

The Urban Centres of Education and Culture

Collective Papers, 1979 – 2009

Katalin R Forray is Professor of Romology (Roma studies) at the University of Pécs, Hungary; *Tamas Kozma* is Emeritus Professor of the Sociology of Education at the University of Debrecen. They began their academic cooperation as members of a research team at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the mid-1970s, becoming recognised experts in the field of educational reform in the 1970s and 1980s. Their major contribution to the educational reform debates has been the concept of the ‘ecology of education’, that is the application of regional research perspectives and data to educational strategies. One of their findings is the ‘urban centres of education and culture’, a concept that has received new impetus in the recent movements of ‘learning cities’ and ‘learning regions’.

The present volume consists of twelve of their co-authored presentations, papers and essays, all focused on the educational renewal of Hungary in a regional context. The papers were written between the late 1970s and the 2000s. Their main idea is the alternative educational strategy that could be developed according to the various needs of the different regions, an educational development which involves not only a top-down strategy but also (and mainly) bottom-up initiatives. It is an idea that has relevance not only with regard to the former regime but also in every bureaucratic formation of educational policy.

Urban Centres of Formal and Non-Formal Learning (1979)

The central structure of the education system was one of the protracted debates in the educational policy arena in Hungary during the 1970s. The HSWP (the Communist Party) was unable to initiate educational reform for both economic and political reasons. The experts received a free hand to debate possible alternatives. Three structures of the system were initiated by the experts. These were: the traditional 8+4 structure (8-year general education + 4-year upper secondary education) supported by the Ministry of Education; the 10+2 GDR structure (10-year general education + 2-year secondary education) initiated by the National Planning Office; and the 9+3 Swedish structure (9-year general education + 3-year comprehensive secondary schooling) suggested by some experts. As part of the debate, this paper argues that no single ‘best system’ is applicable to all regions of Hungary. Different regions with different economies, social and cultural indices may need alternative forms of restructuring the school system. They propose (a) vocational training centres and comprehensive upper secondary schools for developed urban areas; (b) vocational training centres for industrial regions; (c) comprehensive centres of education and culture for regions with traditional town centres; (d) comprehensive general and secondary schools for small village areas; (e) ‘co-ordinated secondary education’ for small town areas; and (f) cultural centres (with embedded educational programmes) for the urban agglomerations.

Educational Planning in Budapest (1982)

Under the impact of the above-mentioned policy debates, the educational authority of Budapest (capital of Hungary) came up with its long-term development plan. As invited experts, the authors proposed the idea which they have worked out in the national debate. The present paper differentiates nine developmental areas (zones and sectors) of the city and

suggests alternative educational developments for them: (a) educational supplies in the 'city centre' could be developed by strengthening the existing institutional network; (b) a two-track system (grammar schools as well as vocational schools for upper secondary students) for the south-eastern sector; (c) many-sided activity programmes for the grammar schools of the north-western sector of Buda together with a new 'urban centre for education and culture'; (d) various vocational training programmes in the existing training schools and institutions for the northern sector of Buda with a new 'urban centre' for the newly constructed residential estate; (e) more educational programmes leading to the higher education for the northern sector of Pest; (f) a new vocational training centre for the north-eastern sector of Pest; (g) Kőbánya (a traditional area of small industry) would need more quality programmes of VAT; (h) two areas of eastern and south-eastern Pest should be supplied with comprehensive (upper) secondary education; while (i) the southern part of Pest (Csepel island) could be supported with an all-embracing development of its institutions and programmes.

Regional Planning of Education (1983)

Regions (districts or 'counties' in Hungarian) were obliged by the National Planning Office to create their own Regional Development Plan. A National Plan for Regional Development served as a framework for the lower level developmental strategies. As researchers and experts, the authors were invited to work out the educational part of the long-term development plan of Komárom County (in northern Hungary). As a long-term objective they envisioned upper secondary schooling for all, and proposed alternative institutional supplies for the four areas of the county.

