

National Report on Development of Education
-Hungary-

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Budapest 2008

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1. The education system facing the challenges of the twenty-first century: an overview

1.1 Major reforms and innovations

The transformation of human work and education in the world of global knowledge economy urges the states of the European Union to reconsider the aims of education. The ability to act and manage open situations is in the focus of common educational policy. To develop this ability has become one of the main objectives of educational policy, which has set off a series of changes in curriculum development, assessment and legislature; and for implementing these changes considerable community resources have become accessible for the new members states, including Hungary. In Hungary financial problems also contributed to the changes in the education policy in the examined period (2005-2007). In Hungary it is the local communities, the *municipalities* that are responsible for the provision of public education.

(a) the organization, structure and management of the education system

In Hungary financial problems also contributed to the changes in the education policy in the examined period (2005-2007). The structure and management of education as well as the organizations constituting the system of education and training were practically the same as they had been five years before. Although the system seemed to be of static nature globally, significant changes could be observed especially at the local levels, close to the world of schools. These changes were caused by a considerable decrease in the number of pupils, which affected most the local governments maintaining schools (see more details on the demographic processes in section 1.2 (a)).

In Hungary it is the local communities, the *municipalities* that are responsible for the provision of public education. However, the *obligation of providing education* does not mean obligation of maintaining educational institutions as well. A settlement has to provide primary school education for all its children of school age, however, it is not obliged to establish and maintain a primary school. Municipalities are free to decide how to complete their duties: by maintaining an educational institution, by forming school associations or by contracting another municipality or school maintainer. Besides, the municipalities have the right to provide for other than primary education as well, e.g. they can maintain a secondary school although according to legislation secondary education has to be provided by county and metropolitan municipalities.

Owing to the settlement structure and the above legislation the majority of public education institutions are maintained by villages and small towns. Because of the high numbers, small sizes and the continuously decreasing school-age population the issue of *settlement-level cooperation* has gained special attention. Schools associations were first encouraged by the education policy in the second half of the 1990s. First the purchase of common school buses was supported, later the settlements forming school associations received additional normative per-capita grants. In addition to various forms of financial support a change in legislation also encourages the *formation of school associations*. The 2006 amendment of the Public Education Act stipulates that as of September 2008 a general school working with fewer than eight grades can only operate as a member school of another 8-grade general

school¹, or a 6-grade secondary school. According to the Act a school cannot be considered as an 8-grade based on its charter of foundation only, it has to be regarded as one working with fewer than 8 grades when classes cannot be organized in grades 7 and 8 for two consecutive years. Classes in grades 7 and 8 can only be taken into consideration if the number of pupils enrolled in them reaches 50 percent of the maximum number of pupils in a class (at present 15 pupils). (This regulation obliges only public schools; schools maintained by churches or foundations, etc. have to comply only with the regulation concerning the maximum number of pupils.)

This regulation has forced several settlements to act, municipalities that did not introduce any changes despite financial incentives and the fact that their educational institutions could not be maintained in an economical way. Although these small, independent institutions cannot be kept unchanged, there are several options for the municipalities. One option is to close the school in the settlement and organize the transportation of the school-age population to other settlements. Another option is to hand over the schools to another maintainer or cooperate with other municipalities and form school associations.

In Hungary public education institutions can be established and maintained – in addition to the state and municipalities – by local, regional and national minority self-governments, registered churches, economic organizations, foundations, associations or private persons. Maintainer's rights can be transferred even in the case of already existing institutions. If a public education institution ceases to be maintained by the state budget (i.e. a church or a foundation takes over the institution) the pupils are still entitled to continue their studies under unchanged conditions according to the Act on public education. In such cases the municipalities usually enter into a public education agreement with the new maintainer. If the provision is obligatory (e.g. pre-school or general school education) the level of the given service should not be lower than before and it should not involve undue burden for the children, pupils or parents concerned. If a municipality enters into a public education agreement with e.g. a foundation, the obligation of provision will still be with the municipality, i.e. it has to ensure provision even in a given school-year when the new maintainer cannot or does not wish to run the institution. Thus the consequences will have to be born by the municipalities that are obliged to provide education. From July 2007 a new regulation has been in force, which stipulates that if a municipality transfers the rights of maintaining a general school operating with fewer than eight grades to a non-state or non-municipality maintainer, the transferring maintainer has to pay an amount corresponding to the additional normative per-capita grant set for churches (at present HUF 145,000/pupil, approx. EUR580) in the given and the subsequent four school-years. As of 1 September 2008 maintainers of public education institutions, economic organizations participating in organising training practices, and institutes of higher education have the right to establish Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres to complete tasks connected to vocational training (Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education and Article 2 (5) of Act LXXVI of 1993 on Vocational Education). According to this regulation a Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centre is not a public education institution; these centres help organising vocational training in a more efficient way.

In the nineties natural catchment area connections led to associations between municipalities. There was no regulation obliging municipalities to establish such associations or specifying that the municipalities of geographic regions or micro-regions should establish them.

¹ In Hungary there are 8-grade general schools. (ISCED 1 and 2, primary and lower secondary education).

Encouraging, however, was the fact that in 1996/97 area development councils were set up in the counties, in which only micro-region associations and no individual settlements could participate. Setting up associations could not be made obligatory without amending the act on local governments but the associations received considerable budget support. In 2004 the amendment of the act on regional development and physical planning identified 168 micro-regions, statistic and development units covering the whole territory of the country. In the same year the act on the multi-functional micro-regional associations of local governments² regulated the *multifunctional micro-region associations of local governments* allowing for public education provision as well. The local governments establishing multi-functional micro-region associations are allowed considerable latitude and freedom to decide what tasks to undertake in the field public education provision.

Local governments can opt for *joint maintenance of institutions*, in which case the multi-functional micro-region association does not exercise any maintainer's right. The institution maintainers are the municipalities participating in the association, which make common decisions concerning maintenance issues. Another option is that *the association itself exercises the maintainer's rights related to the public education institution*, in which case the public education institution no longer functions as an institution maintained by the local government but as an institution maintained by the multi-functional micro-region association. In the framework of a multi-functional micro-region association the member municipalities can complete various tasks by *offering* the other members *services* provided by a public education institution maintained by them. In this way the municipalities concerned share the tasks of service provision and organization and agree on the economic issues. All these possibilities show that the diversity of Hungarian public education will most probably remain but the changes in the direction of size effectiveness will somewhat reduce the existing, incredibly extensive local autonomy.

In the examined period there has not been any reform that would fundamentally change the structure of public education. However, the vertical structure of public education at ISCED 3 level has slightly been modified. Secondary schools may launch *foreign language preparatory grades* in the so-called zero grade³. This opportunity has been welcome by several institutions in secondary education: nearly half of the general secondary schools and more than one third of the vocational secondary schools organize such grades. In 2005 110,000 pupils in nearly 400 schools took part in foreign language preparatory education, while in 2006 this proportion was even higher: 52 percent of secondary schools offered such programmes and the demand considerably exceeded the supply. As of the school-year of 2010/2011 the amendment to the Act on Public Education permits secondary schools to launch foreign language preparatory grades if it is justified by the number of applicants and also allows for inter-institutional cooperation in organizing such programmes (Imre-Györgyi, 2006).

Unlike public education, a comprehensive structural reform has started in higher education as a result of the governmental decree issued at the end of 2005, which launched the so-called Bologna process in Hungary. According to this decree in the school-year 2006/2007 a multi-cycle course structure was introduced in higher education. Graduates completing the first cycle (the so-called basic cycle) receive bachelor's degree entitling them to enter the labour

² Act CVII of 2004

³ Zero grade: for pupils completing grade 8 of general school to improve their foreign language or information technology competences by studying mainly these subjects in this grade.

market or continue their studies in the master's cycle. The introduction of this system had been preceded by serious debates, and a long conciliation process as the new system required total re-structuring of the content of education and training so that graduates completing the bachelor's cycle could receive useful qualifications and that the studies in the first cycle be in accordance with the requirements of the master's cycle. This totally contradicts the former system of education and training, in which initial general (theoretical) training was followed by specialization. The new system would have entailed serious problems for certain types of studies (veterinary medicine, law, architecture, medicine, dentistry, pharmacology, and several arts studies), therefore the institutions offering such programmes were allowed to keep the former system (Imre-Györgyi, 2006).

(b) the aims and purposes of education at each level

If we wanted to characterize the educational policy processes in Hungary between 2005 and 2007, the most appropriate expression to use would be '*a wave of modernization*'. In this period public education was affected by a series of modernizing interventions partly by using the traditional method of legislation and partly by exploiting the possibilities offered by development programmes funded by European and national sources. The development programmes covered areas like using information and communication technologies in education, improving foreign language competences, interventions supporting social integration, developing key competences for life-long learning in primary and secondary education, the content and institutional reform of secondary vocational training and other smaller initiatives (*Reformok az oktatásban...*, 2006; see also chapter 2.4.b)

In the examined period developing competences was the main objective in public education. Programme packages for developing competences were prepared; pupils' performances are now assessed in report forms and pupils "cannot fail" in the first four grades of general school. As a part of this development the function of grades 5 and 6 (the so-called groundwork stage) has changed. Although this change was brought about by the 2003 amendment to the Act on Public Education, however, as it was introduced in the school-year 2004/2005 in an ascending system, the first effects could be seen only in the examined period. This change in the function means that unlike the previous practice when pupils received subject-based education from grade 5, now in 25 to 40 percent of the compulsory teaching time they receive non-subject education. The essence of this change is that a two-year transition period has been introduced from a one-teacher system to a multi-teacher, multi-subject system (Vágó-Vass, 2006). The implementation of this measurement requires significant changes in teaching force management of the institutions, and schools had to prepare for this. In this mixed groundwork stage together with (and instead of some) subject teachers in at least one quarter of the teaching time one or two class teachers work with the pupils and in this way the personal attachment created in the first four grades can be retained. This change was also justified by the results of competence assessment tests proving that Hungarian pupils' competences are of high level in the first four grades, but in the following grades this level is much lower on the average. The aim is to stop this decrease and facilitate the development of key competences by ensuring that the methods of classroom management successful in the lower grades be used for a longer period.

