to be based.³⁷

The debate on the development of vocational training since the Maastricht Treaty has been marked by the growing interest in life long learning. This debate has posed challenges for the structure of vocational training systems which, it is argued, also need to adapt the forces of change that are affecting the learning process. Both the policy framework and its implementation have sought to adapt to this development.³⁸

The European Commission also contributed to the Community vocational training policy framework and through this step vocational training got an even larger role within the Union. This was due to the white paper in 1993: Growth, competitiveness, employment – the challenges and ways forward into the 21st Century.

The white paper set out a strategy to achieve more employment-intensive growth in the EU, arguing that vocational training had a role to play both in combating unemployment and in boosting competitiveness. But to play this role, educational and vocational training systems had to adapt to meet new demands. A number of major weaknesses were identified.³⁹ To address these weaknesses, the white paper put forward a number of proposals aimed essentially at developing lifelong learning and continuing training and making it more systematic. To support this process, the white paper encouraged an analysis of vocational training systems and ways in which co-operation between the different interests involved could be and, to this end, proposed a European Year of Lifelong Learning, which took place in 1996.⁴⁰

³⁶ Treaty on European Union – Article 127

1. The Community shall aim to implement a vocational training policy which shall supplement the action of the member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training.
2. The Community shall aim to: (a) facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular, through vocational training and retraining; (b) improve initial and continuing training in order to facilitate vocational integration into the labour market; (c) facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people; (d) stimulate cooperation on training between educational and training establishments and firms; (e) develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.
3. The Community and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of vocational training.
4. The Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189c and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, shall adopt measures to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States.

³⁷ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: *Op. cit.* (2000) p. 13.

³⁸ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: *Op. cit.* (2000) p. 31.

³⁹ These weaknesses are: a deficiency of skills in science and technology, a relatively high number of young people in Europe leaving school without basic training (which in turn contributed to social exclusion), inadequate development of systems of continuing training and access to it, a lack of genuine European skills market in both skills and qualifications and a lack of opportunities for open and distance learning. p.15.

⁴⁰ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: *Op. cit.* (2000) p. 15.

However, it is important to distinguish between the employment framework to which training contributes and a policy framework for the development of the vocational training systems for themselves. Such a framework is important for ensuring that systems accommodate the new learning processes and flexible structures that lifelong learning demands.

1. Economic, social and demographic changes

Globalisation of the world economy has accelerated. Developing countries have industrialised in increasing numbers. Markets have become more open. Advances in technology and communications have reduced the importance of geographical distance, making it increasingly possible to locate production in places where costs are lowest. Competitive pressures on European producers have intensified, reinforced by the single market and monetary union.⁴¹

At the moment, Hungary is in an advantaged situation against the Western countries in terms of the costs of the work-force which are significantly lower here than elsewhere in the territory of the EU. There are many foreign enterprises here exploiting this temporary benefit. But, as it was mentioned, it is only a temporary advantage and due to the rapid increase of the GDP and the increase of the living standard, Hungary is losing this advantage. Even nowadays, there are foreign plants – using low skilled labour – leaving the country and moving to the East, to Romania or Ukraine.

While Hungary has the unalterable intent to join the Union, the living standard and the average salaries in general – which are still very low compared with the ones in the EU – have to increase. Therefore, this interim advantage of low-cost labour-force will belong to the past in a few years time.

The present and even the future economic competitiveness of Europe depends on human resources, the knowledge of the work-force rather than raw-material resources. Changing markets and the need to find new areas of specialisation mean the comparative advantage of European producers increasingly lies in access to a well-educated work-force, able to adapt to new ways of working and develop new products.⁴²

The Union also has to face demographic changes. In about 10 years time, if not sooner, the total number of people of working age will also fall in most EU countries, which could reduce the size of the labour force. Even if the size of the labour force does not fall, it is set to become older on average and the number of people reaching retirement age is projected to increase significantly. This has a number of implications. First, to avoid a reduction of the number in employment at a time when the number of people above retirement age and in need of income support is increasing, the proportion of those of working age actually in work needs to increase. Secondly, it means that there is a greater need to maintain and update the skills of the existing work-force and to ensure that those remaining longer in employment can work efficiently.⁴³

⁴¹ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p. 127.