Social Groups with Educational Interests (1983)

The Hungarian communist regime (the 'Kadar system', named after the Hungarian party leader) gave more room for manoeuvre than did other regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. This paper describes and analyses the possible strategies with which the population in the catchment area of a given school could present its educational interests in the early 1980s in Hungary. It is based on the research results the authors made as experts of the various educational planning activities. Following the paths of analysis of bureaucratic organisations (mostly the literature of the 1970s), schools are shown here as the centres of local bureaucracies against which parents might fight. The usual strategies include: (a) limitation of the bureaucracy (including school bureaucracy) by laws; (b) taking over the school ownership as community representatives or school board members; (c) or moving from one catchment area to another.

Ecology of Education: New Perspectives in Educational Research (1982)

Some theoretical questions arose during the educational planning activities, including: planning as a social and community activity, social indicators, the relationships between policy makers (that is, the Party) and educational experts (planners, as they were called) at the turn of the 1980s. This theoretical paper tries to answer these questions by reviewing the existing literature of the late 1970s and early 1980s. A new branch of educational research is initiated by the authors. 'Educational ecology' (following the term 'social ecology') might include three aspects of regional and spatial research in the field of education: (a) analysis of educational processes, that is the educational processes and the schooling levels of the given community living in the given geographical area; (b) analysis of educational supplies, that is the institutional network of a given area; and (c) analysis of educational policy formation in a

given socio-spatial unit (a community). 'Educational ecology', the authors propose, may complete the vision of the educational reform initiated above. More than that, it may support the grass-root alternatives of the central initiative (the leading idea of reform-minded intellectuals in the latter years of communism in Hungary).

The Educational Reform: A Regional View (1987)

Educational reform was no longer a party priority at the end of the 1980s. Instead, a reform of the entire political system began. The reform was initiated by the central party authorities, while it was blocked by party secretaries at county (district) level. Regional approaches to the reform processes became important in the struggle between the highest and the medium party levels. This paper differentiates among four reform options: (a) the option of growth, (b) the option of change, (c) the option of stagnation, and (d) the option of recentralisation. Each of the options, when decided upon, has its educational connotations. The growth option involves the development of (upper) secondary education with quality VAT. The change option needs market forces integrated into the educational enterprise. The stagnation option means an educational policy which would keep the traditional system and processes. The recentralisation option would prefer conservative educational policies, serving the traditional values of socialist state education. According to the authors, all the reform options are present in the various regions of the country.

Strategies of Educational Reform: New Facts, Old Considerations (1988)

In the struggles between different power levels in the party (mentioned above), the Ministry of Education represented a new power centre. It developed its own strategy of educational reform. The present paper is one of the authors' contributions to this strategy. They apply again their regional views on the educational system. According to their view, the primary institutions should be established as close to families as possible; and they should be re-established where they have been merged into larger school units. Secondary schools (upper level) should be established throughout the country but in various organisational frames, following the developmental needs of the various town areas (individual grammar schools, schools with various educational programmes, grammar schools in cooperation with VAT institutions, comprehensive secondary schools as 'urban centres of education and culture'. Former analysis of the country's higher education network has shown an unequal supply of higher education in the different regions. The south-eastern, south-western and north-eastern regions of the country are supplied with adequate higher education; while the rest of the country is dominated by VAT institutions only. The central region (including Budapest) is oversupplied with higher education; it serves, therefore, the entire country. These regional inequalities of the educational provision have to be equalised during the educational reform.

Regional Processes and the Institutional Networks (1988)

The merging of small village schools into town school centres has a long history in Hungary going back to the 18th century. A new wave of school merging – as a central political decision – took place at the turn of the 1980s. As the political changes came closer, the re-establishing of small village schools became a social movement among small-size communities. This conference paper argues for the reestablishment of small schools, which may have various social and cultural functions (centres of formal and non-formal learning; educational centres integrated with public policy institutions and/or local government offices and the like).