Concerning the aims of various educational levels another important area is the overall transformation of the secondary school-leaving examination; which was completed in the examined period. The new secondary school-leaving examination was introduced in 2005 following a decade-long development work. In 1996 the amendment to the Act on public

education defined the levels, the number of subjects and the compulsory subjects of the examination. The objections to this new exam included “cutting secondary education into two halves”, creating a 2+2-year-system and a possible increase in unequal chances as a consequence of introducing the two-level system. The function of the secondary school-leaving examination has remained unchanged: it entitles those passing it to continue their studies in higher education or enter the labour market.

The new, two-level secondary school-leaving exam was introduced in 2005. The introduction was preceded by two pilot exams (in 2003 and 2004) with the aim of testing tasks, interpreting results and giving feedback (to teachers, candidates, exam developers and in-service teacher training) as well as giving comprehensive information on the new exam to teachers and candidates.

The new secondary school-leaving examination is a standardized exam inasmuch it is based on standardized requirements and is administered according to standardized specifications. At the same time it does not meet the requirement of standardization concerning piloted and calibrated tasks. The new exam, however, is still much more suitable for assessing the effectiveness of the public education system as well as individual schools than the former one. The standard quality criteria are easier to achieve by a central written exam containing the same tasks based on the same requirements for all candidates, and, naturally, by central keys and assessment and rating scales. The ratio of written and oral parts of the exam has changed considerably: e.g. in Hungarian language and literature this ratio used to be 50-50 percent, now it is 66 and 33 percent, respectively, while in history 60 percent of the total score can be achieved in the written exam, while formerly there was only oral exam in this subject.

One of the major objectives of the secondary school-leaving examination reform was to examine the existence of complex skills. For example, in the history exam there are essay tasks that measure the candidates’ skills in interpreting and using resources, using the appropriate terminology, orientation in space and time, exploring the facts shaping events, and presenting historical events and phenomena in a problem-centred way (Horn-Sinka, 2006).

(c) curricular policies, educational content and teaching and learning strategies

From among the international trends characteristic for the content development and regulation of public education it is worth noting some that are especially relevant for Hungary. One of them is the modification of the two-level content regulation (central, national core curricula and local curricula). The input regulation has become *more flexible*, its regulating role has decreased and the output regulation has come to the foreground. The feedback from assessing and evaluating the requirements and pupils’ performances play an ever increasing role in defining the content of education.

The *input content regulation system* determining the practice and quality of teaching in Hungary was a two-level one (central and local), which has become *three-level* with the introduction of educational programme packages. Also the new *output regulation tools*: measurement and assessment requirements exert an increasing influence on input regulation – especially on its second level: optional framework curricula, educational programmes together with the textbooks and other content-bearers connected directly to them or the National Core Curriculum; these tools also influence teachers and classroom work.

With the appearance of a new approach to the quality of education a special challenge has to be faced– the central position of competence-based education (Vágó-Vass, 2006). From the turn of the millennium to the present days the already functioning elements of content regulation have partially been revised. From 2003 there have been regular *National Assessments of Competences*, in 2005 the new, two-level secondary school-leaving examination was introduced with new educational contents. By 2005/06, in the framework of the first National Development Plan (NDP 1), new educational programme packages of six competence areas have been tested in the Regional School and Pre-school Institution Centres (RSPIC) established as part of this programme, and significant content development work has been going on in the framework of the Vocational Training School Development Programme as well. (For more details on competence assessment see chapter 1.2.b.)

The objectives related to the content of education are defined by the National Core Curriculum (NCC) introduced first in 1998. Although the Act on public education renders to revise the national curriculum every three years, it was first revised only in 2003. The new document regulating school work has been in force since 1 September 2004, first in grade 1 and in the subsequent years in higher grades as well in an ascending order. Following the revision the NCC has considerably changed and by not containing detailed requirements it has become a real core curriculum. Important changes included that with the extension of compulsory schooling⁴ the new NCC prescribes the common requirements for 12 grades as opposed to 10 grades formerly. Another important difference is that now competence development is defined as the basic task of education. This also involves that the development of *key competences* serving preparation for lifelong learning is emphasized, e.g. basic competences (listening and reading comprehension, creating a text) and the competence of efficient, individual learning. The National Core Curriculum is a strategic document inasmuch as it provides the conceptual basis for and basic principles of education, defines the main cultural domains and the key development tasks, but it does not directly regulate school work. At the same time it serves as a basis for the work of developers, writers of detailed (framework and local) curricula, programme package developers, exam and assessment requirement developers and textbook authors; it also serves as a reference point in content issues for all stakeholders in education and the general public. The due revision of the new NCC – which is an important quality assurance task of the minister of education – started in late 2006 and ended in April 2007 in accordance with the relevant legislation; it has been proved, however, that a triennial revision is too frequent. (Elszámoltathatóság..., 2007).

The implementation of the competence developing objectives of the National Core Curriculum was facilitated by central developments in six competence areas (text comprehension and creation, mathematical, foreign language, ICT, social, life and environmental, and career building competences). Among the elements of the educational programme packages – pedagogical concept, programme curriculum, module descriptions, content-bearers, teaching aids, support, and services – assessment is of special importance from the aspect of quality, which involves assessment of pupils' performances and evaluation of the educational programme/programme package as well. In this area there have hardly been any initiatives for disseminating the piloted programme packages – with the only exception of RSPICs testing the developed tools. Thus the products of the several-billion-HUF programme are accessible for only 120 institutions of public education and fewer than 10,000 pupils in a school-year (Vágó-Vass, 2006).

⁴ In line with a former amendment of the law for those starting school in the school-year 1997/98 compulsory schooling lasts until the age of 18 as opposed to 16 before the amendment.

There was a strong intention to develop basic skills and key competences even in the nineties when input regulation was in the change. The accepted explanation for not implementing changes in classroom practice was that due to the unchanged examination requirements the tense pace of preparing for the secondary school-leaving and university entrance exams did not make it possible. That is why the development of the new model and detailed requirements of the secondary school-leaving examination meant a great change. The new secondary school-leaving examination was first administered in 2005. Requirements are specified in all subjects for two levels with competence development emphasized first of all at the lower level. These specifications are public and are the same for all types of secondary schools, while the two levels provide for differentiation as well. The new secondary school-leaving exam offers the students and also the secondary schools the possibility to choose. After completing secondary studies the exam can be retaken during two exam sessions a year at the same or the higher level, which facilitates lifelong learning, creates the possibility for corrections necessary for realizing changing career plans (Sinka, 2007).

It is worth noting, however, that the only working element of the examination system regulating and at the same time testing the output of public education is the secondary school-leaving examination. In international comparison it is very rare that all those directly involved in education: pupils, parents, teachers, school maintainers, (ministerial and governmental) stakeholders responsible for managing the system effectively and efficiently, and tax-paying citizens financing public education get feedback on the standard of the education service and the effectiveness of education in nearly all important competence areas only at the end of grade 12. The basic examination planned for the end of grade 10 has not been introduced and its introduction is not on the agenda of education policy; consequently 25 percent of pupils, the most disadvantaged ones, and the weakest performers leave public education without their competences being assessed and without their knowledge being tested at any point of their school career (Elszámoltathatóság ..., 2007).

The third level of content regulation, the *local curricula* existing since 1998 has been reviewed following the revision of the National Core Curriculum. The aim of this review is that schools reconsider their strategies concerning adaptation to the expectations of their environment related to schooling; develop and implement programmes for improvement to raise the level of their pedagogical culture and renew the content and methods of teaching and educating. All this can considerably improve the quality and effectiveness of education at the level of individual schools as well. Although the decision to introduce the National Core Curriculum of 2003 exclusively in the first grades of schools lent tranquillity for the schools that had become tired of permanent content reforms, it does not seem to be fortunate that 4-grade general secondary schools and vocational training schools will only have to revise their local curricula in 2011 the latest (Elszámoltathatóság..., 2007).

Besides curricula and programmes *textbooks* have a significant role in ensuring the effectiveness of education as very often they represent the teaching material and the knowledge to be acquired for both pupils and teachers. That is why ensuring the appropriate quality of textbooks is of exceptional importance. The Act of 2001 on the guidelines regarding the textbook market stipulates that textbook supply is a public task serving the enforcement of the right to education as defined by the Constitution. The minister of education has to publish a list of accredited textbooks. Publishers wishing to have their textbooks on the list have to apply for it. The system of textbook accreditation is regulated by a ministerial decree, the latest amendment of which (2006) defined much stricter criteria for textbook approval. An important element of quality assurance of textbooks could be the

examination of textbooks from the aspect of how teachable and learnable they are. Although the act of 2001 renders this possible, due to the high expenses of such an examination there have been only a few trial procedures. A much more significant problem is that however strict quality assurance is if teachers can use non-approved textbooks as well, it is not forbidden by the law.