⁴² STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p. 127.

⁴³ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p. 37.

According to the OECD statistics, in Hungary by the year 2008 the expected percentage of the age-group 15 to 19 will be 85% (1998 = 100%) and the proportion of the ages 15–19 from the population is 7%. These figures at the age-group 5 to 14 are expected to be 82% (1998 = 100%) and the proportion of the ages 5–14 is 12%.⁴⁴ Hence, in this respect, our country has similar trends but, as it was noted earlier, the life expectancy of Hungarian people is very low, which has two consequences for the future. Firstly, the national budget will not be so overloaded from this point of view and this is the reason, for the retirement age being 62 years. Secondly, it will have an effect on the world of labour, because the population is declining. So, as much as it is predictable, in Hungary there will be a shortage of the labour force in the future. This fact doubles the need for people with up-to-date skills.

In all Member States [and in the potential Member States] there is a general policy of raising the skill levels of the work-force. This is being pursued in two broad ways. The first is to try to increase the number of young people remaining in education and vocational training beyond basic schooling and to seek to ensure that those entering the labour market have the necessary qualifications to have a reasonable chance of pursuing a worthwhile career. The second is to try to increase the provision of continuing vocational training to those already in work or to those returning to employment after a period out of labour market.⁴⁵

These efforts had their results and can be followed in statistics: across the EU, around 70% of 25 to 29 years olds have at least upper secondary qualifications whether vocational or general.

Comparative figures in Hungary were available including the 25 to 34 year olds. In this age-group the figures of those with at least upper secondary qualification is 77%.

In Hungary we can also speak about the expansion of secondary education.⁴⁶ The unexpected rapid increase in the number of pupils in this area began in the second half of the 1980s. In 1985, the proportion of those who enrolled in the secondary schools was 46,8%. In 1996 this figure was 61,6%. So the increase between the two figures is 23%, while the number of youths in this age-group is declining from the school-year 1992/93.⁴⁷

Although there is little room for debate about the significant long-term increase in the proportion of young people completing upper secondary and tertiary education and initial vocational training, there is room for the debate about the reasons underlying the rise. More specifically, the question is whether the rise of employers requiring more highly educated people to perform jobs is being created as economic development takes place, or whether, on the contrary, it arises from the supply side and the desire of individuals to be better educated, encouraged by governments expanding the places available.⁴⁸

The answer to this question from the point of view of the EU has implications for policy. If the increase in the participation in further and higher education is not strictly

⁴⁴ *Education at a Glance OECD indicators*. Edition OECD 2000 p.25

⁴⁵ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p. 46.

⁴⁶ This expansion in Hungary characterised only those schools, which give a certificate after completing the four- year-long education there (in Germany the Abitur; in France, the baccalaurat) but not in other secondary level schools.

⁴⁷ ANNA IMRE – ZOLTÁN GYÖRGYI: *Közéiskola mindenkinek?* In: *Educatio* 1998/1. p. 19.

⁴⁸ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p. 46.

due to economic forces, then, although there may be a case for continued expansion, in that it reflects a growing demand for education on the part of individuals, the economic justification for government support of this may be weakened. The willingness of governments to increase expenditures on education and initial vocational training beyond basic schooling and to extend its duration stems in part from the conviction that they are contributing to strengthening the potential for economic development. At the same time, however, irrespective of the economic case, there is a strong argument that access to higher education is a key feature of a democratic society.

The question may also have a bearing on individual well-being. If, in reality, the increase in educational levels is not justified by the greater skill requirements in the economy, it could lead to a growing sense of frustration and disillusionment over the lack of opportunity to make use of the tuition received.

