

GABRIELLA PUSZTAI

Expansion, Systematisation and Social Commitment of Church-Run Education in Hungary

Abstract There is a variety of acknowledged approaches available for the investigation of the educational roles of denominational education. First, it is possible to analyse government activity concerning denominational institutions. It is also worth observing the changes in the educational policies of churches and, if we presume that churches represent community interests, the trends in the educational behaviour of the religiously affiliated community. After giving an overview of the above areas, we will summarise the following main trends of change: the latest wave of expansion of denominational institutions in the educational system, signs of their network developing into the systems, strengthening interaction between sectors and taking more active part in the education of disadvantaged social groups and regions. We expect that Hungarian denominational schools will take on a commitment to be present in low status communities as it was done by Catholic schools in the USA in the 1960s (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

Keywords: church-run schools, systematisation, religious interest groups, regional differences

Denominational schools in the light of national educational policy and social demand

The educational policy outlined in the 2010 government programme did not set any specific objectives regarding either denominational or religious education, as it focused on more comprehensive issues such as creating a competitive labour force, making the labour market more accessible, encouraging social solidarity and levelling social inequality. Churches, along with local governments and NGOs, were mentioned as possible allies in these tasks, which is in accordance with the norms of European educational policy concerning churches as actors in education. The legal background and regulations affecting denominational institutions of education formulated in the documentation of the programme reflect the principle of sector neutrality. However, some symbolic actions of the government, for example choosing the location of the national school-year opening ceremony or participation in anniversary celebrations of denominational schools, suggest that government communication does emphasise the merits of denominational education and hold them up as examples to other sectors of education. As it is not surprising of a conservative government, the qualities they most highly appreciate in denominational institutions are their attachment for religious values and value-based education, altruism towards communities and fostering solidarity. This study,

however, instead of analysing political and media communication, aims to examine the changes and social relevance of the denominational sector of Hungarian education. From among the various trends of change we identified four core ones, namely expansion, systematisation and turning towards disadvantaged social groups.

As for mapping the social demand for denominational institutions of education we have very little fresh data at our disposal. There was a comprehensive survey on students of denominational schools around the turn of the millennium (Pusztai, 2006). Yet later nationwide surveys such as the public opinion polls on education in 2005 and 2009 as well as youth studies omitted the variable that identified the type of school attended. But it is possible to obtain information about those having contact with denominational school students and from the latter one about young people who have received a religious upbringing¹. From the 2011 census data one can identify those who claim to belong to a religious community and thus can be counted as potential users of denominational education (Pusztai, 2011).

The present changes in religious behaviour show tendencies towards weakening institutional ties, the dominance of individual religiosity and diminishing differences caused by social status or generation gaps (Tomka, 2010). As regards youth religiosity, the past two decades have witnessed definite elitisation: the proportion of highly qualified young people with religious affiliation has grown considerably (Rosta, 2010). Our millennium study has shown that although denominational school students are much more religious altogether than their age group, they do not exclusively come from families that are traditionally religious or have experienced religious revival (Pusztai, 2006). In fact, two thirds of them have either heterogeneous or non-practising family backgrounds. The two latter groups also made their choice of school in the hope of moral development or placing their trust in the atmosphere rooted in the religious nature of the school (Pusztai, 2006). The 2009 public opinion poll on education showed that denominational schools were appreciated for the personal care and attention students received and the integrated education of disadvantaged and disabled students. Data from 2005 reveal that practising church members are overrepresented among those who have come into contact with denominational schools, but on the whole, the majority identified themselves as religious in their own way. The importance of this observation is that it makes it clear that the circles of people choosing denominational schools and of practising adherent church members do not completely overlap. People choosing denominational schools come from a larger population: from those who have some ties to churches or religious communities and trust their institutions. Who actually becomes a denominational school user from this population depends on personal choice and available opportunity.

The latest statistics available on people having ties to churches and religious communities are from the 2011 census. Their interpretation is an issue of debate, but it is clear that in 2011 54.7% of the entire population, i.e. approximately every second citizen claimed to belong to a religious community or a denomination.² We do not have detailed data on the religious affiliation and social background of those who have chosen religious education³. Yet the fact that about 50% of first and fifth-grade students have enrolled nationwide seems to confirm the above percentage.