(d) the legal framework of education (in particular, new legal provisions)

Along with the inner educational problems of the country the EU membership has also brought about considerable challenges for the educational government in Hungary, especially in the field of adaptation to the community support policy based on Union resources (Balázs-Palotás, 2006). Reconsidering the share of responsibilities and tasks between the levels of governance went together with developing the system of conditions for access to EU funding. This is necessary especially because cooperation-based governance was alien to the traditional model of public administration based on distinct and hierarchical principles of organization. Partnership, however, plays an important part in the support policy of the European Union.

Hungarian education is regulated by the Acts on public education and higher education. Both acts were adopted by the Parliament in 1993 and have been amended several times. In the examined period (2005-2007) there were amendments every year. Below the new legal provisions exerting the greatest influence on the operation of educational system are summarized.

As a consequence of the amendment to the Act on public education (2005) enrolment to general schools have changed. As of 2007 according to the modified regulation schools cannot select freely among pupils as the new legal provision built in strict restrictions in the process of enrolment. If there are more than one general schools at a settlement, the neighbouring catchment areas have to be defined in a way so that the proportion of cumulatively disadvantaged pupils compared to the total of pupils who can be enrolled in the given area should not deviate in more than 25 percent from the neighbouring catchment areas. If the general school, having fulfilled its obligation concerning the enrolment of pupils, can still accept further admission or transition requests, it is obliged to advantage pupils living in the settlement where the school is and can only reject the admission of cumulatively disadvantaged pupils if there is lack of places. When the school has enrolled all the pupils it is obliged to enrol, the decision concerning the remaining applications has to be made by drawing lots. General schools are not allowed to organize entrance exam in order to select pupils (Imre-Györgyi, 2006).

The amendment to the Act on higher education (2005) has brought about a comprehensive structural reform, modernization and has launched the so-called Bologna process in Hungary. This was discussed in detail in Chapter 1.1 (a).

The amendment to the Act on public education in 2006 stipulates maintainers' responsibility related to the assessment of pupils' performances. If according to the results of national assessment and evaluation the educational work at a given school does not meet the minimum criteria set by the law, the maintainer is obliged to call for the head teacher of the school to draw up an action plan. The head teacher is obliged to send this action plan to the maintainer within three months. The action plan becomes valid when approved of by the maintainer. In the action plan the causes of poor performance have to be explored and measures necessary

for eliminating these causes as well as the school improvement programme required for the implementation of these measures have to be defined. If the following national assessment also shows that the school does not meet the minimum requirements, the Educational Authority calls for the maintainer to draw up an action plan within three months. The maintainer is obliged to cooperate with an educational service provider, an expert or a professional organization in drawing up the action plan. The action plan becomes valid when approved of by the Educational Authority.

The essentialness of reducing the serious – and even in international comparison – huge budget deficit experienced in the second half of the first decade of the 21st century required drastic changes that did not leave the system of public education untouched, either. According to the convergence programme including these changes convergence to the average development level of the European Union requires a growth and development oriented economic policy relying on sustainable public and external balances. In order to achieve this not only short-term fiscal measures were/are required for the rapid consolidation of public finances but by re-assessing the role of the state and the operation of the whole public sector the extent of redistribution also had/has to be reduced effectively. In accordance with the convergence programme the already adopted amendment to the Act on public education changed the regulations related to the financing of public education in order to develop an (institutional) organizational framework with an economical service provision in view. Teachers' compulsory instructional hours per week were increased and as of September 2007 the so-called "public education performance indicator"⁵ was introduced, which led to the decrease in the demand for teachers in education, and the obligatory integration as member institution of small schools of fewer than eight grades or with fewer than the required number of pupils allows for developing a more efficient network of institutions. Other powerful factors affecting institutional restructuring are: the development of the framework of regulations and financing preferring associations of local governments and – in vocational training – speeding up the establishment of Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centres by making vocational development funds accessible only in this organizational framework.

(e) objectives and principal characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms

The strategy was developed simultaneously with the formulation of the first concrete texts of the first National Development Plan (NDP 1), and it was not the objectives of public education that set the directions for the public education programmes of NDP 1 but the measures of the simultaneously developed and nearly finished operational programmes were incorporated into the strategy for public education development: the operational programmes were developed first and not the strategy. In 2005-2007 the reforms were primarily financed by EU funds. Joining the European Union has opened up new possibilities for public education in Hungary: access to development funds of the order of magnitude inconceivable before. Adopting the EU approach to development policy, i.e. setting comprehensive, complex objectives represented a huge challenge for educational government as well. It was a significant task and there was little time and experience available for preparing the first national development plan and to start the legislative and institution-restructuring process required for receiving and using the resources.

⁵ The new indicator takes into account the principles and regulations of the Act on public education concerning the formation of classes and groups (average number of pupils, time frame), teachers' compulsory instructional hours per week, and the institution type coefficient expressing the public cost-effectiveness of various institution types (pre-school, general school, secondary school).

The strategy serving as the foundation for the First National Development Plan (NDP 1)⁶ was accepted by the ministerial conference of the Ministry of Education in 2004. This “umbrella strategy” aimed at organizing the conscious social activities of various levels and range aiming at developing public education into an EU-conform logical coherence and to serve as guidelines or all actors participating in planning and development. (Balázs-Palotás, 2006).

The medium term objectives of the strategy related to the NDP 1 emphasized the direct relation to the support policy of the EU (competitiveness, social cohesion, openness –social accountability). The priorities included: laying down the foundations for lifelong learning, reducing inequalities in education, supporting the development of the teaching profession, promoting the use of ICT tools, improving the physical conditions of education, improving the cost-efficiency and management of public education, and improving the quality of education. This followed from the situation analysis: the SWOT analysis showed that the institutional quality improvement systems did not fit a comprehensive quality policy system; the objectives of education were not appropriately related to programme development and quality improvement. In this context the backwardness of mechanisms ensuring the accountability of teachers’ work and the lack of the culture of assessment and evaluation constituted a danger (Elszámoltathatóság ..., 2007).

The development of public education using EU subsidies started in two operational programmes of NDP 1. Content and methodology development was carried out in the framework of Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRDOP), while in the framework of Regional Development Operational Programme (RDOP) institutional infrastructure was improved. In the 3.1 programme of HRDOP programme packages facilitating the development of abilities, skills and competences necessary for lifelong learning were developed. In these programme packages content development and methodological innovation was accompanied by related in-service teacher training and know-how and monitoring development. The 2.1 measure of HRDOP – also through central development – supported ensuring equal chances for disadvantaged pupils as well as integration; separate programmes were developed for Roma pupils and pupils with special educational needs. The logic of this development was similar to the one used in measure 3.1.

In the period of 2007–2013 the implementation of the Lisbon strategy is an organic part of EU structural policy, which also means that educational policy receives considerable support for achieving its objectives. The document entitled “The Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs”⁷ approves of supporting the introduction and implementation of reforms in education and training. In the 2005 report of the “Education and training 2010 Work Programme” of the Lisbon strategy, according to which education has a key role in increasing the global competitiveness of the Union stressed that education and training should have a central place in the national strategies for using structural funds. In the field of public education development the New Hungary Development Plan (NHDP) aims to continue the processes started in NDP 1 and disseminate the developments to the institutional level of the education system. One of the priorities of the New Hungary Development Plan (NHDP), whose main objectives are to increase employment and promote long-term growth, is social renewal to be achieved by reducing the inequalities of life chances and implementing a consciously organized process starting from early childhood and encompassing the whole of the education system. In the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) lifelong learning is a specific aim. The programme states that improving the quality of publication has

⁶ The medium term strategy for public education development, Ministry of Education.

⁷ COM (2005) 0299. Brussels, 5 July 2005.

to go together with a considerable increase of the effectiveness of developing basic and key competences and laying the foundations of learning. A standard, comprehensive system of quality assessment and quality assurance is required and in order to increase the efficiency of public education and ensure its sustainability the concentration of institutions has to be considered a priority and cooperation at the level of micro-regions has to be encouraged.

In the strategy the effectiveness of education is mainly interpreted in the context of pupils performances. Data of PISA assessments and those of the national competence assessments are the standard references in this area. Longer-term effectiveness of education is discussed in the strategy in the context of employability. In this area the greatest dilemma is the low labour market activity (based on the data of ordinary labour market surveys). Remedy for this situation is in the focus of priorities and improving the quality of education, increasing its role in creating opportunities and strengthening its relation with the economy are on the agenda.

A new and great challenge that public education faces in planning the NHDP is that a considerable proportion of EU sources serving the development of public education can be used in a decentralised way and not only through governmental programmes. There are, however, some exceptions. In SROP the educational government plans the concrete tasks of developing a *standard assessment-evaluation, and quality assurance system* in the framework of a central programme. This seems to be necessary as many elements of such a system are missing (e.g. teacher evaluation), and using the existing elements is not widespread (e.g. using the data of national assessment of basic competences by schools). The reason why the separate elements do not constitute a comprehensive quality assessment and quality assurance system is that the quality policy concept that such a system could be based on has not been prepared by the educational government yet. At the same time it is important to stress that the data of the assessment of competences were duly publicised, while data on the evaluation of certain programmes were not appropriately publicised (e.g. HRDOP⁸ 3.1) ‘Matching’ the processes developing since the second half of the 90s seems indispensable. For this the old tools of quality assessment are not adequate, while new ones are still not available.

