



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

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**Abstract**

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

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

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## **Introduction**

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

## **Narratives**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The phase of the turn lasted for only 1-2 years; in Hungary from circa the autumn of 1988 until the end of 1993. We all partook in it: education policy makers, researchers and experts. Our decisions in education policies, our research results and our expert reports were strongly influenced by 'the moment'. We have not yet picked up on this dimension thoroughly enough. In the following section, we demonstrate the transformation in the education policies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The radical disassembly of the previous isolation took place - compared to what we could sense in the Kádár regime (as a slow transformation processes) - in reality happened with dramatic pace. (see also what's written on 'the moment'). By nowadays it is more visible - twenty years after - how the isolation that we had lived and grown up in (that was forced on us as a result of belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence as well

as the Cold War situation) lead to: on the one hand, the feeling of captivity; on the other hand, served as a protective shield. Hungary, a country that over the course of the 20th century had already split from an international level integration (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) now once again lost its political and economic 'safeguard duties'. That is to say, its reliable market that it could (willy-nilly) produce to; the loss of which meant the sudden facing of new, previously unexperienced challenges. In day to day life all this meant: on the one hand, sudden losses (unemployment, the appreciation and depreciation of loans, the shift in social distance, the increase in economic distance, new forms of social tension) were experienced. On the other hand, it led to the appearance of a kind of consumer society (or merely its Eastern European accidental light) and its experience somehow eased the endurance of the other, harsher reality.

We can date the system change's second phase – at least in the case of Hungary – approximately began with the third quarter of the 1990s (the Socialist Government's 1994 re-election) and lasted until the EU accession in 2004, that is one decade. This decade was characterised by the country's quest for identity regarding the foreign policy and the external sector. In the system change's first – euphoric – phase the public opinion (including many experts as well) was in the popular fallacy that: in Hungary, in the late stage of the Kádár-regime (the 1980s) those structures developed, that would ease or at least make the integration into the West possible. ('back to Europe' was the, by nowadays, almost forgotten governmental motto). Now (in the second half of the 1990s) it turned out that this all qualifies as 'merely a game' in contrast to the harsh reality of the market economy, in which both the international politics and the government policies are different from what they seemed to be from the outside. (In one of its episodic but relevant long-term decisions was that not even the 'friends' of the new government – much as Hungary was celebrated previously by the Western European public opinion – could invite Hungary into the European Economic Community nor could they help with the remitting of the country's huge debts).

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

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

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

From these groups many are brought up when we run back over this era, twenty years later. From these, in the present context, we emphasize only two: the churches (although they were significantly weaker structurally during the Kádár regime, but they more or less managed to preserve their hidden prestige) and the local area self-organised groups that were now rallied as a result of the weakening of the regional administration and the empowerment of local authorities. Further non-governmental operators also appeared in this decade – in Hungary (moreover, almost even competitively) as well as all over throughout East-Central Europe. From these we have to emphasise the international economic organisations. Their appearance was once celebrated – new, previously unprecedented shops, workshops, manufacturing plants; as well as banks, service provider offices and the services themselves. It only became apparent over the course of the decade how deeply these influenced the fight that the – once feared and despised – state apparatus had fought to regain its influence over the system change. They regained what they had lost with the privatisation of the economy and the democratisation of society (as well as their legitimacy that they had lost as a consequence of breaking away from the Soviet sphere of influence and still could not gain back with the integration into the new structures).

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

From all the changes in education policy in this context we highlight the changes in management. The education management that was formed in the second phase of the system change also carried on with the fight between the state and the civil sphere. However, in this sphere unique traditions had to be changed or could be referenced.

Those who thought of education policy as a means of integrating into the new structures referenced international examples and advocated the implementation of international solutions. These 'international' management models and techniques were primarily Anglo-Saxon inspired, reflected their reality and thus fitted the deregulation policies – which was suggested by the quickening of the neoliberal market economy and the social policy adapting to it. In terms of Hungary it meant local governments and the (more or less) evolving, bottom-up initiated self-governed education management. In this management model the governance did not – could not – have a voice in the processes (of teaching-learning). Instead, it could regulate the entrance exams (applications for admission, preliminaries) and school-leaving exams (exams, evaluations and degrees) more precisely and with more technical support.