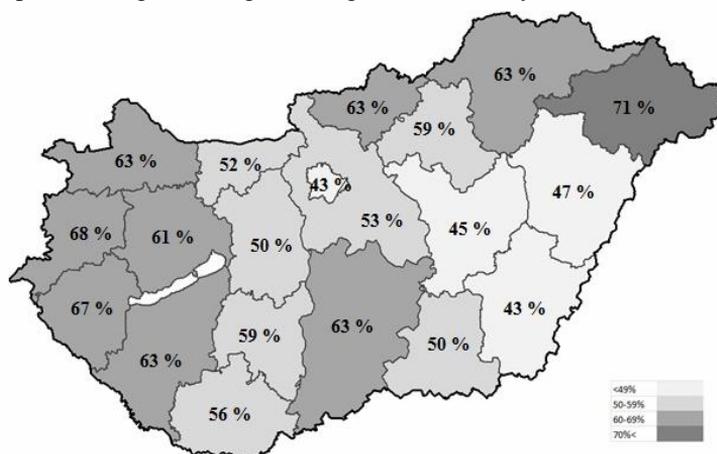
Table 1. People with religious affiliation according to census data

	2001 Your religion or denomination?	2011 Which religious community or denomination do you feel you belong to? ⁴
Gives negative answer	14.5%	18.2
Names the denomination	74.6%	54.7
Refuses to answer	10.8%	27.1
Total	10 198 315	9 937 628

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Censuses of 2001 and 2011

However, a researcher's interest goes beyond general national data. From our point of view it is noteworthy that the percentage of people who have no religious affiliation or refused to answer is the largest in the capital as well as in three south-eastern (mainly protestant) counties, where over half of the population belong to that category. In contrast, in the Catholic and multiconfessional regions of the northern and westernmost parts (and in a southern county) of Hungary the rate of religiously affiliated people approaches or reaches two thirds. That is to say, there are considerable regional differences.

Map 1. People claiming to belong to a religious community or denomination

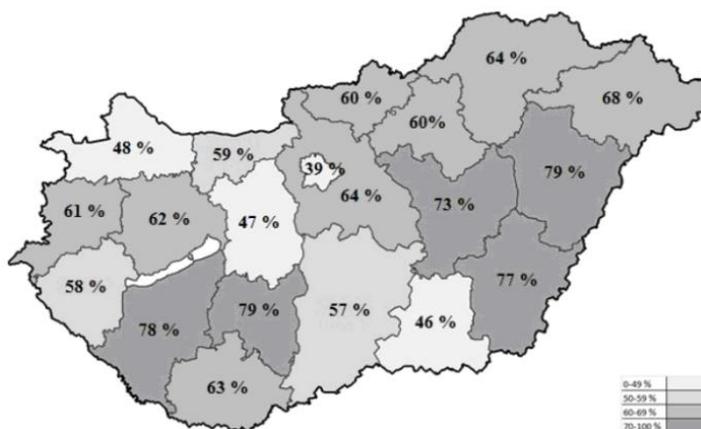


Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Census of 2011

As our millennium survey among denominational schools' students revealed significant regional differences in the function of church schools, it is worth paying attention to the connection between religiosity and the families' education levels. By

the joint analysis of various indicators of religiosity and social status within our sample, we identified six very different types of family milieu (Pusztai, 2004). In our further analyses we pointed out that there are considerable differences in the composition of schools both within and between sectors (Pusztai, 2008). Therefore we find it important to compare the characteristics of potential school users and the geographical patterns of the school network. The analysis of census data on religious affiliation and level of education leads us to the conclusion that in Northwest Hungary and in the capital city the majority of people belonging to religious communities are highly qualified, whereas in other regions the majority of religiously affiliated people have less than secondary education. The lowest level of education among religious people is typical of the three south-eastern counties, where two thirds of them could not complete their secondary education, and over half of them have primary education (8 years) at the most.

