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Possibility, Challenge or Barrier? Tasks of Public Education: The International Outlook and the Hungarian Situation

This paper analyses the international processes which determine the role of public education and its effectiveness both internationally and as regards Hungary. We try to emphasize local characteristics and highlight how globalization processes are suitable for the performance of schools. We also give a description of the paradigm shift in the Hungarian educational system and the role of the inclusive integrated school in the framework of Hungarian integration efforts. Finally, we write about an integration program that was carried out in a town where a de facto segregated school had been closed some decades ago. We focus on how experts could help the integration of Roma children.

In post-modern society with the challenges of globalization, social differences are generated which become more and more a barrier to further social improvement. For the improvement of education, resources should be allocated for fostering equal opportunity (Fukuyama, 2008). Studying the reform processes of the South American countries, Fukuyama claims that they repeat the same two methods that were unsuccessful in the developed countries: unsustainable expansive improvement and competition-orientated quality improvement which increases the inequality of disadvantaged groups and ultimately propagates poverty. He says that social integration and social improvement are unimaginable without more integrated and equitable forms of education.

Coleman and his colleagues emphasized the role of social and human capital counter to the institutional effect of the school claiming that "the school does not matter" (Coleman, et al., 1966; Lannert & Nagy, 2006). After the scepticism of the 1960s and 1970s, researchers have been trying to show the role of the school contrary to contemporary opinions. Coleman's warning is valid today because in public education, local experts and politicians working in education in the European Union have to face that fact that schools are less able to reduce social differences. This is certainly the case in Hungary where the parents' qualifications and where they live play important roles in students' achievement.

Since the Declaration of Madrid in 2002, the declared aim of the European Union is to establish an inclusive society among the Member States. The ambitions

of integration require the development of social processes through active and positive actions. This is shown in constant monitoring studies, the elaboration of suggestions and strategic plans and guarantees of resources (e.g., the European Action Plan 2005–2006; and the European Action Plan guaranteeing equal opportunity and access 2006–2007). Equal opportunity means access to services, education, trainings, and employment without any barriers at the physical, information and moral levels. With accession to the European Union the old-new challenges need to be faced with regards to access to new resources.

The reports referring to Hungary at the end of 2000 have drawn attention to several unfavourable social processes and system-level problems, some of which seem to indicate the anomaly of public education (Halász & Lannert, 2003). Public education is unable to balance negative social processes; it strengthens the increase of social differences and the lack of opportunity for excluded social strata. The lack of qualifications and base competences (reading comprehension, maths, science, problem solving) worsens chances for higher education, lowers motivation, and ultimately reduces chances for employment. The disadvantaged strata need remediation by increasing their competences and competitiveness and reforming public and higher education, despite the less than optimal conditions. It is also important to note that the budget for education was steadily reduced in the 1990s as well as in the next decade. Participants of the system have been forced to compete with each other for additional resources.

Global correlations

With globalization, in addition to the socially valuable effects of diversity (e.g., multiculturalism, national and ethnic values), the problem of social inequality is also occurring more and more extensively (both at national and international levels). Problems with access to material goods and the unequal distribution of social and human capital make the achievement of the declared social objectives harder for more and more people. Families are not able to handle the problems of the ever more unmotivated, frustrated and apathetic members of marginalized groups, while the decline in social responsibility places an increasing burden on individuals. This pressure does not usually spur people to take action, but rather there is a tendency to blame others (institutions, minorities), in this way shaking off the tension and responsibility (often forming a group or nationalistic consciousness), which then creates a very negative social environment for the education system.

All of this has further enhanced the complexity of social systems, making the outcome of changes and alterations more and more unpredictable. Due

to the size, complexity and diversity of systems the vulnerability of individuals has increased, while the effectiveness of traditional regulatory processes has decreased (positive and negative feedbacks), especially in the adaptation of the social, educational and health care systems and related policies. A clear need for change appears. Similar needs generated extensive political reforms following the reconstruction and the realignment of power after World War II.

Social, educational and health care systems respond to the challenges and needs caused by socio-economic processes; they seek to meet the needs and try to control and correct negative processes. In many cases politically motivated continuous reform efforts have not only been unable to achieve the goal of equal opportunity and more equitable distribution, but have worsened the situation (Liberska & Farnicka, 2014). Without going into a deeper political and sociological analyses, we can say that the political governments in most of the countries of the world closely monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system and use it as an important tool to achieve their goals, although their interventions often fail to reach the desired goals.