In practice, while a case can be made for the increase in the participation in education being primarily due to supply-side factors, the weight of evidence suggests that there has been a strong demand-side pull which shows no sign of abating.

From the Hungarian point of view, as Imre Anna and Györgyi Zoltán suggest correctly, one of the causes of the expansion of Hungarian secondary education was the competition started for the pupils, namely that the support the educational institutions get from the state (which is a specific character of the system today, too) mostly depends on the number of enrolled pupils. The demographic change and this phenomenon together contributed to this increase. The other cause is closely connected to economy. The firms, which earlier were in public ownership were privatised and due to this process many workers became jobless and there was no demand for certain (low-skilled) jobs any more. The secondary vocational system could not accommodate to these changes in their supply of vocations and the parents (who did not want to see their children being unemployed) had their children enrolled in other types of secondary schools which gave a certificate in the end. Later we will return to the expansion of secondary education.

The data show that between 1990 and 1997 the total enrolment in tertiary education doubled, among the EU Member States only Portugal had such a very high increase in this field, the figure here (1990 = 100%) is 268% in 1997.⁴⁹

There is a close relationship between education attainment levels and earnings, which suggests that employers are willing to pay a premium for better educated and trained people. In general, in the Member States the average monthly earnings of men with upper secondary qualifications were over 10% higher than those for men with only basic education ... In Spain, Luxembourg and Portugal, they were over 30% higher.⁵⁰ In the case of women, there is evidence of positive returns to upper secondary level education across the EU [though the measures are not so high as in the case of men in general]. In Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg, the average earnings of women with upper secondary qualifications were over 30% higher than for those with only basic education.⁵¹

The returns to tertiary education – university or equivalent were more substantial in all Member States for both men and women. (On average 60% more than those only

⁴⁹ Data available: *Education at a Glance OECD indicators* 2000 Edition OECD. p. 160.

⁵⁰ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p. 41.

⁵¹ STEVE BAINBRIDGE, JULIE MURRAY: Op. cit. (2000) p.42 (See graphs); data available from year 1995.

with basic education. ... For women, the returns to tertiary education were large in most countries but lower than for men.

In the OECD statistics we can find similar trends in Hungary: The average monthly earnings of men with below upper secondary education were 26% lower than those with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. The same figure for the earnings of women with below upper secondary education were 34% lower than those for women with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Looking at the earnings of men with tertiary education in Hungary, we can see that their earnings are 213% higher than those with upper secondary qualification. This figure for women is only 154%.⁵²

Furthermore, the division of employment between sectors has shifted appreciably towards more advanced services, such as business services, health and education and, within manufacturing, towards high-tech industries. The occupational structure of jobs has shifted in a similar way, from less skilled manual jobs to higher skilled non-manual ones, specifically to managerial, professional and technical positions.

2. *The content of initial vocational training in the Union*

The need for the work-force to adapt both to structural change and the content of jobs raises questions about the highly formalised structure of occupations which has traditionally existed in a number of Member States, especially Germany and Austria. In both countries, there is typically a well-defined programme of vocational training and a set of qualifications, which anyone wanting to take up a particular job will usually need to have completed before they hope to be employed. The corollary of this is a highly differentiated range of education and training courses at secondary level, particularly in respect of vocational training, which combine school-based tuition with practical on-the-job experience (the dual system).

For many people in these countries, their career prospects and their place in society – largely determined by the occupation followed – are largely decided at a relatively early stage. The position is not so different in other countries (Hungary included), though the structure of occupations is generally less formalised and preparation for particular jobs usually involves fewer years of training.