Map 2. Percentage of people with less than secondary education among all religious people in the counties



Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Census of 2011

Numerous research has proved that religiosity has a crucial influence on the upbringing of children, choice of school and school career (Pusztai 2007; Pusztai, 2008). With respect to upbringing, young people who belong to religious communities exhibit different characteristics from their peers (Greeley, 1975; Lehrer, 1999; Lenski, 1961). Religious upbringing has a significant impact on young people's behaviour in Hungary. The 2012 Hungarian Youth survey, carried out among a sample of 8000, showed that among young people who have received a religious upbringing the proportion of those who feel they are loved, trust in public institutions, and avoid the company of drug users is higher. However, almost two thirds of young people feel they have not received a religious upbringing. Their number has not grown in recent years, whereas the number of youths brought up in a religious home has decreased, adding to the number of those who refused to answer.

Apparently, not only the fact of religious upbringing but also one's willingness to admit it depends largely on one's regional and social background as it was in the capital city that the highest proportion of respondents refused to answer that question. It was a general tendency that the children of parents with secondary education were the least willing to answer questions about their faith, and among the children of the most highly educated mothers the number of refusers were above average.

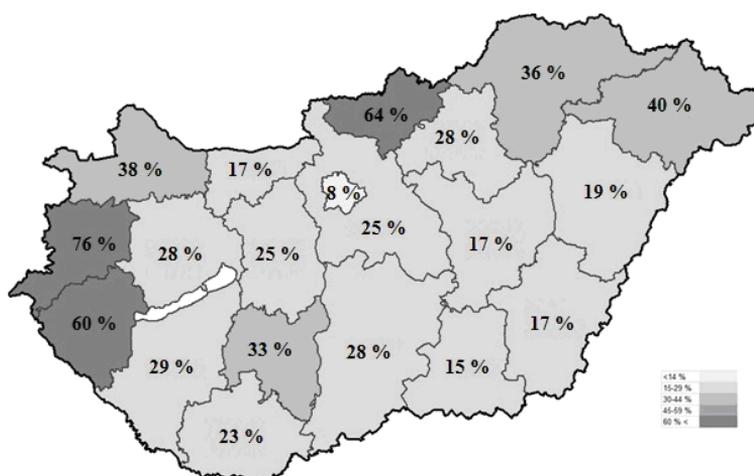
Table 2. Percentages of young people aged 15-29 in 2008 and 2012 with respect to religious upbringing

	2008	2012
Received a religious upbringing	34.7%	26.9%
Did not receive	62.4%	63.1%
Does not know	1.0%	1.9%
Refuses to answer	1.9%	8.1%
N=	8076	8000

Sources: Hungarian Youth, 2012; Youth, 2008⁴

As neither a two-variable nor a multi-variable analysis revealed any correlation between parents' education levels and religious upbringing, we decided to examine regional characteristics. The regional distribution of young people receiving a religious upbringing is identical to the regional variety shown by census data. Refusals to answer also produce a typical spatial pattern. When asked about the ideological nature of their upbringing, almost one fifth (19%) of young people in the capital city do not give a clear answer, which is twice the national average rate. Also, the proportion of those who claim to receive a religious upbringing is the lowest (8%) in the capital city. In the south-eastern counties the corresponding figure is less than one fifth, whereas it is outstandingly high in Western and Northern Hungary.

Map 3. The proportion of young people receiving a religious upbringing by counties



Source: Hungarian Youth 2012

Our millennium study pointed out that the combination of religiosity with other social background factors result in different patterns of composition in the institutional context of denominational schools (Pusztai, 2006). Hence the question is, whether the social status of people identifying themselves as members of religious communities is similar or different from region to region. Our statistics show that in counties where the number of people with religious affiliation was above average, the children of highly qualified parents were more likely to receive a religious upbringing than the children of less qualified parents. In contrast, in counties where non-religious people form the majority of the population, highly qualified parents do not tend to give their children a religious upbringing. Budapest is exceptional in the sense that while the proportion of parents who do not give their children a religious upbringing is outstandingly high there, their composition in terms of education level does not differ from that of parents who bring up their children in a religious way.