The contradictions of efficiency

It is not surprising that in the last 20–25 years emphasis has been placed on the measurement of performance in schools. In addition to national competency measurements, the efficiency of educational systems is also monitored through international surveys (TIMS, SIMS, PISA) and various indicators (e.g., OECD indicators, such as the percentage of those leaving school, the number of pupils who successfully took matriculation exams, the number of graduates, the proportion of GDP spent on education, etc.). In addition to useful conclusions, misleading statements and false comparisons are also made on the basis of these data. For example, some studies appraised the educational reforms implemented by the controversial left-wing Blair government in the UK as clearly fruitful, since they achieved an increase in the proportion of those who successfully took the final examination to over 80% by increasing financial support from the budget to education and carrying out massive infrastructure development. On the other hand, the financial support allocated for home schooling reforms, also carried out by the left-wing government, did not result in improvement, and in fact, produced worse PISA results (Héjj, 2008).

In contrast, critics of the English reforms (e.g., Wolf, 2011) blame the former left-wing education policy for wasting too much money on trainings which provided their participants with pointless, socially useless qualifications (e.g., the 1–2 GVS exam). According to these critics, there is no real knowledge behind

the matriculation, and therefore this became more severe due to the reforms and was assigned to independent examination centres. Critics very strongly question the expansion of higher education as well. And, of course, the recent reforms initiated by Glove¹ are widely disputed as well. All of this points out that reforms and the education performance are often contradictory. While political debates obviously do not provide guidance in the evaluation of real results, a significant portion of the legal and financial framework is determined by governments. The possibility of sustainable change as a possible “fourth way” of the development of educational policies was formulated by Hargreaves (2009) – in contrast to the “third way” introduced by Giddens, which later became known as “Blairism,” which does not provide effective long-term perspectives for the development of education.

The McKinsey report of 2007 (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) sought clarification in judging the performance, effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems. Clarification of their relationships is all the more important, since it seems that expenses do not necessarily yield good results. Inequalities in the educational system afflict socially disadvantaged groups more than privileged ones, which increases the already existing social differences (not only in our country). The report examined three groups of educational systems: the ten most productive countries of the PISA test, countries showing very rapid development due to successful reforms of recent years, and developing countries and their characteristics. The results are staggering, as the schools themselves hardly influence the effectiveness of the system which absolutely does not depend or depends only weakly on financial expenditures and the number of teachers and groups (i.e., class size). Primarily, it is the quality of the teachers’ work that affects performance, so the authors of the study have found that teacher training and the improvement of the quality of the teachers’ work are the way to successful reform.

They found that other factors determining success are the proper selection and training of leaders, the setting up of learning communities and opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. In the most effective systems, the children’s performance is determined less by their socio-cultural family background, the teaching practice is more equitable and less selective, but the demands are high on the students. Expectations are complemented by continuous assessments,

1 In 2010, after the change of government in England, Professors A. Wolf and M. Glove prepared a report about vocational training courses for the purpose of describing how the teaching practice could be improved at the request of the Undersecretary for Education. Wolf emphasised that the courses for teenagers are not useful in the case of employment (Wolf, 2011).

and in the case of shortcomings, individual intervention and suggestions are offered as to what is needed for good results and every child's success.

The McKinsey report of 2010 (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) provided further surprises. In this case they placed even more emphasis on the development of the participants and on detection of the effects of reforms in relation to national averages. The strongest correlation for results was found again not with the financial investment, but with the ways of implementing the reforms (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). Financial expenditures were not found to be directly proportional to performance. Slovenia, for instance, produced the same results as the U.S. with (proportionally) half the expenditures, and Jordan reached the same success as Norway with one tenth of the costs.

It is instructive that the less developed countries showed a more intense development (in comparison to the earlier survey) than the developed countries, which may indicate the limits of performance or a promising equalization of the differences. Furthermore, curriculum and education policy had little effect on the successful reform processes, professional leadership was more important. It is also remarkable that the level of education affects the practice of the application of interventions. The more advanced and efficient the system is, the more likely it is that the standardized measurement systems are exchanged for accountability. After objective criteria have been met, efficacy can be inspired through the subjective elements of the system. The reforms introduced have a cumulative effect on the results, i.e., change is not only temporary. Development is more significant for the performance of students from the lower segments than it is in the case of high-performing students.

Openness toward higher qualifications and development correlates with the demands of the market economy and improving competitiveness. Not only is the more humane and balanced functioning of democracies at stake, but also their economic development through the qualification and docility of the workforce. Due to the spread of the use of more complex technologies, the mechanization and the automation of industrial production operations, and the expansion of the service sector, the structure of employment has fundamentally changed. The stake of educational qualification is thus not simply access to better jobs, but employment itself (Halász, 2009). In his cited essay, Gábor Halász looks at the directions of education policies and related educational concepts as well as at research and development from the nano-level of the individual, the student group, the school, training programs, and national curricula up to the national policy (Akker, 2005, cit: Halász, 2009). While important empirical studies are being conducted concerning the neurological and other elements of learning that may point out directions for individual teaching practices, finding possible

pathways and relations of change and development are also important areas of research (Fullan, 2008).