Restructuring the Educational System: Misleading Concepts (1991)

Restructuring of the education system remained a policy priority even after the political changes of 1989/90. The arguments originated in the 1970s, but the actors in the new debates were different – because of the political transition. This paper goes back to the former discussions as it analyses four possible structures of primary and secondary education (8+4, 10+2, 4+8, 6+6). There is not too much room for manoeuvre for the central educational authorities, the authors argue. The spatial networks of the various school types impose limits on experimentation. The 4+4+4 model of the educational system best fits the existing network of cities, towns and villages in Hungary. Villages and the smallest catchment areas can be provided with the 4-year primary education; the 4-year lower secondary institutions can be organised in towns; while the 4-year upper secondary education fits to the city areas. The spatial network of the Hungarian education system not only accords with the geographical network of habitation, but also the existing school network reinforces the existence of the country's network of communities.

Educational Visions and Labour Market Realities (1993)

The private economy and the free labour market have caused dramatic changes in the traditional planning of the educational system and provision. It has also caused an essential shift in the network of habitation. This paper browses through the new realities and suggests solutions to the old planning dilemmas. The two main problems of the educational system are (a) the new connection between general education and VAT; and (b) the massification of higher education. According to the 1990 census data, the young labour force is concentrated in the traditional agricultural areas (south-eastern and north-eastern Hungary as well as the southern areas of the Transdanubian region). The new economy, on the other hand, is growing mostly in the Western areas of the Transdanubian region, while the northern part of Hungary (heavy industry) is stagnating. The authors suggest new academic preparatory schools for the former agricultural areas to prepare young students for quality VAT. They also propose new VAT centres for the new industrial regions.

Regional Changes and Educational Policy Alternatives (2000)

As mentioned above, the political transition caused considerable changes in the regional structure of Hungary. Considerable changes were needed in education policy, which was previously based on regional developments. Four types of developmental areas are distinguished in this paper, each of which has special needs of educational development: (a) Small village areas have young inhabitants with low schooling levels. The existing school networks have to be substantially developed. (b) Traditional medium-size towns (mostly in the Hungarian Plain regions) have populations with relatively high levels of schooling and relatively high percentages of older people. Knowledge intensive economy would be necessary in those areas. (c) Small-size town areas with large vicinities received a new agriculture after the transition; however, the concentration of agriculture has caused serious unemployment. Educational and VAT provisions have to be concentrated in town centres, for which these areas would serve as catchment areas. (d) Areas at the (state) border are mostly traditional ones in a marginalised situation. They fall into the agglomerations of towns and cities on the other side of the border. Cross-border cooperation might help their situation, including their educational provisions.

Non-Traditional Students in Higher Education (2009)

A new expansion of higher education began after the political changes of 1989/90. New social groups appeared in higher education institutions. They have new demands for educational provision and learning activities. Following their earlier view of alternative strategies for various regions, the authors analyse and compare three university campuses (the University of Pécs in south-western Hungary, the University of Debrecen in the north-eastern part and the University of Gödöllő in the central region). They all have non-traditional students (adult learners); however, these groups have different objectives to reach and different means to reach their objectives. (a) The adult learners in Pécs and Debrecen are mostly women aged 30-45 years, while the students at Gödöllő are partly also men, and they belong to much younger age cohorts. (b) The students in Pécs would like to become part of a social environment that is more educated, while the students in Debrecen want to meet the expectations of their families and social groups. The Gödöllő students, on the other hand, have more precise labour market goals (employment). (c) Their learning environments are also different, partly depending on the socio-economic and cultural environment the student groups come from. The students in Gödöllő have a richer environment for information and learning (partly because Budapest is in the vicinity). The students in Pécs have problems with travel (caused by the location of the university). The Debrecen students are partly coming from the neighbouring countries (Romania, Ukraine), and they have problems with entering Hungary. Problems and obstacles would need to be addressed through different educational (teaching and learning) strategies at the various universities.