We examined how the most powerful indicators of social status influence the distribution of religious upbringing at home by counties. In 2012 parents' education level did not have – even in a multi-variable comparison – a significant impact on the chance of receiving a religious upbringing at home. Women and young people living in villages are significantly more likely to experience a religious upbringing. After adopting counties into our analysis as a variable, we find that the impact of the type of settlement is diminishing, but remains significantly positive. The influence of logistic regression coefficients controlled by other variables reveals that the chances of receiving a religious upbringing are the highest in the western and northern-north-eastern edges of the country. There is a fair chance in the central and south-western region, but not in the capital and the south-eastern region. The question coming up in the education researcher's mind is which regions' denominational schools prefer to ground their institutional network on.

The expansion of the denominational sector of education

At the time of the political transition around 1990 it proved obvious that the totally state-controlled educational system was not only incapable of providing social equality and integration, but it also limited the demands of various religious groups for passing down their own culture (Kozma, 2005). At the millennium it seemed that the religious sector of education had reached its maximum extent, but the middle of the decade saw the beginning of another, although much slighter rise. The trend was all the more surprising as it coincided with a decrease in school-aged population.

We examined the statistics on the number of educational institutions and students in primary schools, grammar and secondary technical schools between 2000 and 2012. In primary schools, where the decrease was the most striking (the population fell by 200,000), the number of denominational students grew by only

one seventh of the above figure, and whereas the number of school-sites fell by 600, the corresponding growth in the denominational sector was a little over one-fifth of that. In contrast, the number of grammar school students grew by 13 thousand, which includes a growth by ten thousand in church schools. While the number of school-sites in general secondary education increased by nearly two hundred, the share of the denominational sector was no more than one-fifth of that. At all levels of education, the denominational sector tends to prefer establishing independent institutions to simply increasing the number of school-sites, because they aim at forming cohesive school communities. Our findings show that an important resource of church schools is a cooperating teaching staff with teachers available also after their teaching hours (Pusztai, 2004, 2007). Parents who choose denominational schools for their children expect, far beyond traditional instruction, an extended role from the teacher, at the heart of which there is direct personal contact with the student (Pusztai, 2007, 2011).

For a long time it seemed that churches were unable to make a significant contribution to vocational education as they had little tradition to rely on in that field. In the 1990s they launched some such institutions with the aim of supporting marginalised or minority groups. It appears now that the denominational sector is ready to have a bigger share of vocational education: while the total number of secondary technical school students has fallen by almost 30 thousand, their number in the denominational sector has risen by five thousand. Our data shows that the denominational sector is also affected by the slight increase in the population of vocational schools (different from secondary technical schools): 1800 out of the total increase of 5000 belong there. Yet their share of school-sites and students is still only 4% and 3% respectively.

It is to be concluded that, in the first place, the denominational sector has been capable of some growth in every school type in spite of the demographic slump. Secondly, where there is a decrease in the state sector, namely in primary and secondary technical education, it is not because of the siphoning effect of the denominational sector. It is also to be noted that the tendency is not due to the educational policy of the legislative period after 2010, as it already started in the middle of the previous decade and there was no dramatically accelerated growth in any of the school types after 2010. The denominational sector in primary education underwent a second, more moderate wave of expansion owing to the drastic impairment of circumstances under which state schools operated mainly in small rural settlements. In the quasi state sector grammar schools siphoned part of the students from secondary technical schools; however, it did not happen in denominational institutions.