In experimentation and innovations regarding educational practice, developing countries and the professionals seeking solutions to the problems of disadvantaged groups hold a prominent place. How can high-impact educational concepts and practices be introduced with limited resources? HIWEL (Hole-in-the-Wall Education Learning) launched in India, Africa and South America is a thought-provoking example in which only one significant correlation was found, namely that learning in a group is more effective than individual learning. Computers set up in a public place open to everybody spontaneously attract children, as shown in an intensive study. Without any help these children managed to acquire a user's level of computer and internet skills, and later the English language as well through specialized programs. In countries where sufficient numbers of qualified teachers are not available, similar programs can be very helpful. Blended learning uses the tools of self-learning and self-motivation, where e-learning, small group work and elements of traditional teacher support mixed together form a very conscious concept that is based on individual needs.

Individual needs require creative processes and the reinterpretation of a new mutuality and a partnership-based teacher-student relationship (Fullan, 2013). Rigid, inflexible educational concepts with their regulated selection of tools render teachers unable to establish contacts with students and so carry out effective developmental work. Similar to other professions, the professionalism of education has changed in the direction of reduced autonomy and increased control; government oversight and international convergence requires the standardization of expectations and outputs. However, competition aiming at increasing performance results in the marginalization of individual needs.

Thus, the direction of change can be determined in offering fair, high quality education where the combined performance of the teachers and the children demonstrates effectiveness. To this end, the political leadership all around the world have prescribed a number of reforms and changes to the actors in the education system. This expansion, which increases the costs of education, together with the higher-education bubble threatening to burst, endangers the maintenance of the safety system in a number of developed countries. In addition to accessibility, sustainability has also become a central issue (Hargreaves, 2009). Earlier reforms caused the overrating of costs and investments, the dilution of trainings, the devaluation of qualifications, student credit default and unnecessary indebtedness of a wide strata. Since the process first started in America, this phenomenon is the most visible there and has required further interventions, of course, by a middle class dedicated to education.

More effective change, the road to success

The unpredictability of top-down political reforms has introduced additional uncertainty in an already dynamically and unpredictably changing environment, forcing it to adapt to new problems. Thus, a strange situation emerges as the reform process becomes not so much part of the change, but rather poses a kind of complicating factor in the system. This seemingly paradoxical statement is enlightened for us by Fullan, who, in his study related to the development of the educational system, presents a system-level analysis of the process variables and attributes and has compressed the key to successful change into six central factors (Fullan, 2008). His most important starting point is that successful change (adaptation and improvement) can be realized only through the combined effect of inspiration coming both from the top and the bottom (from the system itself), taking into account a number of factors in the form of long-term tailor-made solutions which can be planned only limitedly in advance. So, there are hardly any universal solutions; bad tendencies are not simply bad practices but also the consequences of incentives (interests, needs) coming from the system. An analysis of some of these ill-planned practices in the Polish system of education was made by Farnicka and Liberska (2014).

The ultimate goal unfolds continuously; it can be interpreted as the trip itself rather than its itinerary. This means that at the beginning what is least clear is what the desired final action exactly will be. An implementation process is a widespread method in the practice of introducing new curricula and educational reforms (Fazekas, 2012) which helps raise awareness of the steps and the coordination of the participants' roles, thus contributing to success and long-lasting effects. Fazekas describes the literature of implementation in an organic relation with Fullan's change management. However, in contrast to project-planning and implementing practices, the latter requires more flexible and creative use of objectives and outputs.

Without an inner intent to change and collaborative efforts, instructions from the outside result only in changes at the administrative and bureaucratic levels of the system. Long-term success is unimaginable without internal motivation, a sense of moral values and an every-day effort to change practice. To handle the situation, we have to be able to understand and follow the processes, consciously applying their implementation. In order to achieve this, we need system-level research of education, the analysis of good practices and the development and application of evaluation and self-assessment methods. The modern science of education can do the most in the field of social development. A consistency must be achieved between the universal goals of efficiency, effectiveness and

success and the assessment of local educational practice, which does not imply equivalence.