Among the more problematic elements remaining from the era of the Party/State was the way in which vocational training, higher education and scientific research were structured. They were 'vertically' structured and segmented according to the 'economic sector', as opposed to a typical education structure in a market economy which is 'horizontal', and operation across the breadth of the economy.⁵³

As the structure of the economy evolves and new jobs are created, and as the content of existing jobs changes, the structure of occupations and, correspondingly, the training which goes into preparing individuals for particular jobs, must also change. There are essentially two responses to this, given the desire to maintain a formal

⁵² Source of data: *Education at a Glance OECD indicators 2000*, p. 293.

⁵³ STEPHEN P. HEYNEMANN: *The Transition from Party/State to Open Democracy*. In: *Educatio* 1998/3, p. 575. – The author remarks "to be sure there were differences from one country to the next; and for the most part, the segmentation of higher education was a problem typical of the former Soviet Union." This statement is mostly true for Hungary, too.

structure. One is to continuously define new occupations or redefine existing ones to try to keep up with change. The other is to broaden the definition of occupations to encompass new jobs as they emerge. In practice, both approaches have been followed and ... there has been a marked trend in recent years to reduce the number of occupations which are categorised.

A related response has been to broaden the content of initial vocational training courses, to include more general education to provide the basis for vocational training in specialised areas and to strengthen the capacity of participants to adapt to future changes in the techniques of performing a particular set of tasks or to shift to a related area of activity. The aim, therefore, is both to teach individuals the skills required to perform a given job, but to try to ensure that they are able to keep up with new advances in working methods and to take up other jobs if the need arises.

This approach is based on the notion that for any occupation or activity there is a key set of skills or qualifications which individuals need to possess in order to perform the various tasks in a particular job. These skills are more general in nature than the specific ones involved in the job itself. They consist for example, of the ability to reason logically, critically and conceptually when analysing and solving practical problems. They also include an ability to learn, communicate and co-operate with others and the capacity to acquire, understand and process information.⁵⁴

The main function of the education and training system is to pass on this set of key skills as well as those which are more specific to particular activities. This implies a prior need to define the precise qualifications required for different occupations and the division of responsibility for teaching them between different parts of the system. It also implies that any effective programme of vocational training needs to consist of both general education to provide the essential basis for the acquisition of specific skills and the ability to continue to learn, and practical training to enable individuals to acquire the specific skills in question.

It has become an axiom of economic policy that workers and firms need to adapt to change. In practice, this is overly simplistic in the sense that workers and firms are not merely the passive players in the competitive process, subject to the whim of external market forces and changes in technology, but they can, and do, influence the environment in which they work.

Accordingly, it is important that there is effective interaction between those responsible for designing and organising education curricular and initial vocational training and employers. The need is, therefore, to develop efficient means of communicating to ensure that vocational training provided is responsive to labour market needs. The need is recognised throughout the EU and, in practice, a number of arrangements are in place in Member States to do this. These include:

- (a) monitoring economic developments and their implications for skill requirements and attempting to predict future changes in the latter;
- (b) the involvement of employers and trade union representatives in advising on the courses which should be taught in the education and vocational training system and their content;

⁵⁴ STEPHEN P. HEYNEMANN: *Op. cit.* p. 575.

- (c) the direct participation of those working in different sectors of activity in teaching and the organisation of training courses by the social partners, trade associations or professional bodies;
- (d) encouraging regular contact between local businesses and schools and colleges in the area;
- (e) establishing career advisory centres in schools and colleges;
- (f) decentralising decision-making concerning the courses taught and their content to schools and colleges and to regional or local authorities responsible for managing these;

If Hungary really wants to endeavour an economy with high added value production and intends to establish efficient conditions in education and vocational training, the governors have to draw serious attention to these arrangements. In this area Hungary has a lot to learn from the Member States. Although there were many changes in the field of educational policy in Hungary so far, Heyneman's and Birzea's words always should remind us of the control and improvement of the present system: the transition has phases and stages, and not all of them lead forward. Some education reforms are quicker and easier to put into place, such as changes in curriculum, textbooks, and pedagogy. ... Other areas appear more problematic. They include rationalising the number of institutions, establishing coherent education legislation, redistributing educational property, redefining local and administrative controls.⁵⁵

The European Union through its Member States already has enormous experience realising the above mentioned arrangements. So Hungary has the possibility to recognise the successful solutions, to choose the useful, realisable elements of them and to establish an own system in accordance with the Hungarian legislation, traditions etc.