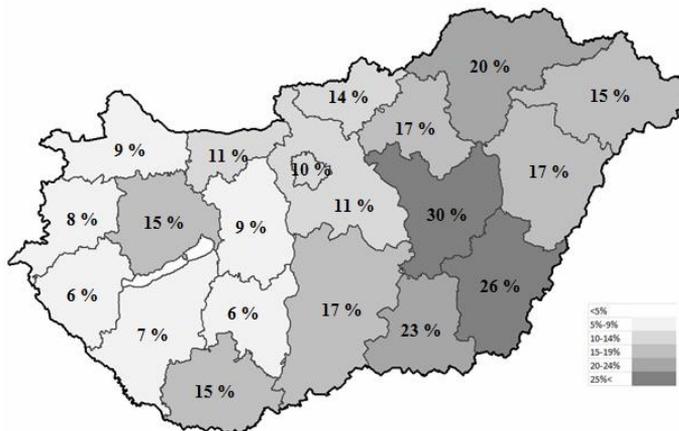
Table 3. The proportion of denominational education in the Hungarian educational system

	primary schools		grammar schools		secondary technical schools	
	students	school-sites	Students	school-sites	students	school-sites
2001/2002	4%	4%	13%	14%	2%	3%
2002/2003	4%	4%	13%	13%	2%	2%
2003/2004	4%	4%	14%	13%	2%	3%
2004/2005	4%	5%	14%	13%	2%	3%
2005/2006	5%	5%	14%	13%	2%	3%
2006/2007	5%	5%	14%	13%	2%	3%
2007/2008	6%	6%	15%	13%	2%	3%
2008/2009	6%	6%	15%	13%	2%	5%
2009/2010	6%	7%	15%	14%	3%	4%
2010/2011	7%	7%	15%	14%	3%	5%
2011/2012	8%	9%	17%	15%	4%	6%

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education 2005-2006, 2010-2011

The regional arrangement of the denominational school network becomes relevant in the light of statistics on religiosity. The question is how the maps depicting the distribution of religiously affiliated people and that of denominational institutions match each other. On a closer look it becomes clear that the map depicting the proportion of denominational primary school sites by counties is the reverse of the map depicting the proportion of religious people. That is to say, the denominational primary school network is the densest in those counties where the proportion of people identifying themselves as religious and young people receiving a religious upbringing is the smallest.

Map 4. Proportion of denominational primary schools (school-sites) to all schools (school-sites) by counties



Source: Hungarian Educational Authority

What is the explanation? From the point of view of parental and student needs, in a society where the rate of religious affiliation is high, it is unlikely that practising

families feel the need to choose an alternative school for their children instead of a state school even with a subculture alien to them. From the point of view of the churches that operate schools, in regions with a low religiosity rate they obviously have a sense of mission. The question is whether its goal is religious renewal or the fulfilment of the social mission of churches, i.e. the support of low-status, helpless people.

As for higher levels of education, not only do some less religious regions (south-eastern counties) have a dense denominational school network, but also the dominantly religious northern and southern counties. The recent takeovers of schools by churches have taken place primarily in three northern (and in a southern) counties. What do they have in common? The joint analysis of the population's religious affiliation and level of education shows that the majority of religious people have a low social status there, so it seems that the new wave of the expansion of denominational institutions is characterised by taking responsibility for low-status students from religious backgrounds.

Systematisation

When church schools opened or reopened in the 1990s, there was no such thing as a church-operated system of education and there were no individual denominational systems, either. Now, in 2013, it is still only in education officials' statistics that a unified system exists. The closer we examine a denominational system, the more we realise its inner segmentation. Some Catholic schools belong to monastic orders, and the individual orders maintain their own independent school networks. Other Catholic schools are maintained and organised into a system by dioceses, others are operated by various social organisations of the church. In the Reformed Church both local congregations and church districts can maintain schools; likewise, in smaller churches schools are not necessarily maintained by the church itself as an institution but by some of its organisational units or foundations. This structural division within denominations allows different educational traditions and a division of tasks. The system of relations within the sector is made more colourful by the different agents declaring their special educational values and concepts (Pusztai, 2004).

While the inner segmentation of maintainers has remained, the process of developing into a system is perceivably under way within individual units of denominational education (Archer, 1979). Examining the proportion of the major denominations' (Catholic and Reformed) educational institutions by levels we find that they do not intend to establish isolated schools but base them on one another. The proportion of kindergartens and primary institutions are over 60%, whereas in less populous denominations primary education constitutes 50% at the most. The systems of Catholic and Reformed educational institutions no longer look like pyramids turned upside down as they did at the millennium, but by 2013 they have

turned into an upright position.