The objectives are never one-sided. They always occur in pairs of polar opposites – success in both competition and equity, both individualism and community spirit (but not group consciousness), both self-sufficiency and the ethic of cooperation – all of these should characterize learning communities, says Fullan in his popular work (2008). Development should therefore be directed to the organization as a whole. The participants' excellence, their improving cooperation, their developing relationship with the environment, the richness of methodological tools, a continuous self-reflection, self-correction are all the possible options of a school's output regulations. Traditional economic system-management models (which seek to guarantee conditions and outputs) do not work, simply because of the complexity of the systems, their unpredictability and the temporal extent of changes. We have to think of the education system as a living, ever-changing, evolving and adaptive system with actors who are organic, autonomous individuals with high self-regulation, consisting of groups and communities which are in a complex emotional- and interest-based relationship. Science and research can help to clarify certain concepts and define the phenomena which we wish to measure, the purity of the methods that we use for measurements, the values, interests and internal conditions of the participants so that they might better understand themselves and each other.

In regards to the direct environment, creating the security necessary for the processes is impossible without an atmosphere of trust and support along with transparency and accountability. In addition to means of publicity, leadership, plays a key role both in creating the necessary conditions and in representation. One of the keys to change is leadership that besides having the freedom to experiment, keeps the processes on course. It requires the continuous clarification of responsibility and power, dealing with moral dilemmas and the time necessary to spend on collaboration and planning to create such security. Creative work and its effectiveness are self-affirming; they are able to increase satisfaction in pedagogical work, as has been shown in a number of case studies (Fullan, 2008).

Contradictions in local integration practice

We shall try to summarize the wider relationships of the phenomenon so that the reader will be able to understand Hungarian integration practice in both its approach and its difficulties. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and multiply disadvantaged children achieve in the lowest segments of PISA surveys. When they are a majority it weakens the efficiency of education with a reduction

of average and good performance and the lowering of a school's expectations without converting the concept of the culture of the school. In our opinion inefficient integration reforms could play a role in the reduction of achievement seen in the latest PISA surveys.

The research of Eszter Berényi and her colleagues brings attention to the selectivity of the choice of school in public education. They found that parents of higher status (in qualifications, social position) are better able to avoid segregated special schools and enroll their children where there are better educational facilities. This refers to that fact that there is not an equal chance for pupils to get into an integrated school in Hungarian society. Csaba Bánfalvy harshly criticizes this practice in his study-volume (2009). A decision of the Educational Authority in October 2013 absolves those SEN pupils who are certified with certain disabilities from the competence survey, although it allows them to take part in it if they desire. This motivates neither the teachers nor the students to improve their knowledge and removes opportunities for evaluation as the achievements of many pupils belonging to the lower strata do not appear in the survey. Their improvement cannot be followed and they get lost in the system.

Anna Imre and her colleagues (2011) have studied the implementation of educational reform concerning integration, its congruity to the requirements of the new enrolment and further progress with the help of case studies in five schools of three regions of Hungary (Budapest – the capital city, a small city and a village). One of the most important questions was how efficient the top-down initiative is and whether the requirements of the laws are realized in achieving the desired goals and positive changes. Research was conducted to study the implementation process and how it looks in practice. According to documentary analysis, the legal processes appear properly in the local government and school documents. The outcome indicators, the time frame necessary for implementation and ability, however, are typical in only one of the schools in Budapest. There are great differences in teaching practice, mechanical copy and the application of the laws. We are interested in the integration of disadvantaged and SEN children, and in this regard there is no integration in the schools of the capital city in Hungary. It occurs mainly in smaller cities where many students commute between the school and where they live, and where the numbers of SEN and disadvantaged children are proportionally higher than the national average.

Differences can be seen in the conditions of realization, but there are always problems with the conditions, and it is sometimes difficult to interpret them. The realization is said to be problematic and it seems that the presence of the special education teachers, who must travel a lot, is not enough to do the tasks properly and professionally. The preparation of teachers has been left aside or has not been suitable. (Imre, 2011, p. 56)

An institution that assumes integration faces challenges under dual pressure. On the one hand, it faces performance pressure – coming from both the direct and indirect environment of education which emphasizes selection and competition, and on the other, the task of fairness in integration – coming from the direction of policy. Each of these can be improved at the other's expense and correlate with one another. The integration of SEN children involves slow learners who have learning disabilities and demand more attention. Furthermore, multiply disadvantaged pupils are placed in the centre of conflicting interests during practical realization while the scales are tilted in the interest of majority by the advocacy capacity of pupils. In segregated schools the majority of the pupils are problematic and deviant, but in other schools they are excluded from the school community. This imbalance causes the anomaly of integration practice and it leads to deformation of the efficiency of schools and/or the children attending them.