SROP contributes to the comprehensive objectives of the NHDP, namely those of growth and the increase of employment with measures related to the supply side of labour market and developing human resources. Developments connected to public education are subordinated to the specific objective serving the facilitation of lifelong learning. This objective is achieved along so-called strategic priorities (development areas). In the scope of the priority axis “Providing quality education and ensuring access for all” (3.3) developing quality policy tools appears among the operations supporting the dissemination of competence-based education in order to get an objective picture of the impacts of the changes following the introduction of this new form of education. In fact there is more than that in the plan, which includes implementing the European Union’s quality improvement efforts, building and developing institutional quality assurance systems in harmony with quality assurance systems in higher education, devising the methodology for full sample, adaptive measurement of pupils’ performances suitable for measuring individual competence development and creating a

⁸ HRDOP as part of the National Development Plan (NDP 1) laying the foundations for using the subsidies received from the EU Structural Funds in 2004-2006 was realised in accordance with several EU and national programmes in the cooperation of three ministries – those of Health, Employment and Labour and Education, using subsidies of 750 million euros. For its efficient completion the Managing Authority of HRDOP operating in the Ministry of Employment and Labour was responsible. The outcomes were evaluated by the Monitoring Committee of HRD.

mechanism for feeding assessment results back to the improvement as well as financing of the education system. (Elszámoltathatóság..., 2007).

In the first phase of the NHDP between 2007 and 2010 the ministry plans to develop some elements of quality assessment in the framework of tenders. A part of in-service teacher training programmes are accredited trainings focusing on the school use of national competence-based assessments of pupils' performances.⁹ The plans also include the development of measurement tools making the assessment of several competence areas possible.

Adaptation to the development policy of the European Union has created the opportunity for the educational government to take into consideration the requirement of accountability in the broadest sense of the word. In fact, this was recognised as early as after the first PISA Survey. The new approach to the quality of education – usability of acquired knowledge in practice – was accepted following a wide professional and social discourse. It is also important, however, that the development and long-term effective operation of the new quality assessment tools related to the changed quality concepts should not be connected to the necessary short-term rationalisation of public education because adequate tools for assessing modern quality concepts are not available or there is only a limited availability of them.

In the last few years several strategic documents have been created in the field of education. In May 2005 the government adopted the strategy on vocational training and development¹⁰, in which lifelong learning approach is recognised only in a limited way, meeting the demand of the economy is emphasised as the main objective. The strategy of lifelong learning¹¹ – urged by the European Union – was prepared by the end of 2005. It was also accompanied by an action plan¹², however, the implementation of this was not followed up or only in a fragmented way. In February 2007 the government initiated to set up Round Tables in three subjects – pensions, competitiveness and public education – all of which require long-term thinking. The Education and Chances for Children Round Table was set up as a result of recognising that Hungary is lagging behind its competitors in the world of education, which is proved by national and international surveys. The foundation “proclamation” (thesis paper) says that education is a national case, new development processes have to be launched to solve the problems, and education has to be taken out of the field of force of everyday politics.¹³ According to the diagnosis the most important tasks are: to compensate for the disadvantages in early childhood, to make it possible for all children to reach a desirable level of basic competences and skills, to reform vocational training, to reduce drop-out rates, to renew teacher training, to transform the comprehensive system of pupils' and school assessment and to reconsider the institutional conditions and financing. The Education and Chances for Children Round Table recommends changes in 12 various areas of intervention, published in a Green Book. The Round Table worked for nearly one and a half years and

⁹ According to the plans 65-70% of public education institutions will be reached by competence-based developments. At least one teacher per institution will be trained in in-service teacher training for using the results of the measurements in institutional quality assessment.

¹⁰ Government decree 1057/2005. (31.05.) on the measurements required for the implementation of the government strategy on vocational training and development.

¹¹ Strategy of the Government of the Republic of Hungary on Lifelong Learning (2005): Ministry of Education and Culture, Budapest.

¹² Government decree 2212/2005. (13. 10.) on the implementation of the Government Strategy on Lifelong Learning.

¹³ www.magyarorszagholnap.hu

stated that measures improving the quality of the teaching staff and thus raising the social prestige of the teaching profession should be given priority. Such a measure could be a raise of salaries for young teachers entering the profession. (Lannert, 2008).

1.2 Main policies, achievements and lessons learned

(a) access to education (focusing on actions being taken to reach children, youth and adults that are currently excluded)

In Hungary many young people of school-age drop out of school and there are even more who leave school without any qualification or a qualification that cannot or can hardly be sold on the labour market. Dropping out and low qualification is a result mainly of the disadvantaged social conditions. This disadvantaged and very often cumulatively disadvantaged situation deteriorates as a consequence of no or low school qualification, which compels both the individuals and their families into tragic life situations.

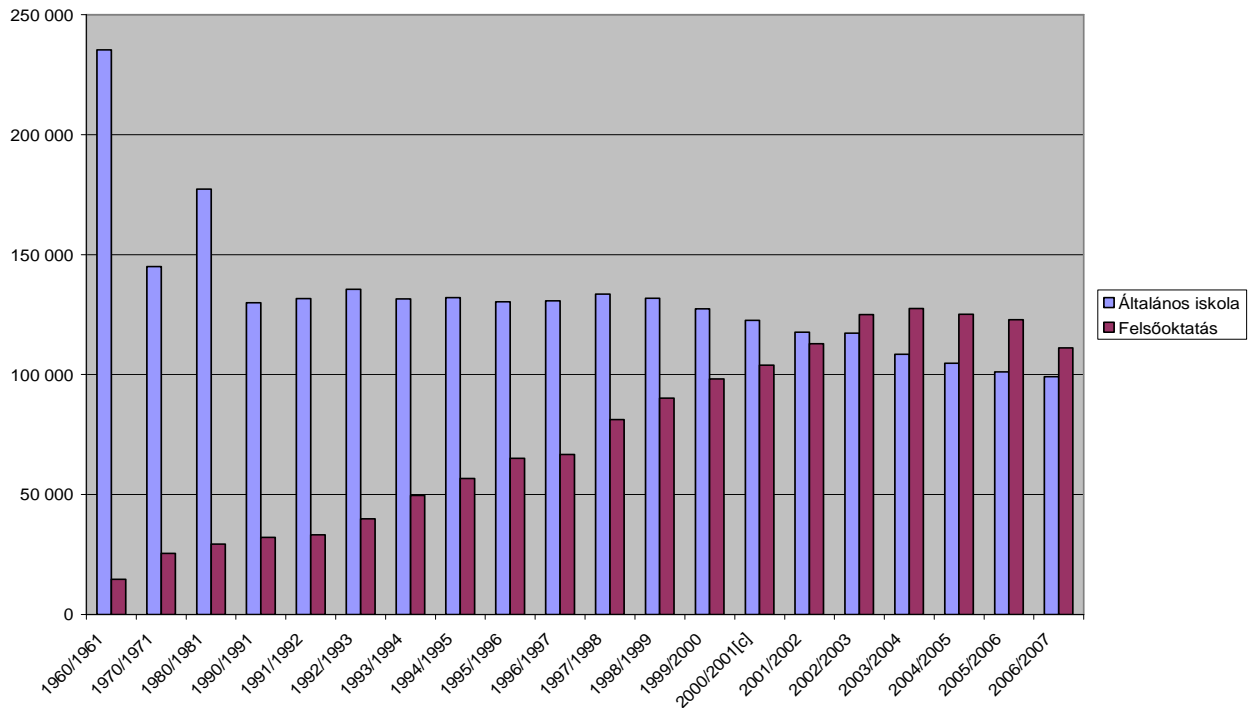
The strategy on lifelong learning (*A Magyar Köztársaság..., 2005a*) published in the autumn of 2005 puts “targeted support for disadvantaged groups on the labour market” on the first place among the seven major strategic trends, while “strengthening the role of education and training in creating opportunities” is the first among the five priorities of the strategy. This latter says that “In order to mitigate social and geographical disparities, it is essential to strengthen the role of education and training systems in and their contribution to combating social exclusion and improving the individual’s life opportunities. To this end, any group that is disadvantaged for social or other reasons should receive marked educational support”.

Equal chances and drawing the disadvantaged social groups into vocational training appear in the latest strategy on vocational training and development (*A Magyar Köztársaság..., 2005b*), though less exposed as in the other two strategies cited above. Among the measurements in the chapter “Quality vocational training for all” preventing early school leaving and helping the drop-outs return to training are mentioned.

In Hungary the large age groups (those who were born between 1974 and 1980) slowly leave higher education-age as well, and the next age groups are less and less numerous. In 2005 the number of 11-16-year olds was around 120,000 but the number of the youngest school-aged children was even smaller. (Jelentés, 2006). The number of the present 0-6 year-olds is smaller than that of school-aged youth, in the coming five years the number of those entering general school will be smaller than 100,000 and further decrease in the number of school-aged population is expected. The rate of decrease and its impact on the whole education system is illustrated by the comparison of first-graders in general schools and first-year students in higher education, where this latter has surpassed the number of the first cohort since 2002. (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1.