Recent years have seen the consolidation of pedagogical institutes and professional services, which offer schools various services and guidance as well as supervise their work and thereby contribute to the development of a unified system. Besides pedagogical professional services, the leading bodies of major denominations still have educational officials, who work as coordinators in strategic and administrative issues and play an important role in dialogues with other denominations and government offices.

From the very moment of their (re)opening, the institutions have taken great pains to formulate their pedagogical *ars poetica*, to create and make known their individual spirituality. In the early period the task was assumed by the schools themselves and around the millennium it was taken over by the maintainers. The foundation of the institutional and ecclesiastical legislative background of a unified system started as early as in the 1990s. The second half of the 2000s was characterised by assuming social responsibility, facing strengths and weaknesses, looking for take-off points and, most importantly, the intention to build up strategies, especially to make long-term plans. These were all unmistakeable signs of developing into a system, but one could call them unified action only with reservations. The Catholic Church has been traditionally functioning in a centralised way as opposed to protestant churches, where particularism stemming from autonomy has been a recurring problem⁵, but at the same time their locally-based structure is an important resource. However, it often occurs regardless of denomination that the development of institutions in a particular location or region is uncoordinated and a rivalry grows between institutions that might even belong to the same denomination but different maintainers. In this way they are likely to fall behind in the competition with the increasingly centralised and therefore sooner or later more efficient state sector. Consequently, the question of centralised control may come up again in the future⁶.

In the years after the political transformation both professional and lay public opinion stressed the sharp difference between state and denominational schools. Attitudes were marked by distrust, competition and even hostility. At the millennium, a clear interpretative framework for the integration of Hungarian denominational institutions into the system of education was provided by such unquestionable European principles as political and ideological pluralism of the school system, freedom of choice of school, subsidisation based on the number of students, adapting to central curricula and regulation by legislative and professional control. This interpretation, based on ideological pluralism, has by now replaced the earlier, simplifying interpretation based on the theory of conflict, and proved that interdependence is much more characteristic of the relationship between the sectors

of education. It is perceivable that denominational education is not separated from the state sector; moreover, they are in interaction. Recently, state education policy has spectacularly adopted from denominational education good practices and research-proven impact factors such as full-day school, realising the importance of extracurricular activities, voluntary work as part of school programmes, religious education, the reinforcement of teachers' authority and appreciation, supervision and assessment of institutions and teachers and highlighting the importance of moral as well as professional education at schools (Pusztai, 2007, 2011). There are also influences working in the other direction, for example the demand for centralisation discussed above, which is obviously strengthened by the centralisation going on in the non-denominational sector.

It is confirmed by our fieldwork study that in the early 21st century denominational schools in Hungary have a much more secular atmosphere than one would have expected at the time of their reopening two decades ago. Codes of behaviour and dressing have changed, school regulations have become less strict and student governments have been formed. All that is partly due to the fact that half of the Hungarian population claim to be religious in their own way, which means a combination of individual religiosity and a laxer attitude to the norms declared by institutions, and the majority of denominational students come from just such backgrounds. In Catholic schools the number of priests and monastics in the teaching staff is decreasing. Regardless of denomination, there is a growing number of lay experts with experience in the other sector or just loosely connected to the church working as headmasters or in other leading positions. Simultaneously, denominational teachers take part in training courses together with their colleagues from other sectors and perform tasks as educational counsellors, examination board chairs or even officials in state education offices. While in the 1990s it seemed that the student and teacher societies of the two sectors would exist in complete segregation, now there is considerable passage between them and there are relationship networks reaching beyond sectors (Dijkstra, Dronkers & Karsten, 2001). However, there is still fierce competition for students both between and within sectors. What has remained a distinctive feature of denominational schools is their special norms of behaviour, the traces of which can be detected when one compares students entering higher education from different sectors (Pusztai, 2011, 2013).

