

SUMMARIUM

BALANCE 2002-2006

This volume of *Educatio* ponders over the 2002 educational policy objectives of the government, its achievements and what has not been fulfilled from it. We try to explore through our studies the state of art in the Hungarian education in 2006, as a result of the educational policy originally envisioned in the governmental program. We endeavour to measure the implementation of the educational policy to its own, stated or sometimes undisclosed objectives, in order to verify what has been done out of what it had been aimed at. By this review we follow the tradition of the previous Balance volumes.

We can assess the efficiency of the governmental educational policy on issues which have proved to be outstandingly important among the educational issues of the time. Such were, for instance, the reform of higher education (the so-called “Bologna process”, the demographic changes, and those related to expansion); the financing of education; questions related to the content of general education; the management of issues regarding minority education (especially pressures for the education of Hungarians abroad); the dilemmas of disadvantaged groups and the efforts to solve these problems (social equality or freedom?); search for connections between education and economy (more exactly between vocational training and the government or the business sector as financers); the requirements imposed by the EU accession and internationalization, their prospects and limitations.

We were asking for, and looking for articles which made judgements neither based on conceptual nor on political considerations, but which expressed an opinion taking the own goals and values of the government into consideration. Our question is not whether the governmental educational policy was right or wrong in Hungary at the turn of the century, but whether it has been effective or not. We tried to collect objective studies – even if not totally value free, but in any case free of political ideology – that outlined the objectives of the government in the proposed domain and displayed the actual results and failures.

This issue does not only resemble previous Balance volumes: it also differs from them. Beside measuring the educational policy of the 2002-2006 governmental cycle, we also intend to evaluate the educational policy of liberalism, as it developed into a governmental program, and then into particular decisions.

More than ever, the educational policy of the period 2004-2006 has been accompanied by liberal principles. During the establishment of the government, the liberal intelligentsia made an effort to enforce their principles even in educational policy. Comparing it to 1994-1998, between 2002-2006 they only had to continue the already initiated liberal policy - adapting it, of course, to the new circumstances (e.g. the EU-accession) – having the support of those who had laid its foundations in the first place.

In addition, we also embark to present how the liberal political principles and ideas could be implemented in education policy in Hungary at the turn of the century. What were the educational, social and political realities that a liberal policy had to face in the domain of education, and what responses did it seek and find to these realities? According to its tradition, the *Educatio* does not take a stand in ideological debates (even if its editors have unambiguous and mostly consonant opinions). Nevertheless, it does not only put the educational policy of the government on the scale, but also the feasibility, headway and failures of the principles upon which the liberal policy of education relied. The message of this volume pointing beyond the actual governmental cycle regards the encounter between liberalism and the realities of schools, policy and politics.

Gábor Halász: Impacts of the European Union on Hungarian general education between 2002-2006

Hungary became full member of the European Union - together with nine other countries - by the middle of the 2006-2006 governmental cycle. The enlargement took place in a period when the role of communities in the educational policy formation went through an intensification without precedent, and along with this, one could witness a positive reevaluation of education inside the European politics. The period between 2002-2006 could be characterized as one opening up the general education for the influences of the European Union, and its impacts became important motivating factors for the dynamics of processes on national level. The educational development programmes of the 2nd National Development Plan, more exactly their acceptance, and the establishment of their financial provisions will indicate how successful Hungary was in coupling up its internal sphere of problems in terms of education with the community goals.

Tamás Kozma: A bottom-view of the accession

The accession to the European Union found the educational policy in the middle of the government mandate. The example of Austria – described in a previous study – demonstrated that the EU accession can only be successful if countries make preparations well in advance, even for decades, if necessary. This stands for educational policy as well. In consequence, Austria managed to preserve the good traditions of its school system. The acceptance and adoption of the credit transfer system framework in Hungary displays a different case. Using the pretext of the accession, the government tries to solve several problems that were not caused by the accession but by previous wrong decisions of its own. Thus the accession to the European Union became one of the legitimating instruments of the governmental educational policy in Hungary.

Andor Ladányi: Four years of higher education policy

The study evaluates the goals of the socialist-liberal government program regarding higher education, and reviews the main steps of the process which lead to in the Bologna process and the reform of higher education. It brings a critical analysis of the preparations of the 2005 Higher Education Act and its regulations which provoked most interest or even debate among those interested; it also analyzes the statistical data that document the transformations emerged in higher education during the four years.