Not only environmental improvements are necessary, the initiation of laws and their successful implementation are as well. This includes a necessary change in teachers' and pupils' attitudes. The Hungarian situation in this case is not so hopeful. In Hungary, secondary school students often have disturbing and unpleasant feelings, even fear, when they meet a disabled or mentally retarded student (Berényi et al., 2005). On the one hand, this comes from lack of knowledge and prior relations, and on the other, they want to conform to the excluding behaviour of society (it is embarrassing to be seen with him/her). There is a stronger revulsion towards students with mental or intellectual disabilities or autism than there is towards physically disabled or sensory challenged students. Students mark differences among their disabled and mentally retarded peers on the basis of self-dependence, self-sufficiency, vulnerability and the extent to which their appearance can make a frightening impression.

The excluding behaviour of Hungarian culture is characterized by attitudes towards integrated students (Dancs & Kinyó, 2012). While there are more positive than negative attitudes noted, international comparisons show the negative attitudes (e.g., attitudes of repulsion) of Hungarians are significantly higher than those noted in other European countries.

Research conducted on a small sample (Fischer, 2009) inquired about parents' and teachers' opinions in connection with the acceptance of disabled children. The parents were more optimistic, especially in the case of vision and hearing impairment. According to the teachers, disabled pupils have the highest acceptance (nearly 100%) and those who are mildly mentally retarded have less acceptance. Both the parents and teachers, who live in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary, harbor prejudices against the mentally retarded pupils.

Several studies deal with attitudes of teachers (e.g., Németh, 2009). According to the results of an unrepresentative study, those interviewed have no preparation for educating integrated SEN children and they have only limited knowledge about it; some of them would like to apply for training in the education of SEN children. Teachers (primary school teachers, mostly in the junior section, and those who have practical experience in the area of integration) in smaller villages are more tolerant towards integration. According to Miles, the most important factors in negative attitudes towards integration are disinterest, ignorance, and the rigid system (Miles, 2000; Németh, 2009). The complex improvement of the school system is necessary for the next step which includes governmental initiation and processes of the teaching staff as well.

Selectivity of the education system and segregation

High-standard education in Hungary is traditionally the most significant instrument of social mobility, and perhaps the only area which allows a degree of control during the processes of social integration. Educational qualification is a legitimate tool to reach social goals, high positions and salaries. If one is persistent, diligent and does everything possible while studying, there is a chance to get a well-paid job. Unfortunately, success is not guaranteed, but learning is still an important instrument to increase one's autonomy.

In the higher grades there are significant differences among schools (especially among secondary schools in Budapest and in other big cities, the so-called 6- and 8-year schools²). Similar differences can be seen in secondary and higher education as well. In Hungary the majority of students who are accepted to the most popular faculties of higher education come from only a few (about 12) popular secondary schools (Polónyi, 2012). On the other hand, students from technical or other secondary schools apply to lower-evaluated institutions, while only an insignificant percentage of students from vocational schools continue their learning in higher education.

2 In Hungary one can complete eight years of primary school and then three years of technical school. Technical school offers a certificate but no matriculation exam (a requirement for application to university or other institutions of higher education). One can also attend a vocational or other secondary school which offers a matriculation exam. Secondary school normally lasts for four years. The "6- and 8-year school" scheme means that one can apply for six years of secondary school after the sixth grade of primary school or for 8 years of secondary school after the fourth grade of primary school, in both cases ultimately taking the matriculation exam.

Selection and exclusion are an element not only in the rather selective secondary schools, but also in a significant number of primary schools (by way of school-readiness investigations). This also applies to students who have learning difficulties, behaviour and integration problems and/or struggle with social deficiencies. This selection or exclusion was realized in the so-called SEN schools. Assigning private learner status meant the possibility to dispose of children who have learning and behaviour problems. Many children who struggle with behaviour and learning problems come from the lower socioeconomic strata. When the quantity of problems and the limitations of opportunities reduce motivation, a kind of impotence can arise in parents, children and teachers as well. So, the lowest one-third of pupils, who have no chance to succeed in learning, perform below the level of their own skills and school requirements. Being average in competency is still good enough in Hungary, and while those students who have an excellent scholastic record try to do their best and the standards in competency indexes grow higher and higher, there are more and more students who do not care to try to achieve even average competence. This is shown in PISA tests which have been studied for more than 20 years with the results published annually in public education journals.