Turning towards low-status target groups

One of the chief goals of education policy is the levelling of social inequalities. Politicians are often held accountable for its realisation by critical education sociology, but one cannot ignore parents and students as actors capable of autonomous decision-making. It is doubtlessly in the interest of every government to

establish comprehensive schools, which are capable of integrating middle and lower class children. However, the higher the proportion of low-status children in a given region is, the more typically middle class parents want to secure similar-status school networks for their children (Coleman, 1990). Therefore it remains a difficult question how denominational schools can have their share in diminishing social inequalities. In our earlier works we analysed the role of denominational education in compensating for social status and the means at their disposal to do so and pointed out that some denominational schools regard it as their traditional mission (Pusztai, 2004, 2009). We revealed that as their circle of users is formed on the basis of value orientation and religious affiliation, denominational school communities provide relationship networks that bridge social gaps (Pusztai, 2004). This statement also seems to be confirmed by the latest trends in Hungarian denominational education as the fourth element of its transformation is a more determined commitment to low-status social groups.

It is the most spectacular in primary and higher education, but it is present at all levels. The most typical phenomenon at primary level is the takeover of schools by churches, affecting mainly schools functioning with mixed age classes because of a steadily decreasing number of students and year-groups in sparsely populated, disadvantaged settlements stricken by poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. Even where conditions were not so critical, the takeover concerned schools facing economic problems and the threat of closing down. Regarding takeovers, there are noticeable differences between denominations, and even different maintaining bodies within one denomination show differences in behaviour. To our experience, however, it is rather on a regional basis that takeovers produce a special pattern, and regional differences are even more significant than denominational ones. One of the most important motives of the denominations involved in takeovers is obviously a sense of mission and an intention to support the religious socialisation of young people. Yet the strategies towards the goals are not unified at all. According to one concept, a large and strong local religious community and the significant proportion of practising people at a locality decrease the perception of the necessity of takeovers, whereas according to another one they do increase it. Another important strategic element is that institutions of education should be based upon one another vertically and form a full local or regional system instead of the fragmented school network of former times.

At secondary level, schools are thought to have turned towards groups of slightly lower status because of the decreasing number of students or out of a sense of social or religious mission. They are not entirely new interest groups in denominational secondary schools. We already pointed out their existence at the time of the first wave of expansion (Pusztai, 2004). In the second half of the 2000s several denominational school maintainers realised that in disadvantaged rural

regions the large number of lower middle class students, who have an uncertain value system and struggle with academic problems because of their insufficient supply of cultural capital, would not be able to integrate the even more disadvantaged groups. On the contrary, it is to be feared that the integration would happen the other way round. Ever since the Coleman report it has been a well-known dilemma. A traditional means of giving support to students coming from disadvantaged regions are residence halls, the proportion of which within the school system, owing to closing down or merging, has fallen by 30% in the last decade, while none of the denominational maintainers have given up any of their institutions. In consequence, at present every fifth residence hall is maintained by a church, and it enables efficient complementary pedagogical and integration work in cooperation with the school.

Vocational training is another major scene of social integration. As we have discussed above, that field was not among the strengths of denominational education, but statistics unambiguously show some recent growth. Access to work, however, does not depend on technical knowledge alone. Our research identifying the reliable indicators of academic success called our attention to the importance of one's attitude to work, which is a precondition of entering independent adult life and a means of social integration (Pusztai, 2011). Education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes to work. Our earlier research findings showed that in this respect denominational education makes a useful contribution to the achievement of the education system. Denominational students both in secondary and higher education stand out with their positive attitude to work, extracurricular activities, voluntary work, and their plans for starting a career (Pusztai, 2009, 2011, 2013). The profit earned from the social capital of religion-based communities is discipline and ambition. The behaviour attributed to aspiring middle classes as described by Bourdieu (1984) is very close to the educational ideal expected and offered by denominational schools.

In order to provide equal opportunities for everyone, education policy has given high priority to handling the problems of Roma people, and their educational disadvantages have been treated together with their employment and health conditions. Government communication repeatedly underlines that church schools are expected to play a key role in the process. In 2011, 67% of the Roma population claimed to belong to a religious community⁷, a higher rate than the one in the population with a Hungarian identity. We do not have any statistics on the number of Roma students in denominational schools, but according to our fieldwork study it is not easy to attract them into church-operated institutions. The phenomenon is attributed to self-selection rooted in the considerable distance between the norm systems at school and at home (Gereben & Lukács, 2013).