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

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

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

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

The mentioned co-operations were conducted along almost all sections of the borders. (co-operations with Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia) Few or scarcely documented co-operations appeared with Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. Based on the

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

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

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

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

The cross-border co-operations – that is to say the development and management (funding) of Hungarian education across the border – in light of the studies, in all cases investigated, had proven to be government assistance. Those national minorities could form their own autonomous schooling, which had been granted funds from the 'mother countries'. These funds had to manifest in different forms; since in the given period of the system change the countries were not preparing for co-operation, but the formation of their new political identities. And in this phase of identity searching state education

fulfilled an important role everywhere – it seemed that the educational separations that were aiding the national minorities with their political autonomy were unwanted. Thus the funds took private forms. All the more so as the system changing countries' shaken governments were, for a long time, searching for their legitimacies, and were not in the position of preventing the flourishing private educational initiatives (at least in the sphere of higher education.)

*Church engagement.* Higher education's 'regionalisation' and 'privatisation' was still conducted in a half legitimate form. The newly formed states neighbouring Hungary have not yet re-regulated their higher education; whereas Romania, which was not a new state, began the establishment of a new political system, with underdeveloped higher education law regulation.. This half legitimate situation enabled that, within the unfolding minority education, from the local participants the most organised could have an active role. And these were the Churches.

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

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

The other revelation of cross-border educational research was – based on these – that the system change, that went off along the boundary between Europe's Western and Eastern parts – did not only shake a few politicians in a few counties, as some political forces wanted people to believe. No, the whole of Europe has been shaken. A sign of this was that national communities also started the formulation of their political identities, those who have not yet reached this point. This meant that they also started the formulation of their educational autonomy. Pieces of cross-border research – that were once based on the almost forgotten regional educational research and in the moment of the turn were brought back to life as border region co-operations – hence now introduced international phenomena and transformations; became a type of comparative studies. And this is the most important event of the system change's second phase: the regional educational research that was enclosed into a respective country or region, narrowed down to a very provincial way, became conjoined with the international regions' comparative research.

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

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

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

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

At the same time, its EU membership provided opportunity for new rivalries on the scene of Central European diplomacy (as well as economic and political): the race for the

access of EU funds (to those symbolic and concrete). This race has proven to be a much more familiar field – mainly to the political group, that in its youth had already been (to some extent) socialised in the previously integration of an imperial nature (the Soviet sphere of interest). In the previous phases of the system change could still go on – on the scene of internal affairs – between those who wanted the country's identity rebuilt based on traditions, and those who searched legitimacy in the integration into the new „international structures”.

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

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

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

Many regulations of the system change's previous phases – especially the first phase's sudden recrudescence – had proven to be increasingly uncomfortable; it was no longer

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

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

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

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

that Brussels called for (e.g. the so called Bologna system) would have required a strong and stable educational governance.

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

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

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

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

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

Here, the Bologna process crashed with those higher education initiatives that appeared all over Europe during the 1900s and constituted as local, regional, communal minority, ecclesiastic, voluntary or as other forms of private higher education. Facing this colourful and stirring reality of minority education of Europe in the 1990s (see Kozma et al., 2004) the Bologna process put these once initiated (at the dawn of the system change) 'newborn' institutions. Based on the study of its 'career' (see Pataki & Kozma,

2011) – that was more than a decade old – it had to choose from the following options. If they integrate into the unifying state higher education due to EU pressure: on the one hand, they gradually lose their original social momentum and their local-regional initiators; on the other hand, with state recognition they are gradually stabilised and become official (legitimate). If they do not integrate – resisting the state pressure forcing the Bologna process – they lose (do not gain) state recognition, the necessary accreditation. In this case, they can remain as local (regional, communal, civil initiated) institutions but can no longer fulfil their higher education function, as designed by the founders. Is there a way out of this dilemma?

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

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

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

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

### **Lessons Learnt**

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

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

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

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

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