First-graders in general schools and first year students in higher education, 1960-2006

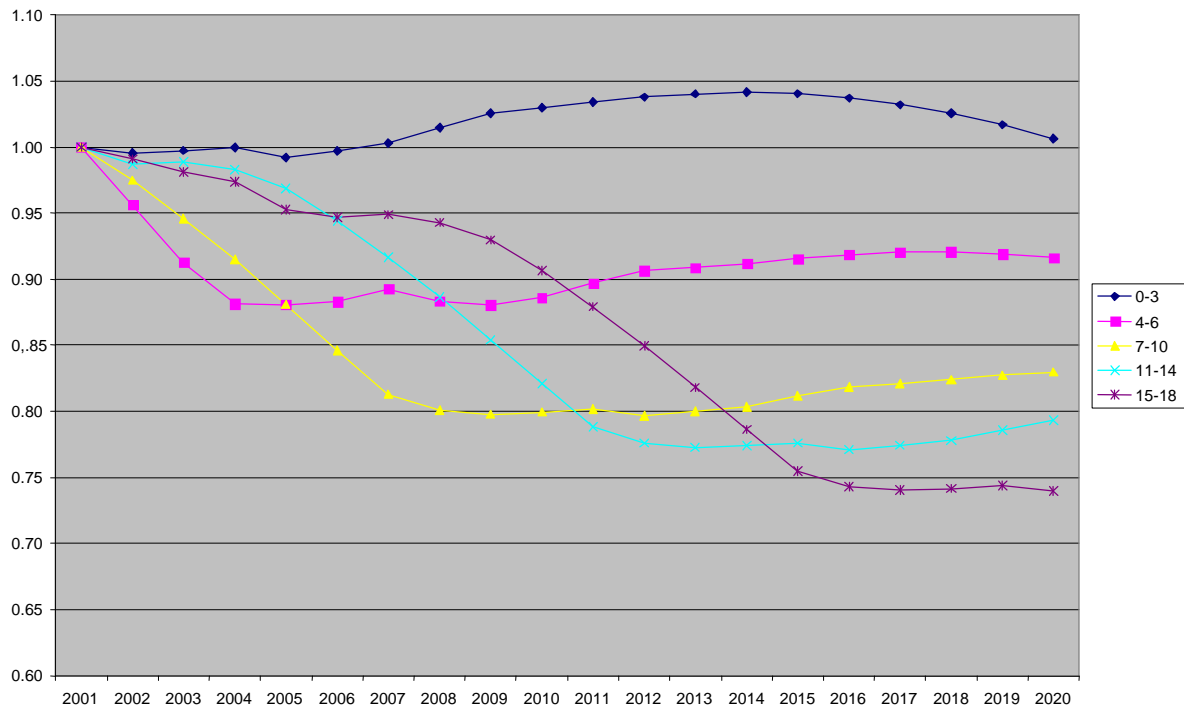


Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education 2006/07, Ministry of Education and Culture

According to the prognosis of the Demographic Research Institute in 2016 the cohort of 18-year olds and younger will be by 15 percent less numerous than the one in 2000. The decrease in the cohort of 3-14-year-olds seems to come to halt, in the future stabilisation and a slight increase is expected. On the other hand, the decrease in the cohort of 15-18-year-olds will continue up to 2016 and compared to the number of 2001 a 25 percentage point decrease is expected. (Figure 2.)

Figure 2.

Expected tendencies in the cohort of 0-18-year-olds by age group, 2001=100



Source: Hablicsek, László, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Demographic Research Institute

Regarding the demographic processes very similar tendencies can be observed in the neighbouring countries as well. According to an OECD prognosis in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland a 30-percent decrease is expected in the cohort of 15-19-year-olds in the coming ten years (*Education at a Glance, 2006*). These processes strongly affect the number of school-aged population, the organization and financing of education.

The reform of the secondary school-leaving examination described in the previous chapter is accompanied by the total transformation of the system, of entering higher education as in addition to closing secondary school studies the new secondary school-leaving examination acts as an entrance examination at the same time. Previously there were two different examinations in Hungary that those wishing to enter higher education had to take. In the case of some subjects the results of the written secondary school-leaving examination could be converted into scores of higher education entrance examinations, but oral examinations had to be taken twice in those subjects as well. These oral tests were often very close in time but the requirements were totally different. With making the secondary school-leaving examination an entrance examination as well, the often-criticised previous system in which universities and colleges did not take into consideration the requirements of the secondary school studies and developed their tests based on their own requirements ceased to exist.

Since the introduction of the new secondary school-leaving examination this new type of examination has been administered 4 times in Hungary and thus it can be judged how much it has met the expectations. The great majority of higher education institutions do not require their candidates to take the higher-level secondary school-leaving examination; this can be

regarded as the major dysfunction. Only some universities of high prestige require their candidates to take the higher-level exam and only in the case of the most popular fields of studies, in all other cases students get extra points if they pass the higher-level examination. However, the requirements of the higher-level exam are much higher and students can easily lose as many points as they get for choosing the higher-level exam. Also, the number of extra points are maximised and they can be acquired by passing a foreign language examination. Students often opt for this latter one as in this way the final score becomes more calculable. As a consequence of the lack of such requirement from the higher education institutions on the one hand and the lack of interestedness of the candidates on the other, the number of those sitting for a higher-level secondary school-leaving examination in any subject is far below the number of those who wish to enter higher education. At present there are only cautious estimates concerning when and to what extent this process will change.

(b) early childhood intervention (as a means to support children's development, transition to primary education and learning)

Similarly to the practice of the majority of European countries, responsibility for early childhood care is shared by two ministries. Institutional day care of 0-3-year-old children, which belongs to the tasks of child welfare and social protection, is supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, while the formal education of 3-6-year-old children, pre-school education, which belongs to public education, is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Nurseries, the institutions providing day care and education for children below 3 years of age do not belong to the Ministry of Education and Culture but to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. This provision is only available for a smaller proportion as at this age the traditional scene of education for children is the family (Imre-Györgyi, 2006). In the past years the number of nursery places has decreased, and today only 8 percent of the given age group can get access to this service as opposed to 15 percent before¹⁴. The existing nurseries show the signs of over-crowdedness and the number of the family day care centres (that could be alternatives even in smaller settlements) grows very slowly. One reason for that could be the lack of tradition, and possibly the low level of per capita financing.

Pre-school education receiving children from the age of three fulfils a double function. On the one hand it provides day care as a task belonging to the scope of social governance, while on the other as part of public education it prepares children for school. The Act on public education stipulates an obligation of pre-school education for the five-year-old children; as of the pre-school-year when the child is five year old they are obliged to spend at least four hours in pre-schools and participate in pre-school education. Hungarian education policy interprets the beginning of school education flexibly, which means that the beginning of compulsory education is defined not exclusively by age but by age and the state of the child's development together. Due to this flexibility children spend various numbers of years at pre-school, and the number of those spending 4 to 5 years there (between the age of 3 and 7 or 8) has increased. Access to pre-school education in Hungary is very favourable even in international comparison, it covers all five-year-old children and about four in every five children attend pre-schools. However, access to pre-school education is very uneven across

¹⁴ Source of the data: website of the Education and Chances for Children Round Table, www.magyarorszaghonlap.hu

the country. In some regions the demand for pre-schools is higher than the places available. In many places children under the age of five, about 5,000 small children are rejected on the pretext of over-crowdedness. In other regions, because of the radically decreasing number of children, groups have to be merged or whole pre-schools have to be closed. While pre-school education could be one of the most important means of ensuring equal opportunities, it is the least accessible for the social groups that would most need it. It is the children of families with many children living in villages and struggling with financial problems, who struggle with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who get access to pre-school education at an early age. This is why extending the care for 4 year-old-children, which is especially important from the aspect of creating equal opportunities, is strongly supported by social policy (Imre-Györgyi, 2006).

(c) learning outcomes, particularly concerning the efforts to improve learning achievement (how well are students performing at various levels?) and reduce inequalities (how have disparities in achievement been reduced?)

In the examined period (between 2005 and 2007) two international and a national educational measurement of pupils' achievement were carried out in Hungary. The common feature of the two international assessments (PISA and PIRLS) and the national one organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture is that the effectiveness of the education of the schools and the country is approached from pupil level. In all these assessments pupils individually do tests measuring various competences, skills and knowledge to which researchers assign class and school level parameters and then analyse the results using complex methodological tools. Methodological precision is exceptionally important in all national assessments: tests have to measure the same irrespective of when and where a given age group takes them. Also, when analysing the data the most up-to-date statistical tools have to be used to calculate or estimate the unavoidable errors.

Each of the international and national surveys identified the same major problems irrespective of the cultural domain examined, although these were most conspicuous in the PISA survey.

1. 20 to 40 percent of Hungarian pupils lack or barely have the fundamental skills necessary for orienting themselves in everyday matters, i.e. their achievements are weakest at level 1 or below in the various grades and cultural domains.
2. PISA test results indicated that the achievement of Hungarian pupils in mathematical literacy and in reading literacy was below the international average, while they scored at around the international average in natural sciences and problem solving.
3. Hungary ranked second after Turkey from among the countries participating in the PISA survey in terms of the size of the difference between the achievements of schools.
4. It is in Hungary that the qualification of parents and other features of family background have the largest impact on a pupil's educational achievement at school.

The degree of the difference between the achievements of schools and within a school (variance) can be a good indicator of equity: smaller differences among schools indicate equal access to good quality education; a more significant difference indicates lack of equity. The degree of difference between the performance of schools and school types is one of the largest in Hungary from among the countries participating in the PISA survey. At 66.0%, the

gap is almost twice as large as the average calculated for PISA countries, moreover, it continued to widen slightly during the three years after the PISA 2000 survey, when it was found to be 60.3%. If today we compare the performance of a randomly selected general secondary school student with that of a randomly selected vocational school student, we will find a significant difference of nearly one and a half spread (146 points). Another important issue is to what extent the difference between schools and within schools can be attributed to the differing family background of pupils. In Hungary, 53.2% of the differences between schools (to the greatest extent internationally) is due to the social differences associated with the composition of pupils and is indicative of an extremely high degree of inequality. Presumably this was the most dramatic message of the PISA Surveys of 2000 and 2003 for the Hungarian educational policy. (*Horn-Sinka, 2006*)

Another, likewise important related message concerned the great impact of the individual family background – qualification, job and economic status of parents – on the achievement of pupils. The qualification and the profession of parents and pupils' access to cultural goods have a larger impact on educational achievement in Hungary than in other OECD countries on average. The analysis of the composite effect of these variables is supported by what is known as the *economic, social and cultural status* index. The impact of this index on pupils' performance is one of the largest in Hungary among the participating countries as it accounts for 27% of the variation of educational achievements, or in other words 27% of the performance of a child depends on the social status of the parents.