Schools in Hungary not only cannot compensate for social inequalities, but these inequalities are also widened by selectivity. Pupils' learning abilities are strongly determined by the social and cultural capital of their families, just as in other European countries. Many authors write of the necessity of a more reasonable education system with more balanced opportunities to reduce the differences. Evaluation is partly responsible because it confirms the system. This results in the intensification of the production of measured results which after a while tends to support itself (for example, the academic evaluation system with publications and citation indexes). If school is a competition, there will be winners and losers, successful and unsuccessful pupils, especially if they begin school with unequal chances, and there will be those "who need to run a double distance" and work twice as hard. This type of competition cannot work with integration. That is why the interest groups supporting either selectivity or integration do not agree with each other and so the debate on reasonableness versus efficiency continues.

Lack of opportunity and equal opportunity

Losers of the regime change – low-educated and low- or un-employed groups, particularly Roma families and their children and unskilled disabled people – have found themselves in a complicated situation as regards education. Both

groups (the Roma and the disabled) are strongly stigmatized in Hungarian society. Prejudice, fear and communication difficulties have a strong impact on public opinion regarding integration. Surveys at the end of the 1990s showed a correlation between both groups in the area of public education. In segregated SEN schools the Roma population is overrepresented and is steadily increasing contrary to the situation in the rest of Europe (Polónyi, 2001).

In Hungary special education for the disabled traditionally offered a rather high standard of higher education, with teacher training and a rather centralized and segregated institutional network. SEN schools, located in the county seats, provided acceptable trainings and residential colleges for the vision- or hearing-impaired and for physically or mentally disabled children (methodological training centres maintained by the Ministry, The State Institute for the disabled people, The State Institute For The Blind, Rehabilitation Tree Of Life Institute, etc.). SEN schools meant the availability of compulsory schooling for students who struggle with learning and understanding or with mild mental disabilities. There were/are differences in the standard of education which are visible when one takes into account access to the schools. The smaller the community where a disabled child is born, the less the chance that he or she will be able to make necessary improvements and the worse quality services he or she will have access to. This is intensified by the strongly centralized settlement structure of the country, economical and infrastructural differences between the communities and the institutional framework. The majority of those who have learning difficulties and social-cultural disadvantages are Roma students who have been grouped with mentally retarded and multiply disadvantaged children (Pik, 1999; Liskó, 2001; Polónyi, 2001; Bánfalvy, 2001 & 2009; Andor [ed.], 2001; Havasi & Liskó, 2005). Many research studies, methodological surveys, and so-called catch-up educational projects have been published on this topic but these have yielded only few results over the past 15–20 years and the gap has increased.

Segregation, integration

New terminology regarding socio- and cultural disadvantages and disability status has entered the debate regarding the segregation and integration of the disadvantaged, multiply disadvantaged and SEN children who have learning and behavioural difficulties (Karlovit, 2010). Diagnostic categories, services and financing are related to the definitions of these new categories (Csányi, 1999; Réthy, 2002; Papp, 2002).

Bánfalvy criticizes the phenomenon, calling it an “integration tsunami.” In his opinion, besides the legal rules, the schools are interested in the integration of

SEN schools and mentally retarded students to reduce the number of students. The number of SEN children has increased from 18 thousand to 30 thousand in the junior section of primary school. Schools were not prepared (neither in methodology nor practically) because of the lack of teacher training in special education. That is why the education system reduced the level of requirements which were covered by the lack of written evaluation and class repetition. Those students, who were integrated in large numbers and went to class five, learnt the science subjects involved with the help of teachers in junior sections (this was authorized by a ministry regulation and was similar to the earlier special school schedule) (Bánfalvy, 2009). The concerns of parents and school management that the effect of integration has negatively affected the standard of education seem to be legitimate in this regard as is reflected in the negative tendencies of the latest PISA survey.

The necessity of integration in public education should not be questioned, but without changing attitudes and values it is not feasible (Kende, 2004). In local practice children are prepared and chosen to the methods (school readiness). A child has to achieve a level of readiness for education in school. SEN children are special because the educational system with its methods, tools and goals has to comply with them. This is an unusual perspective for schools, especially for the majority of beginner teachers. Integration requires the teachers to respond to a child's individual needs. These competences were traditionally a part of the studies for special education and that is why they are hard for teachers with regular pedagogical training to handle. After all, attempts at integration have proven to be considerably unsuccessful (Csányi, 2008; Csépe, 2008, Németh, 2009). According to the results so far, parents are dissatisfied, teachers are frustrated and the children underachieve.

