SUMMARY

TRANSITION AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY, 1989–2009

Tamas Kozma: The Niche – the symbolic history of the 'new-born universities' in Central and Eastern Europe. Three cycles of the Central European political changes of 1989/90 are divided up here on the basis of 32 case studies. The first cycles might be called 'the transition' (between the 1980s/90s decades), and the political actions of the first cycle were led by politicians and intellectuals trained in their politics by the former regime; so their ideas and visions could be connected with so-called 'third-way' philosophies, with a stress on bottom-up activities, community self-governance and seeking a third way between socialism and capitalism.

The first cycle usually started with a symbol: a niche or break in the iron curtain between Eastern and Western Europe – as well as a niche or crack in the walls of dictatorial regimes. (One result of this niche is the chain of new-born universities that were organised from the bottom up and which are fighting for their survival in the era of the 'Bologna process'.)

The second cycle is usually identified with the 'transformation period' (during the 1990s and when the 1990s became the new century). New nations and states had emerged (independent Slovakia, the Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia), and they were fighting for their new national identities via which they could separate themselves from their former masters (present neighbours). Making use of national ideologies, government bureaucracies that had lost their legitimacy during the transition period (since they served in the one-party system) began to get back some influence over local society and civil movements.

The third cycle that can be related to such transformation is that coming with European Union integration (in the first decade of the 2000s); now, instead of fighting in favour of national identities, the new rulers/bureaucracies can be legitimized via the existence of European organisations, while the civil movements pertaining to transition periods beforehand have now become more or less a memory.

Katalin Forray R.: The Roma population and political transition – Policy alternatives in Hungary. The fall of the one-party system in 1989/90 gave way to policy alternatives as well as heated debates influenced by party politics and politicians. From these debates, two alternative visions emerged in relation to the 'Gypsy/Roma problem'.

Alternative A followed the new Hungarian law dealing with national and ethnic minorities, according to which the Gypsy/Roma population is to be seen as just one minority existing among others (German, Romanian, Slovak, Serbian, Croatian etc). Language education and schooling as well as support being given to cultural activities became the core of such a policy, here with a stress on Gypsy/Roma folklore, traditions and movements. *Alternative B* – the 'Gypsy/Roma question' – saw the situation as a socio-economic problem, referring to the fact that large groups of this population live in deep poverty and socio-economic (sometimes even political) backwardness.

The positive outcome of policy Alternative A was an emerging Gypsy/Roma middle class, i.e. as this policy alternative concentrates on emergent socio-cultural groupings in Gypsy/Roma society. The result of policy Alternative B proved to be positive discrimination in favour of the most disadvantaged groups. However, an analysis of recent policy developments has shown that mixing the two alternatives might be dangerous since it may lead to ethnic discrimination in the name of 'human rights'

Péter Tibor Nagy: Parties in educational policy. The pluralist educational field is described generally as the arena of pressure groups, or it could be described with a dualist approach (government-opposition). Looking at state-church relations, this paper seeks to explain the differences among different parliamentary parties for the 1989–1995 time period. Voters for the three parties that formed the government during 1990–1994 trusted the church significantly more than did voters for the three opposition parties – as POL shows; yet all parties have their own face and strategy in this field.

Ivan Bajomi: Is it possible to introduce well-prepared and consensual reforms into the field of education?

The author argues that several educational changes occurring in the last two decades have, as a common feature, the fact that they were not well prepared and were not based on a sufficient degree of social consensus. Later, he briefly presents two factors which may have some influence over the quality of public policy (knowledge and the mental preparedness of politicians and decision-makers, the political culture of public actors). Theoretically, the mobilization of people concerned about decisions may be in favour of avoiding improvisation in the field of public policy, though in post-communist Hungary the mobilization potential of teacher unions and NGOs is weak and concentrates more on material issues. Around the time of the political changes, for a short period a situation favorable to agreements concerning education – i.e. with there being a notable degree of consensus between major political forces – occurred, because the communist party and the opposition agreed that changing laws dealing with education required a majority. However, this ruling ended in 1990 – and later initiatives of teachers and unions to restore it had no success. In the main part of the article the author shows us that many educational consultative bodies have been created at the national level in the last two decades, but because of their way of working they cannot substantially influence the quality of decision-making.

István Polónyi: Political transformations in the financing of education. Principles within the political transformation of education (self-governing, pluralism, and autonomy) are now uncertain. The Minister of Education and the initiators of the Education Green Paper were of the opinion in 2009 that the solution to educational problems could only come when the centralization factor was dealt with. It was believed that the unsettled socio-economic background differences are too great; while current maintainers of the status quo and education financing are unable to compensate for these differences.

The efforts of the educational government failed. It did not ensure that education law would guarantee a high amount of central support. Under successive administrations, self-governance (i.e. local government increasing its own financial contributions) versus centralization (i.e. increases in central contributions) has been the issue. All election promises were directed towards centralization – while each new government went in the other direction. Parties wishing more centralization of educational policy always get the attention as they appear to be more active and stronger – which is important in relation

to the way they govern; then, voters can be won over. And after elections, such promises are still a part of the cabinet's politics – later, however, resources devoted to education will be again reduced; thus is the rhetoric of self-governance.

Financing the education sector's independence is also something causing controversy; and there was a break here in 1998 because of an agreement with the Vatican, which increased inequalities within education.

Since the political transformation, schools located in little settlements have been the big, unsolved problem; for small schools in small settlements have higher operating costs, and these forms of school self-government have very little income. Yet it is not only a financing problem – the social composition of village populations and a lack of teachers are having a significant impact on education and its quality here, which leads to there being weaker students' and weaker learning results. And the uncertainty here is traceable to existing government policy and public education funding instabilities.

Géza Sáska: Transition in two steps – and its consequences. The case of Hungary. As in all East Central European countries, in Hungary too a highly-centralized educational system was prevalent until the 1970s. In contrast, Hungary now has the most decentralized system of education in the region, according to OECD data. Schools and local governments have a great deal of broad autonomy, with minimal central controls.

This drastic change occurred during two, separate political ideologies and administrations in the 1980s. Solidarnost, the Polish anti-Socialist movement, had a major effect on the, then, Hungarian leadership, which followed them in wishes to establish Saturday as a day-off, which started a trend of self-regulation in policies. This reform initiative was warmly welcomed by society because it went against the existing Soviet-type communist system, with its so-called "democratic centralization". It was seen as an attempt to reform socialism more or less in a Western way, and turn it into a Yugoslav Tito-type, self-regulated form of socialism.

This pattern of change affected primary and secondary school levels and also universities; while teachers could vote for their principals and propose individual and collective schooling programs; most importantly, teachers accepted a rule that their school would exert its own controls and have its own rules. The program for establishing a school's professional autonomy included, among other things, elimination of the inspectorate system (as this seemed to have violated teachers' professional autonomy).

Apart from in the case of schools, many plans and good ideas occurred in relation to a self-regulated *local* society, though what this all actually entailed became reality shortly after the collapse of the socialist regime; for 3,176 independent, local self-governments were formed after 1990 – and all of them tried to carefully preserve their sovereignty vis-a-vis central and regional governments.

There are a number of unforeseen consequences arising from this direct democratic-based autonomy – for example, a lack of coordination, a widening gap in the performance of schools between urban and rural areas, the expansion of education and a permanent conflict between two autonomously-elected and politically-legitimized bodies, i.e. local assemblies and professional schools.