The National Assessment of Basic Competences administered first in 2001 covers all pupils of all schools in certain grades. The content concept of the assessments was first formulated in 2006 by the so-called framework of references, which describes the concrete competences that the assessment tests measure. Since its introduction both the National Assessment of Basic Competences and the related educational policy toolbox has considerably widened. On the one hand new grades are involved in the measurement and on the other hand measures supporting accountability and quality are connected to the results of the measurement.

The National Assessment of Basic Competences measures the basic competences (reading literacy, mathematical literacy) of each pupil of a selected grade. It is a survey with three objectives: first, to identify pupils' performance, second, to convey to schools the need to develop new content by new test content and methods of evaluation applied during the assessment, and third to promote the development of the culture of evaluation at institutional level and the related supporting methodology. From a professional aspect this is the reason why the assessment covers all pupils of the given grades. Each school has the opportunity to analyse the achievement of their own pupils based on centrally processed data and to compare their performance to nationwide results and indicators. After analysing their own situations the institutions have to be able to plan and implement their own measures and according to the Amendment to the Act on public education of July 2006 they are obliged to do so.¹⁵ The National Assessment of Basic Competences supports this by providing schools with the (software) technology for processing results. Using the software, teachers can evaluate results locally by task, by individual and by class, can analyse their pupils' performances and compare them to the results of others. In this context it is worth emphasising that the Act on public education stipulates that the results of the assessment are public. At system level the Assessment may have considerable returns for the educational governance as well as it

¹⁵ Act No LXXI of 2006 on the amendment to Act No LXXIX of 1993 on public education, Article 16 (2).

ensures that they get a picture of the achievements of nearly all (general and secondary) schools in Hungary.

The achievement of the objectives of competence assessments can be proved only in the long term by the improvement of performances. However, in short term the feedback from schools provides a base for the institutional level utilization and use of the results of the assessments. In 2004 at the time of the third survey more than three out of four school heads found the National Assessment of Basic Competences useful both from the perspective of the separate subject areas and in terms of establishing a culture of assessment and evaluation. In addition to feedback on usefulness the schools also reported how they used the processed results of the competence assessment that were returned to them. The responses show that schools mostly used the results for curriculum development purposes and more than a third of the schools enriched their teaching with more practice-oriented tasks modelled after the ones used in the assessment.

The 2003 amendment to the Act on public education aimed to reduce early selection and segregation by legislation. In the reference period the use of the previously adopted measures for reducing inequalities could be observed. Early years of education are affected by the rule that in the first three grades can be repeated only if the pupil could not meet the requirements due to absence from school. Weak educational performance cannot be a reason for repeating a grade unless it is accepted and requested by the pupil's parents. The law also stipulates that in the first three years and in the first half of the fourth grade of primary education pupils have to be evaluated in report forms instead of a numerical evaluation. Early selection can be reduced by expanding the first phase of education, in which the most important competences are developed. In the present school structure this first phase serving the development of basic competences is very short, and as a consequence there is not enough time in education for developing key competences. To expand this phase a new regulation was adopted, which does not change the school system but provides opportunity for schools to organise teaching in a way that in 30 to 50 percent of the teaching time competence-developing education is provided as opposed to subject-based teaching. The expansion of pre-school education as well as the modernisation of vocational education are also priority measures aiming at reducing inequalities in education.

In public education the encouragement of regional cooperation was an important means in the former educational policies as well used for solving the quality and efficiency problems of education. The administrative reform progressing at micro-regional level, the 2004 law on multifunctional micro-region associations provide opportunities for continuing this process in larger scale. Public education provision now belongs to the mandatory tasks of multifunctional micro-region associations and this makes the micro-region a prominent scene for the improvement of education, for solving the most acute problems of educational policy, namely those of efficiency and quality. Through multifunctional micro-region associations there are better chances for retaining good quality education at small settlements, increasing the role of public education in social cohesion and improving the quality of educational governance. Multifunctional associations facilitate cooperation among public services belonging to various ministries and social accountability as well.

(d) pre-service teacher training, recruitment, deployment, working conditions and in-service professional development

One of the greatest challenges public education in Hungary faces is how much teachers are prepared for teaching pupils of changing composition in an effective way. National assessments of competences as well as the tasks of PISA surveys present the teachers the concept of knowledge that they have to match. Besides, the shift of the secondary school-leaving examination in the direction of being competence-based as well as several in-service trainings connected to the examination reform also facilitated this process.

The intention of renewing the teaching profession has been present in education policy through subsequent government cycles (at the beginning of the '90s there was even a central programme with this title – Renewing the Teaching Profession. Throughout the '90s there were several educational policy conceptions and measures that aimed at easing the rigidity of the salary and promotion system for teachers, which was based only on the qualification of the teachers and the quantitative increase in their teaching experience and promised rewarding quality work (e.g. the introduction of salary supplement for high quality work in 1996, the plans for developing the conception of life career model for teachers in 2001). However, no coherent and continuous educational policy has been developed in this field and nor has the evaluation and accountability system necessary for implementing such policies. Moreover, there has been no professional discourse on these issues. The law delegated the decision on salary supplement for high quality work and the development of an evaluation system serving as a basis for awarding it to institutional level, and the concept of a life-career model has slowly died out.

In Hungary there have been considerable changes in the fields of pre-service and in-service teacher training with a view to improving teaching. In Hungary there is small fluctuation among teachers, the average age of teachers is increasing, therefore in-service training is reevaluated in the eyes of education policy. When there is no lack of teachers and only few novice teachers can get into schools, the target group is not the entrants but the ones who have real impact on school processes. In the middle of the '90s the structure of in-service training was transformed, and the main elements of the new system are: i) it is mandatory for teachers to participate in in-service training of 120 hours in every seven years, ii) in-service training programmes and training institutions have to be accredited; iii) schools have to draw up a plan for in-service training taking into accounts local needs and lacking teacher competences; iv) the governance has to evaluate in-service training regularly.¹⁶ Up to the present day this (mandatory in-service training) has been the only quality element of the teaching work that has to be accounted for – according to legislation – while little is known about the real impact of in-service training on the quality of school work.

A radical transformation of pre-service teacher training preparing for the grades 7-12 in public education started following the adoption of the Act on higher education¹⁷, and the related ministerial decree in 2006, one of the main elements of which is that teachers will be trained

¹⁶ Government decree 277/1997. (22. 12.) on in-service teacher training, teachers' post-graduate, professional examination and benefits and advantages of teachers participating in in-service training.

¹⁷ Act No CXXXIX of 2005 on higher education.

within the framework of master courses in education. Another important element of the legislation is that output requirements are defined for teacher training, specifying the competences that the freshly trained teachers are expected to have¹⁸, i.e. a system of quality expectations are formulated for the long term. (Elszámoltathatóság ..., 2007).

Between 2004 and 2008 a monumental central programme of renewing the teaching profession “Training teachers and educational experts for the tasks of competence-based education” started in the framework of Measure 3.1.1 of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRDOP) and the related tenders that institutions could directly win. Besides developing educational programmes, teaching aids and devices, measurement systems, regional training centres using and disseminating the results of the development the programme promised to provide opportunity for establishing a network of programme-based in-service training and counselling as well as mentoring, i.e. the renewal of the teaching profession. The results of the programme have not been summarised and evaluated yet.

1.3 The role of the education system in combating poverty as well as other forms of social exclusion and cultural marginalization (how is it envisaged? what kind of contribution is expected? what kind of strategies should be implemented?)

As the educational system is embedded in social-economic life it most probably reflects the social and economic differences of the country as well. The large-scale educational differences have a negative impact on the competitiveness and the cohesion of the society. International studies show that increasing the general level of qualification improves the general quality of community life and reduces public spending, while dropping behind is accompanied with increasing individual and social risks due to the lasting expansion of the schooling period.

In international comparison the education system in Hungary is very selective and the differences between schools are disproportionately great. Data of the OECD PISA Survey show that the performance of Hungarian pupils is not only below the average but the achievements depend very much on the qualification of their parents and the performance differences are not so much between individuals but between schools. The two most important factors that determine pupils’ achievement are: school and family background. Concerning this latter the differences are much greater between schools than between pupils of a given school, which involves the danger that schools may deepen the already existing differences. This also means that any measure that serves the improvement of the educational achievement of weakly performing pupils can increase the effectiveness of education in Hungary.

The medium-term strategy of public education development of the Ministry of Education states that in general Hungarian schools cannot compensate with pedagogical tools for the effects of social disadvantages on academic achievement, and selection and segregation is very high. This high segregation and the great differences between schools do not lead to high level educational performances as it is proved by the data of the PISA surveys.

¹⁸ Government decree 289/2005. (22. 12.) and Ministerial decree 15/2006. (3. 4.) Ministry of Education.