Several studies have been conducted to measure teachers' attitudes toward integration (Németh, 2009; Réti & Csányi 1997) and they show that teachers who work in secondary schools are the most negatively inclined towards integration. Their most important problems are the extra administration and the extra work that distract their attention from the children. A surprising 38% of the interviewees are uninterested, while half read literature on the topic. Most complain about difficulties with methodology, the lack of equipment and the group dynamics of the students. Most of these problems can be reduced with a positive attitude and more knowledge of methodology, so it is not integration itself but the way that it has been carried out that is the barrier. Twenty percent of the teachers are strongly against the integration of SEN students into non-SEN schools. Apart from this resistance, it is questionable what quality of education can be achieved while there is pressure for integration because of legal regulations.

Inclusive education, integrating schools

Normally integration should be realized in the form of inclusive education (Réthy, 2002), where the school and its all participants as a system are prepared for realizing integration. Chances for this are questionable at a majority of schools because of the resistance mentioned above, however, there are some well-functioning exceptions. According to Réthy, inclusive education requires the realization of some conditions: (1) conscious, planned, high-standard education using open structural forms; (2) engaging the principles of individualization and differentiation; (3) approaching learning difficulties at the individual and differentiated level; (4) a new culture of learning and teaching as opposed to competition-based education; (5) high quality management; (6) professional work; (7) highly qualified teachers; (8) support beyond the school environment; (9) prevention focused on early childhood development; and (10) development focused on quality (Réthy, 2002, p. 195). Apart from the aspects mentioned above, active participation, cooperation, open and high-standard communication are necessary for all those involved in the schools. (Csányi & Perlusz, 2001; Kőpataki, 2003; Kende, 2004; Pető & Nagy, 2004; Bárdossy, 2006).

Experts dealing with these questions recognize the need for a paradigm shift in public education (Majer & Kőpataki, 2011) where research and empirical measurements have key roles in development. In some schools new perspectives of planning have begun with preparing not only the schedule and the pedagogical program but also a plan for the equal opportunity of schools and the use of individual development plans. The realization of the integration aspect assumes system-level changes and there is a great emphasis on the evaluation of specifications. That is why preparing an individual development plan is an ideal research method. Furthermore, the study of integration in practice is also well-suited to the education system for the purpose of analyzing problems, generalizing the characteristic features of the process and reaching conclusions from the experience. It will be useful especially in evaluating integration practices, summarizing the experiences in connection with development plans and self-analyzing the corrections. In relation to inclusive education, it can be useful to prepare descriptive, investigative and analytical evaluations in connection with integration in contrast to the practice of normative evaluation. Self-evaluation is appropriate for monitoring institutional practice, investigating the participants' roles and changes, and can be an effective instrument for preparing individual development plans. A good example is the research conducted by MTA KTI investigating the effectiveness of public education. In this research the integration practice of schools was studied with

the method of individual development plans and the use of complex data collection (MTA KTI, 2010).

A look at one implemented integration program

A school that had operated from 1958 to 2007 was closed without a legal successor by the local government of Nyíregyháza. The reason for this was that the entire school population were Roma pupils. The “Guszev” school can be said to have functioned as a segregated institution in a spontaneously segregated district of the town. This region is inhabited by low-educated, unemployed Roma families who typically have more than two children. The local government of Nyíregyháza tried to integrate the pupils of the school before the change of regime, but due to the resistance of institutions in other regions it was not carried out until 2007. The Foundation of Disadvantaged Children at Szabolcs-Szatmár charged the city government in the county court because of the segregated school seeking equal treatment. The local government of Nyíregyháza had to react to this charge. Thus, the school was closed and the children were moved to another school in the city. Massive resistance arose on both sides. Parents whose children had attended the “Guszev” school protested and finally these children were moved to six other schools where the percentage of gypsy children is much lower than the average (Kerülő, 2008).

During the first school year the schools experienced some major difficulties, with multiple factors preventing integration (on both sides), but at the same time some excellent results emerged. The Child Welfare Centre operated by the local government played a cardinal role and took advantage of the results of school integration implementing the first step of an integration program in 2007–2008. The importance of mediation among the schools increased and for this purpose a school social-work program was implemented. During the initial period, the school social-work program attended to forty pupils in six schools and in every case the social work was linked to family care. However, community intervention is necessary to counteract segregation and to change the norms and the circumstances in the region. The second step of the community program was day care operated during the summer holidays in the 2007–2008 academic year; the so-called “Huszár” camp was awarded by the Hungarian prime minister. This program operated as day care during the summer holidays (similar to programs both in this region and in others). Thirty pupils regularly attended the camp – practically every day – and a further 15 pupils formed a loose emotional attachment. During the drafting of the program a great deal of attention was paid so that the children could spend their free time happily in a safe environment and