3. Forecasting skill requirements

Arrangements are in place in most Member States to attempt to forecast the skills which, in many cases, involve the social partners either directly or in an advisory capacity. The difficulty of forecasting is that it entails not only predicting the future path of technological advance and its implications for jobs, but also more general economic developments stemming from changes in consumer demand, the process of globalisation and completion of markets. It is further complicated by the relatively long lead-time involved in many cases in increasing the availability of people with particular skills to perform the jobs being created. An effective programme of training, in other words, may extend over a number of years and, in addition, may involve a lengthy period of preparation before the first student is enrolled.

An advantage of forecasting is that it forces a conscious analysis of the present position in respect of the balance of supply and demand as regards particular skills. It also provides a forum in which the various interests involved can meet and discuss both the present position and prospective developments, and it encourages the formulation of forward-looking and practical measures for reducing imbalances in the labour market and for rectifying possible skill gaps in the work-force. In the latter

⁵⁵ STEPHEN P. HEYNEMANN: Op. cit. p. 575.

regard, for example, it might be able to identify ways in which existing courses can be modified.

4. Involving the social partners

In most parts of the EU, the social partners advise on education curricula and initial vocational training courses at upper secondary level. In addition, they participate in continuous vocational training and, in some cases, on examination boards especially, in respect of vocational studies. While such activities are generally encouraged by the government, both partner has a mutual interest in courses being relevant to labour market needs and in setting standards which students have to meet to qualify for a particular vocation. For employers, the incentive is to try to ensure that there is a sufficient number of potential new recruits with the skills they need, for employees, as for professional bodies, there is an interest in managing entry into different occupations to avoid an excessive number of people looking for jobs, on the one hand, and to maintain standards, on the other.

5. Decentralisation

In practice, in most Member States, while responsibility for the implementation of policy on vocational training is devolved to regional and local authorities or to the governing bodies of individual institutions, the formulation of policy, or at least the broad guidelines, is decided centrally.

At the same time, there has been a strengthening of national qualification standards to provide a common framework within which regional or local providers of vocational education and training have to operate.

Although decentralisation of decision-making on the vocational training courses provided may make these more responsive to local demand for particular skills, it also carries the attendant danger that too much emphasis is placed on meeting current needs and not enough on those which might arise in the future. This is a particular risk in less developed areas where the emphasis may be on skills required by traditional industries, liable to decline over the long term, rather than on those likely to be demanded by new industries or services. A parallel risk is that young people taught and trained with local market needs in mind may be put at a disadvantage if they move elsewhere.

To avoid these risks, it is important for policy implemented at local level not only to comply within national standards, but to be both forward and outward looking. This implies the establishment of an effective structure, involving the close co-operation of the social partners, vocational training providers and local or regional authorities, which provides the means of monitoring both current and prospective economic developments and new vocational opportunities and of determining the courses which should be made available.

Earnings and living-standards have a significant role in a lifelong learning oriented society. An educational system – which makes it possible for the population to permanently renew their knowledge or to start training in another vocation in accordance with the demands of the market – requires that the workers in the society

earn a reasonable salary. Reasonable, in this relation, in Hungary means that if an employee wants to take part in a vocational training course to update her or his skills or to learn new ones, it does not danger the existence of her or his family. Not only in Hungary but in other transitional countries there is a same problem: A very big proportion of the workers work more than eight hours (not rarely 10–14 hours) per day just to avoid the cost-of-living problems.