In the education system of Hungary inequalities can be grasped in several dimensions, the most manifest ones are the territorial, programme and ethnic differences. Although gender differences are not considerable at present but they are increasing. The differences in the *territorial dimension* are more perceivable along settlement size than along regions. The differences along the settlement slope are partly the consequences of the composition of the population and partly caused by the differences in the incomes, the opportunities for finding resources and the specific expenditures of the local governments. Nevertheless, the differences in educational achievements cannot be directly related to the differences in the pedagogical work of schools. A study on schools of small settlements proved that the weaker performance of these schools is related not to the weaker performance of these schools in general but to the socio-economic composition of the pupils. The *structural* differences between programme types are observable in secondary education and are mainly due to selection as most pupils are admitted to secondary schools based on the results of entrance examinations organised by schools. The negative impact of the selection between secondary programmes are most manifest in vocational training where the majority of pupils are ones who were not admitted to other schools, who chose this type of education under compulsion, who are not motivated and weakly prepared. In the Hungarian education system the inequality of chances are the strongest in the *ethnic dimension*, related to the education of Roma pupils as segregation, redirecting children to special classes or special schools, admitting pupils only to vocational schools and dropping out of secondary education hit the Roma youth most. *Gender* inequalities are mainly observed in differing learning paths but an increasing difference is seen in the qualification level of the two genders and as a consequence the differences that traditionally hit females now seem to hit males: nowadays it is mostly the females who are more qualified and the males are the ones who have more chances to get into the group of weak performers and those lagging behind.

Several measures have been adopted to help disadvantaged and Roma pupils to achieve a more successful educational career. Among these measures the intention to expand obligatory pre-schooling is the most significant, which is combined with social elements as well (free meals) and with additional capacities ensured for pre-schooling in the regions with very small villages and few pre-schools. This is justified by recognising that pre-schooling can be one of the most useful means for creating equal chances, pre-school care and education is the least available for the social groups that would most benefit from it. Thus the disadvantages that these children accumulate before entering the first grade are so great that it is almost impossible for them to catch up. Despite the fact that in Hungary the number of children is decreasing, in most of the economically and socially disadvantaged regions the reproduction rate of the population is high. There are settlements where pre-school places are scarce or not available, so disadvantaged children can only participate in pre-school education from the age of 5 (which is mandatory at this age). At the same time the indispensable condition of the more effective schooling of this group is several-year pre-school care. In the framework of the NHDP building or expanding pre-schools combined with professional development is planned in micro-regions where justified by demographic indicators.

Due partly to Structural Funds policies aimed at reducing inequalities can calculate with considerably more resources than before 2004. Scholarships may be considered as the most efficient means of support. The Road to Education Scholarship programme started in September 2005 and its three subprojects (Road to the secondary school, Road to the secondary school-leaving examination and Road to vocational training) help gifted but disadvantaged pupils in their school career. An essential and really efficient element of the

programme is mentor help but it is also important that both pupils and their mentors receive scholarships.

In addition to expanding pre-schooling measures aiming at reducing school failure focus on strengthening the first four/six-year stage of education as the most important phase of developing competences, which cannot be made up for later. Stricter regulations concerning repeating grades in the first three grades as well assessment in report forms in the same grades can help balancing the school career of weak performers. Measures aiming at slowing the pace of and deepening competence development in the first phase of school education include redefining the function of grades 5 and 6 in legislation, which will start to have its effects first in 2008. The essence of this change is that a transition period is introduced between the one-teacher and the multi-teacher, multi-subject systems.

The integration of the Roma and special needs pupils is facilitated by the so-called integration per capita funding, which first appeared in the budget of 2003. The condition of receiving this funding is that the pedagogical programme of the school provide for the integration of the pupils concerned, therefore the integration per capita grant can be claimed only by institutions operating according the programme developed for this purpose. In secondary schools the Arany János Programme for Developing Talents of Socially Disadvantaged Students is aimed at ensuring equal chances to some extent, the target group being gifted, socially disadvantaged students living in small settlements. In order to effectively prepare these students for higher education studies teachers of general secondary schools and dormitories participating in the programme and educational experts developed a programme that helps the students overcome their disadvantages. The participating institutions receive double per capita grant for these students and the students receive a scholarship from their local governments.

As the educational system is embedded in social-economic life it most probably reflects the social and economic differences of the country as well. The large-scale educational differences have a negative impact on the competitiveness and the cohesion of the society. International studies show that increasing the general level of qualification improves the general quality of community life and reduces public spending, while dropping behind is accompanied with increasing individual and social risks due to the lasting expansion of the schooling period. (Keller-Mártonfi, 2006)

Hungarian studies show that following the change of the political regime the differences between schools further increased the inequalities of children's chances at entering school education due to selection mechanisms. In the last one and a half decades the selection processes have strengthened and by now the education system has become highly selective, moreover segregating. The increased pressure for selection can be explained by the new demands emerging after the change of the political regime, the low level of social solidarity and such features of the educational system as free choice of schools, considerable school and local autonomy that created opportunities for educational programmes requiring early selection or for selecting pupils with good educational performance at school level.

The tendency that more and more disadvantaged students struggling with various learning, behavioural and social problems are enrolled in programmes in vocational training schools continues. (Imre-Györgyi, 2006) This is partly caused by the fact that general and vocational secondary schools wish to stabilise their situation despite the decreasing numbers of pupils and admit a part of those pupils who would have attended vocational training schools before. A higher number of innovative solutions are needed to resolve the problems of students now

entering vocational training schools and to ensure their successful training, as traditional methods seem to be increasingly failing, evidenced by a significant dropout rate, which endangers the teaching of the remaining students as well as specific costs increase because a part of students have dropped out. Work in vocational training school is made more difficult by lack of material and conditions and by the fact that teachers feel they are left to themselves.

To manage these problems the Ministry of Education launched a three-year (2003-2006) Vocational training school development programme. Its implementation is funded partly from the central budget and partly from the Vocational Training Fund. The programme is made up by several components (A: education in general knowledge domain and pre-vocational strand; B: methodology of vocational training, C: reintegration of disadvantaged students), and includes a set of thematic projects (foreign language teaching, assessment and evaluation in vocational training schools, career guidance, information and communication technology). Objectives of the programme included: reducing the drop-out rate, increasing the number of students completing compulsory schooling, improving entrant skilled workers' preparedness and labour market value by providing them with flexible knowledge. The second phase of the programme was launched at the beginning of 2006, aimed at establishing a system suitable for harmonising the needs of the economy and the vocational training institutions in a flexible manner.

2. Inclusive education: The way of the future

Knowledge about inclusion has also changed and has been enriched in the past years – intentions to change are present everywhere. While on the one hand teachers are engaged in anti-integration and for-integration discussions, on the other hand various models of creating equal chances and social integration for pupils with disabilities have been developed in school practice.

2.1 Approaches, scope and content

a./How is inclusive education conceptualized? What is the current vision of inclusive education in your country?

Currently the general approach to inclusion involves that pupils with special educational needs are integrated in the mainstream educational institutions, i.e. the education of special needs pupils has to be expanded in a way that pupils could receive it in mainstream schools, provided their parents request it and special institutional care is not essential for their development.

Among the approaches to public education issues a new approach to educational services – inclusive education – has received increased attention and is spreading in Hungary as well. Initially, this meant only the ways and possibilities of educating pupils with various disabilities – in the present nomenclature special education need pupils – together with mainstream pupils. Today the term inclusion is very often used together with an adjective, e.g. “inclusion of special needs pupils”, “inclusion of the disadvantaged” or “inclusion of the Roma” signifying classification, which is in *slight* contradiction with one of the features of inclusive education: dissolving classification.

This also shows that in Hungary inclusive education is not a static phenomenon but has developed in various forms. Conceptions, policies and practices related to inclusive education have changed and are changing – therefore the practice of inclusion has to be discussed in the context of current educational reforms.

Knowledge about inclusion has also changed and has been enriched in the past years – intentions to change are present everywhere. While on the one hand teachers are engaged in anti-integration and for-integration discussions, on the other hand various models of creating equal chances and social integration for pupils with disabilities have been developed in school practice.

In 2001 *integrated education, integrating schooling* denoted an educational trend, and “meant the education of children hindered in some way (e.g. handicap, ability disorder, social disadvantages) together, close to their homes”. (Csányi 2001.) This trend is the opposite of segregated education, which separates certain groups of children in special educational institutions.

The accepted definitions of segregating and integrating education are:

- *special education segregation* – pre-school, primary and secondary education of special needs children in institutions established for this express purpose, occasionally in residential ones
- *special education integration* - education and training of special education needs children, pupils and students in mainstream pre-schools, primary and secondary educational institutions and higher education institutions under appropriate conditions.

Currently the general approach to inclusion involves that pupils with special educational needs are integrated in the mainstream educational institutions, i.e. the education of special needs pupils has to be expanded in a way that pupils could receive it in mainstream schools, provided their parents request it and special institutional care is not essential for their development. Pedagogical practice distinguishes between *integration and inclusion*. In *integration* special education needs children receive education in mainstream educational institutions. Individuals are placed into the existing structures of the school. The special education needs (SEN) children are expected to achieve academic performances similar to their non-SEN peers, they are expected to be able to adapt to the required achievement level. *Inclusion* seeks answers to the question: ‘How can it be ensured that all (gifted and SEN) pupils could cooperatively participate in the learning processes according to their individual abilities and pace of development?’ In inclusion the structural framework and conditions of implementing the curriculum are reconsidered in order to ensure the progression of all pupils. *Inclusive institutions are not only suitable for receiving SEN pupils but can also manage to educate pupils deviating from the average in any respect (gifted, distressed, lagging behind, re-starter) together.* Inclusive education is realised through professional and inter-professional cooperation. Its aim is to ensure that children could learn in a school suitable for inclusion, where the organisational and content framework of inclusive education as well as the conditions appropriate for ensuring the progression of all pupils are reconsidered.