at the same time improve their knowledge and skills. The “camp” was a useful, meaningful and sensible way to spend the holiday and may well have been the only option for the children of the community. Daycare in the summer was an excellent opportunity for the children’s personality development and for them to gain experience and learn about community life. Thanks to the innovative social network, the children were able to experience personality development opportunities otherwise not found over the course of the school year. The fun-and-game oriented activities combined with elements of behaviour management (rule following) at the camp are an interesting example of the restorative approach. During the summer program it was noted that some of the children struggled with serious psychological problems. Some of the children with behavioural disorders and problems with emotional attachment required increased attention; it was difficult to draw and hold their attention. Some required immediate positive reinforcement to keep them motivated in completing tasks. It was concluded that the harsh social norms of the community environment to some extent determine the children’s behaviour. Girls were better able to adapt to the school environment than the boys – at least at the day-care centre. The community’s reality – poverty and joblessness, horrible living conditions, hopelessness and domestic violence – forces them to create conflict situations with each other. That is why, without deliberate pedagogical programs, psychological maintenance and social programs, the children’s social integration can result in failure. These children live and grow up in this community. The “*gadjo*” (i.e., non-Roma) world with its possibilities and expectations is a distant reality for them even if they spend their school days there from September to June.

The third step of the Roma integration program involved the organization of the “Diótörő (nutcracker) Club” – a therapy group led by dual group leaders. The Diótörő Club was established because earlier experience had found individual child therapy to be unsuccessful. The results of individual therapy were not useful for the challenges, threats and failures children face at school and often children with behaviour disorders and their families and teachers would become even more frustrated – “Even a psychologist can’t help this child!” Based on previous experience, the goals of the group-works are: exploring the background of the behaviour disorder; searching for its causes and trying to remove them; redirecting non-adaptive behaviour patterns in more positive directions; and resolving anxieties. The Diótörő Club was operated as a closed psychotherapist group every other week. During the course of the therapy, meetings were held more often because of the experienced disadvantages and 16 meetings were held every week. It was necessary to consult with parents and teachers (form-teachers) more often in addition to the monthly work group. On these

occasions actual problems and educational methods were discussed. The children's behaviour disorders appeared within the framework of the group therapy which is considered great progress. They would experience the consequent reactions to their behaviour patterns and they got feedback about their behaviours within the club's empathetic community. Negative feedback did not trigger an automatic backlash, since constant positive reinforcement gave them the possibility to create alternative behaviour methods that would be applicable to a given situation. At the end of the program we studied the results of the Diótörő Club meetings and the parents and teachers were consulted. In general terms, behaviour change was observed in a majority of the children during the group therapy and positive-direction changes were observed in many pupils both directly and indirectly. In general, we noted many successful situations and significant aspects of these can be applied to the schools, so our original plan was realized. The Diótörő Club not only positively affected the integrated pupils but also their schools. As a result of the feedback, the teachers reduced their requirements a little, but their co-operation increased. In the early period of the program (second consultation) the teachers wanted increased help with their school work for the children's improvement and the consultations were used to harmonize the various activities aimed at improvement separated over time and space. The result of the Diótörő Club was that feelings of incompetence and pressure at school were reduced. The teachers started to solve the less serious problems of the integrated children with "a lighter heart" and they were aware that in really serious cases they are not alone. Regarding the parents, it would be necessary to start a parents' group conducted parallel to the children's group therapy to reach the best results, because only they can confirm the norms and provide positive examples for their children.

The local government allocated six hundred thousand forints for the program, and we were allowed to do what was truly important and did not have to conform to a specific budget requirements. This advantage, however, is also a disadvantage. The economic crises and budget cuts in the local government have prevented the long-term maintenance of the program and we have not been able to create more resources to continue the program (Hüse, 2012).

Summary

The solution of social challenges requires a high level of development of the participants' practical skills and abilities and also better academic knowledge. It is important to encourage emotionally and morally mature children and adults in society to both cooperate and take individual responsibility. It sounds utopian

and a bit esoteric, but it is not more utopian than Fullan's expectations of schools in favour of the positive changes. Efficient, effective, successful and satisfied children can study in those schools where the majority of teachers and students support these values. The student communities of integrated schools are ideal places where teachers and pupils can continuously cooperate to improve their opportunities and instruments of their relationship. Efficient communication with disabled children and the experience of its direct quality mean a constant challenge for teachers. Their improvement is the virtue of the positive changes.

Besides quantitative approaches and value research, qualitative analyses comparing the research of practices and systems (interviews, focus groups and case studies) can be very useful in the future. Comparing the experiences of the European regions suffering worse economic conditions is important in order to detect general tendencies and possibilities beyond the national and local cultural differences. The instruments and methods of comparative research can uncover new directions and ideas for school and social integration efforts.

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