An ideal lifelong learning based educational and training system requires (to offer) a rich sort of educational and training (continuing training included) institutions according to the demands and aptitudes of people. And this ideal system would be very flexibly guided by economic changes. The establishment of a system like this is very expensive and to maintain this system – owing to its flexibility, hence its permanent change – requires constant additional expenses from the state. (Beyond the ordinary expenses.) At the same time, if we look at the goals of creating such a system: increasing employability, reducing unemployment, reaching a well-operating economy, surely in a long term, but the government will get the money back. Of course, the individuals and the employers also benefit a lot from this education. As we can see, the problem of financing was also formulated at EU-level.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that employers and individuals are better placed than governments to assess the amount and kind of vocational training they should provide or receive and, since they reap the benefits of training, it is them, rather than governments that should pay the costs. If financial support is needed, because, for example, costs have to be met before returns are realised, then, based on this argument, it should be provided in the form of a loan rather than a grant or subsidy. On the other hand, while it is indisputable that employers and individuals benefit from training, there are also major gains to society and the economy (i.e. significant externalities) from having a better educated and trained population.⁵⁶

Bainbridge and Murray described the potential benefits from investment of vocational training:

Individuals

- More job opportunities
- Higher salary
- Better career prospects
- Lower probability of unemployment
- Increased job satisfaction
- Improved working environment

Enterprises

- Higher productivity
- Increased efficiency
- Higher flexibility
- Retention of work force
- Improved motivation
- Attraction of labour

National level

- Equal access
- Diminished social exclusion
- Increased economic welfare
- Diminished social costs
- Increased tax revenue
- Achievement of adequate skill levels
- Avoidance of free-rider problem

European level

- Convergence of labour markets
- Increased mobility
- Increased cross-border co-operation

⁵⁶ BAINBRIDGE and Murray, Op. cit. p. 64.

As it was written, in the Member States, where the social partnership has long traditions, the social partners can add their suggestions to the curricula. This way they significantly contribute to the success of education. Even a very cautious government is not able to replace the experience of the employers' and employees' organisations which can be used at the elaborating the curricula.

In Hungary nowadays the government has the main role in the decision-preparations, the social partners are in the background – though there are steps forwards. It means that here, social partners do not really have a role as in the EU Member States. This phenomenon again has historical roots. (See in the next chapter.)

In 1998, a new educational system came into force re-determining the curricula in initial and secondary schools (vocational secondary schools involved). The teachers were drawn into the preparatory works – started in 1989 – but the representatives of the social partners did not take part in that.

A well-operating bipartite or tripartite social partnership can give large impetus to economic development. In the Member States the social partners have a significant role during the process of preparing decisions in areas connected with economy and the governments seem to draw significant attention to their opinions, suggestions. Each party has a similar long-term goal and negotiating on this common basis can lead to – from the educational point of view – better curricula which can give hopes for a better economy.

IX. Summary

Chapter 1 examined the present difficulties of Hungary as a transitional country which also has to cope with the big tasks of joining the European Union and post-20th-century problems such as globalisation and demographic changes. The socialist past of the country is underlined because it has not passed traceless and still has affects on the society and the current situation of education and the labour-force.

The fundamental changes in politics and economy in the post-war period and after 1989 significantly determined the educational policy. Due to the economic policy of the socialist system the Hungarian educational system was completely separated from the demands of the market. Both economy and education operated in their own way with no relations to each other, in accordance with the political will of the State/Party.

After 1989 the economy started to operate according to the rules of a market economy, but the educational policy could not follow entirely the rapid changes, though there were innovations in the structure of the educational system, in the curricula. The educational institutions have also tried and try to react upon the new demands appearing for certain educational qualifications.

During the forty years of isolation the non-socialist countries started to lay large emphasis on understanding the relations of education and economy. Their recognition embodied in increased awareness from the states and in measures which tried to give straight way for increasing the skill-level of work-force through widening and strengthening the role of quality-oriented education.