In an earlier paper we treated the distinctive features and responsibilities of

institutions of higher education (Pusztai, 2010). The institutional structure is dominated by colleges⁸, mainly focusing on the training of teachers and experts on social work. In cooperation of the Roman and Greek Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed churches a network of Roma special colleges was established in 2011 (Gereben & Lukács, 2013). The four denominations joined their efforts in order to share their good practices in education. The efficiency of these institutions will only be seen in the long run, but research on student progress has already started. Although Roma special colleges are an absolute novelty, denominational special colleges are not; the oldest ones were founded in the 1990s. According to a survey in 2011⁹, the composition of denominational special college students does not differ in terms of parental social status from that of their non-denominational peers. It is supported by data, however, that they come from larger families. Denominational special colleges have a multidisciplinary profile and prepare students to become responsible intellectuals rather than for an academic career. They also include residence halls, and community activities play a major role in their programmes, adapting to higher education the general experience of denominational education, namely that the stable relationship network in the school community and the interpreting community supporting academic work can make a significant contribution to school career and success both in an academic and a wider sense¹⁰.

Conclusion

The status of denominational institutions in Hungary is determined by the principle of sector neutrality, which had become generally accepted by the millennium. Their work is highly appreciated by society, so the government has attempted to adapt some elements of their pedagogical practice to state-sector education. The essence of churches' educational policy is their mission to support the religious socialisation of the young age group, the development of the vertical structure of denominational institutions and the complementation of local-regional institution networks. The combined regional analysis of indicators of religiosity and social status reveals that half of the Hungarian population is open to various denominational institutions, but a lot of data lead us to the conclusion that the function of denominational schools differs regionally. The last decade has seen a moderate but steady expansion of denominational institutions within the educational system. With the decreasing demographic figures in school-age groups, there has been a slight increase in the denominational sector. However, the loss of students in the state sector is not due to that increase. The process of expansion, which began in the mid-2000s, came to an end with the unification of the state sector. Incipient tendencies towards centralisation are likely to strengthen as the centralised state sector is expected to become an efficient and powerful rival and an attractive employer for teachers, which might counterbalance the advantages of the relative professional

independence denominational teachers have. Meanwhile, the inner conflicts between the several actors of the denominational arena are not likely to die down and the interactions between sectors will probably continue to strengthen. The most important phenomenon is the systematic tendency for denominational institutions to turn towards more disadvantaged and low-status groups of students and students at all levels of education.

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¹The question asked at the poll on education was the following: Is there anybody attending a church run school in your family or circle of acquaintances? The question of the youth survey was the following: Did or do you receive a religious upbringing?"

² There is a lot of discussion about the changes the 2011 data reflect in comparison to the 2001 census data. However, considering the methodological differences between the two surveys i.e. the facts that the wording of the 2011 survey implies closer and currently existing ties to a religious community, the way of questioning has changed and there is an inexplicable increase in the number of people who refused to answer (Rosta, 2013), it becomes obvious that the comparability of the two sets of data is limited. The slight increase in the number of negative answers to the question of belonging to a denomination seems to suggest that no dramatic change has taken place.

³ Religious education is a required optional subject at schools since September 2013 in Hungary.

⁴ The Hungarian Youth Study was organised by Kutatópont Kft. in 2012.

⁵ This was already an issue of debate in the Reformed Church between the two world wars

⁶ It is to be noted that in recent years, besides primary and secondary education, centralisation and rationalisation have begun in higher education as well: faculties have been merged or integrated and training profiles have been revised.

⁷ 69% of the Roma population are Roman Catholic, 18% Reformed, 4% Greek Catholic, 2% belong to the Faith Church.

⁸ Universities make up a small minority of the institutions (5).

⁹ Research on special colleges. Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, 2011.

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