István Polónyi: Promises and facts about financing higher education

The scales of financing higher education by the present government are not counterbalanced. A wage-rise by 50% has been attained, but the guarantee that the basic wage-rise will grow above the inflation did not materialize. There was no raise in 2004. The follow-

up of inflation came only in 2005, with the approach of the elections. The separation of the training and operational normatives was established, however, these did not grow in 2004 and 2005. The new financing model proves that the educational policy clearly yields to the interests of the higher education sphere. Beginning from 2004-2005 the investments in higher education experienced a sudden growth, even though the PPP structure is still immature in several respects and the future burdens of the investments are not yet clear. Only a few faint-hearted plans were initiated in order to build up a system for backing the institutional amortization, but they were not introduced yet.

István Nahalka: Content regulation in general education

The article examines the process of transformations in content regulation and the efforts of the government to decentralize the content regulation, beginning from the introduction of NAT (National Basic Curriculum) in 1994. It discusses the more and more emphasized knowledge-centred education and development of competences, as well as the gradual shift from curriculum regulation to output regulation managed through a common examination system and centralized measurements. The analysis evaluates the educational program packages as untraditional regulatory instruments, in the sense that their application is voluntary and the instruments are malleable and may be redesigned. At the end of the article the author poses problems addressing educational policy (political and professional consensus, the lack of researches and professional debates), which could determine the future and the success of reforms regarding content regulation in times to come.

Péter Szegváry: Self-government and educational management

A new administrative unit with executive powers, but which cannot be found in the traditional territorial administrative arrangements, the micro-region plays an important role in quality educational management and in the 21st century self-governmental management in Hungary. Significant positive steps were taken in the actual governmental cycle for the institutionalization of micro-regions. Nevertheless, we cannot say the management of small regions as a territorial administrative unit of self-government is well-known, popular or even socially accepted. The administrative system of micro-regions hardly finds the necessary political support, given the fact that its implementation needs a two-third majority in the Parliament, meaning that a consensus is necessary among the parties represented in the Parliament.

Miklós Balogh: Normative financing of general education

The fundamental principles of financing general education can be traced back to the Act on Self-governments passed in 1990, the 1993 Act on Public Education, and the sectorial-professional requisites formulated in its 1996 amendment. Following from the Act on Self-governments, the extremely pronounced decentralization is a strong determining factor in the management of public education. In pursuit of the sharing of responsibility and work between the state and the local self-governments it is the imperative duty of self-governments on settlement and county level to ensure the conditions for primary and secondary educational services. A particular characteristic of Hungarian public education is that non self-governmental supporters of educational institutions (churches, NGO-s, economic corporations, private persons) may take a share in the task of providing or financially supporting educational services, and the state – based on the principle of neutrality of sectors – provides normative financial support for them.

Ilona Liskó: Educational prospects of socially disadvantaged pupils

One of the goals of governmental educational policy between 2002-06 has been the amelioration of social disadvantages triggered by the change in the political system and by the development of market economy. The study partly reviews the governmental measures from this cycle aimed at reducing social inequity in schools and abolishing the segregation of the socially disadvantaged pupils. The article also summarizes the problems which need further steps by the government in order to successfully integrate socially disadvantaged pupils into the school system.

Attila Papp Z.: Educational support for Hungarian communities abroad

During the governmental cycle starting from spring 2002, financial supports proceeded according to the previously established mechanisms (boards, councils), yet, a more pronounced intervention of the Hungarian political elites from abroad could be discerned. Unlike in the early the nineties, the parties of the Hungarian communities in several countries (Slovakia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro) received governmental mandates. Thus, letting behind their previously somewhat subordinated roles, they appeared as equal partners from another country and thus they compelled Hungarian governments to leave more room to their interventions in the case of decisions and supports affecting their communities. This “demanding” intensified after the December 5th 2004 referendum: as if the Hungarian government tried to “compensate” for the disappointment caused by the rejection of double citizenship, the prime-minister announced the “5 points of national responsibility” already in January 2005, and in February he created the so-called Homeland Fund by the amendment of the Finances Act. The Homeland Fund supports educational programmes, too.

Text of Tamas Kozma – translated by Ágota Szentannai

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