These emphasises are of crucial importance for Hungary, owing to its nearing accession to the EU, especially the experiences, regulations and recommendations of the Member States. The *acquis communautaire* contains several vocational training topics aiming to increase the skill-level of the work-force and through this the competitiveness of the Member States. The EU awaits the reduction of unemployment from the Community-vocational training policy as well.

Hungary is in transition and due to this situation the country has to do with some grave difficulties, which do not appear in the Member States of the Union. The most urgent tasks of the country to reach a good educational system which can serve as a base for a well-operating economy, are the following:

- to plan a wide-ranging *coherent* strategy utilising the recommendations of the EU and experiences of other well-developed countries and the Member States' as well including the establishment of an institute which forecasts the needs of economy in terms of the concrete skill-level of the labour force;
- to increase significantly the teachers' salaries;
- to strengthen the links between economy and education.

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RÚZS MOLNÁR KRISZTINA

A MAGYAR KÖZOKTATÁS NEHÉZSÉGEI ÉS EREDMÉNYEI

(Összefoglalás)

Hogy egy ország miként tud hosszútávon is versenyképes gazdaságot fenntartani és így folyamatosan biztosítani állampolgárai számára a jólétet, a tőkés országok számára a kezdetektől fogva kulcskérdés volt. Több könyvtárat betöltő irodalma van annak, hogy a termelés egyes tényezőinek megváltoztatásával a termelékenységét miként lehet befolyásolni.

Az, hogy egy ország oktatáspolitikája, annak struktúrája, célja, minősége is befolyásoló tényező lehet, a második világháborút követően jelent meg a nyugati szakirodalomban céltudatos kutatások tárgyaként. Éppen abban az időben, amikor Magyarország a szovjet érdekszféra részévé vált, amikor a gazdaság működését többé nem a piac törvényszerűségei határozták meg. A tervutasításos rendszer nem kívánta meg az oktatáspolitikát és a gazdaság szakember-igényének összehangolását.

Az 1989–90-es rendszerváltozást követően az ország újból teret engedett a piac által meghatározott gazdasági fejlődés előtt. A nyugat-európai és más fejlett gazdasággal rendelkező országokhoz hasonlóan Magyarországnak is tudatos politika kialakítására van szüksége a gazdaság és az ehhez kapcsolódó oktatásügy területén. Magyarország szerencsés helyzetben van abban a tekintetben, hogy e két szféra

kölcsönhatásait és törvényszerűségeit vizsgálva felhasználhatja az előbb említett országok tapasztalatait is.

Mіндеzeken túl országunk különös figyelmet kell szenteljen az Európai Uniónak ezen a területen kialakított szabályozására és iránymutatására (acquis) is a remélhető csatlakozás küszöbén. A közösségi szintű szakképzési politika tartalmazza az erre vonatkozó szabályozás jelentős részét. Az Unió egészének és tagállamainak azonban a gazdasági és oktatáspolitikai fejlődés összehangolása nemcsak a hatékonyabb gazdaság kulcsát jelenti, hanem a foglalkoztatáspolitikai szempontjából is elsődleges fontosságú. Tudjuk, hogy az Unió országai évtizedek óta küszködnek a magas a munkanélküliséggel. Az EU szakemberei szerint egy tudatos, jól összehangolt oktatáspolitikával jelentősen lehetne javítani a foglalkoztatási arányon, ami a szociálpolitikát tekintve is nagy előrelépés lenne.

Ahhoz, hogy Magyarországon hosszútávon jól működő gazdaság jöhessen létre, biztosítani kell az ennek elérését megvalósító szakemberek képzését és ezek folyamatos utánpótlását. Egy ilyen rendszer kiépítéséhez figyelemmel kell lenni más országok elért eredményeire, az Unió elvárásaira, de kialakítása során nem szabad megfélekedni az ország jelenlegi gazdasági fejlettségéről s oktatási hagyományairól sem.