According to the professional approach *integrated education* can be realised at three levels:

- i) *local integration*: the development of SEN pupils takes place in a mainstream institution but there is no connection between special and normal education needs pupils, i.e. a separate class or group is organised in a mainstream school or pre-school
- ii) *social integration*: in institutions where SEN pupils are developed in separate groups, but special attention is given to organising extra-curricular activities (day care activities, leisure time and sport activities, meals) in an inclusive way so that special needs pupils be together with their normal needs peers.
- iii) *functional integration*: when inclusive education and development is implemented in all classes and all activities. The time spent together may vary: in some subject classes, activities heterogeneous groups may be organised (*partial integration*), in other cases SEN pupils spend all the time together with their non-SEN peers (*total integration*).

Concerning the inclusive education of special needs children the importance of the selection mechanisms, medical diagnostic aspects has diminished, and emphasis is given development adjusted to differing educational needs. In an optimal case inclusive education is well prepared – both teachers and pupils are prepared by a special education teacher who is available for support later as well. .

The literature on the school situation of the Roma children analysing inclusive school education in detail suggests a paradigm change as opposed to former school strategies and practices. This new approach does not classify Roma children by defining their deficits or their otherness but treats each pupil as individual entities and recommends education provision to meet the diverse educational needs.

The organisational structure of *inclusive educational services* is based on the principle of heterogeneity. Among its content elements especially emphasised are: fight against exclusion, open, accepting atmosphere, all forms of cooperation (teacher-teacher, pupil-pupil, pupil-teacher, teacher-parent), activity-oriented ways of teaching (suited to the child-centred and alternative pedagogical practices), differentiating teaching based on individual development plan and adjusted to the individual needs of the children, applying various forms of assessment, changing traditional pedagogical roles (teacher, pupil, parent). The main principle is that social exclusion can be eliminated if the concepts of tolerance and inclusion are made familiar for the pupils at school.

Inclusion involves the recognition, appreciation and re-evaluation of diversity. This is achieved by equal participation in education including access as well. In addition to individual learning this also involves: cooperation with others in the classes, which also means getting to know and accepting others. Equality is based on the approach that an individual participates in learning and in everyday activities together with others, in which process the others get to know them, accept and appreciate them as they are. Inclusive school is a constantly developing system, and at a given point the quality of the state of inclusiveness can be described along criteria like the degree of decentralisation, applying open organisational forms, wide variety of teaching and learning tools, professionalism of school management and teachers, inclusive interpretation of differences among pupils, quality improvement, and other features of managing a school (conditions, legislation, social environment).

b./ What are seen as the most important challenges for ensuring educational and social inclusion? How have these challenges changed in recent years?

Social inclusion is not exclusively the task of educational policy; synergy of several fields would be required. Education in itself cannot solve this problem and if the unexpected is expected from it, the chances for concrete interventions based on evidences get farther and farther.

After joining the European Union and in order to increase the competitiveness of the country attention has been directed to the social groups that – due to various causes – were less successful in the market economy developed after the change of the regime in 1989/90 or were the losers of these developments. It has become clear that with large social groups that are poor (and from many other aspects disadvantaged), and unproductive in terms of the economy and the labour market, it is very difficult or even impossible to keep the top positions assigned to Hungary by experts among the accession countries.

The *Hungarian educational system is highly selective*, and the efficiency of schools concerning the compensation of various social inequalities is very low. Although there are causes for this that are connected to the quality of education and the efficiency of schools – e.g. the culture of differentiated education is not widespread – the high degree of social inequalities in itself narrows the latitude of schools. In the pedagogical cultural there is neither a tradition of individualising, personalising learning processes nor a practice of assessing pupils' performances in other than summative ways.

The concept of integration has negative connotations as well. *On the one hand* it has an ethno-centrist dimension, according to which Roma groups should be integrated into the Hungarian society. In schools this involves efforts to change the habits of behaviour. *On the other hand* it has a special educational connotation – previously in the Hungarian discourse integration meant exclusively the integrated education of special needs children. In Hungary along the generally educating institutions a system of special institutions was developed – and these institutions themselves were increasingly specialised. Such institutions were the schools of the blind, but there was also a separate institution for those with mild visual impairment, and separate schools were established for those with mild or medium mental disabilities. In Hungary a *two-track system* is operating, and the two tracks are totally separated. In institutions educating pupils with mild mental disabilities Roma pupils are over-represented.

Questions arising in relation to the (mass) admission of *pupils with special educational needs* to the mainstream schools have been sources of long-lasting discussions both in the general and the professional public. The situation is difficult as in general the problems connected to social/economic integration are not solved based on professional considerations alone but also in the political/ideological dimensions that due to their traditionally divisive character have become obstacles to decisions. Concerning enrolment to institutions recommendations are made by members of expert commissions based on a complex examination. It is in their authority to decide which school the examined pupils should attend, pushing into the background of parents' rights to choose an educational institution. Parents with a lesser degree of rights assertion do not have real chances for choosing a school.

In Hungary the legislation related to maintaining and financing education, the means supporting improvement and the development of programmes for pre-service and in-service teacher training, professional services, strengthening the role of counselling, creating and widening opportunities create a favourable situation for renewing education. The impact of the legislation and educational policy supporting inclusive education was strengthened during the implementation of the 2.1 Measure of the Human Resources Development Operational programme of the National Development Plan “Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Disadvantaged Pupils in Education”. Comprehensive integration-oriented measures developed by the *Ministry of Education and Culture*, the amendment to the Act on public education are aimed at facilitating that anti-discrimination efforts appear stronger in the processes of education and in operation of the related organisations, the exclusion of groups with weaker rights assertion abilities be reduced and their participation in achieving the aims of public education strengthened.

The measures of the medium term strategy for public education development are aimed at reducing inequalities of chances, and in accordance with them the central development programmes contribute to creating chances on the labour market and preventing social

exclusion by ensuring access to quality education and support services. The main aim of the development process is to develop a school system where schools adjust to the diversity manifest in differences in pupils' cultures, abilities and learning needs.

The *current reforms, development objectives* are especially aimed at creating the conditions for competence-based education in as many educational institutions as possible, and a comprehensive action and development plan was developed to enhance this. Planning for longer periods than budget cycles and taking into consideration new elements as well, international conciliation procedures and managing the projects serving implementation – all these constituted new challenges that had to be faced. The developments outlined in the New Hungary Development Plan 2007- 2013 are still aimed at increasing the rate of children participating in inclusive education. The legal conditions have been created, and now the professional preparation of inclusive institutions is in the focus.

The strategy for achieving these objectives includes:

- i) building up cooperation between special education institutions and prospective integrating institutions, in which experts of special educational institutions help the prospective integrating institutions in developing their integration programmes, organise, support and/or undertake special tasks, support or provide necessary additional services and supervision; creating a support service network based on the above, providing further support for meeting special care demands and special needs;
- ii) offering and providing accredited in-service training preparing the teachers of the receiving institutions for integration; developing practice-oriented training programmes based on successful integration practices to prepare for integration

Although there are diverse approaches to inclusion in the Hungarian education system, there are developed, well-established support systems, and the changes have an impact on the pedagogical systems used in the inclusive environments and institutions, the attitude to and the intention of inclusion can be restricted if its content is of assimilating nature and is present only at the level of organising learning.

c./ What specific legal or regulatory frameworks refer to inclusive education issues? What groups are considered as excluded in these frameworks and how are they categorized?

In the past decade differentiation and personalisation have appeared in the practice of an increasing number of mainstream institutions as well. According to the act on public education the pupils struggling with adaptation, behaviour and learning difficulties are also entitled to receive – provisional or permanent – differentiated school education and additional services so that they can successfully complete compulsory education, although their individual abilities may not deviate from the average to the extent that they could be classified as special needs or disabled pupils.

Both national and international studies show that the Hungarian education system increases the inequalities of changes and disadvantages stemming from disadvantaged socio-economic situations and territorial and ethnic factors further deepen these disadvantages. Disadvantaged children receive pre-school education in a considerably smaller rate than the average and their

disadvantages are considerable concerning progression at school as well: a smaller percentage of them than the average complete general school and only a few of them get into secondary or higher education.

Increasing selection is decisive from the aspect of inequality of chances, segregation of schools along social strata affect the school career of the Roma and the disadvantaged the most. Their chances for social assertion are demonstrably much more restricted. Among them the drop-out rate is high and many are excluded from education.

The Republic of Hungary also adopted the Act LXIV of 1991 on enacting the UN convention on the Rights of Children. According to the Constitution: “The Republic of Hungary promotes the realisation of equality before the law with measures aiming to eliminate inequality of opportunities.” The Constitution also says that every child has the right to enjoy the care and protection that is necessary for satisfactory physical, mental and moral development. Parents are entitled to the right of choosing the kind of education their children are to receive.

The – multiply amended – *Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education* accentuates the care and education provision for disabled children. The Act of XXVI of 1998 on the Rights and Equality of Chances of People defines the rights of the disabled children in the areas of the environment, communication, transport and supporting services as well as aids and defines the target areas of providing equal opportunities and the tasks of development in health care, education, employment, place of residence, culture and sport.

The Act on public education distinguishes between two groups of children entitled to special care: (a) children and pupils with special educational needs (disabled children) and (b) children and pupils struggling with behaviour or learning difficulties. In addition to these two groups legal and professional measures also promote the effective education and teaching of the disadvantaged, primarily Roma children.

The multiply amended *Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education* provides for establishing Unified Special Educational Methodological Institutions (USEMI).

Pursuant to the Article 33 USEMI can be established with the aim of facilitating the inclusive education of children with special educational needs. In accordance with its aims these institutions may provide pedagogical services, organise and operate a network of mobile experts¹⁹. The tasks of such institutions may include: special educational counselling, early development and care, developing preparation, logopaedic care, conductive education provision, remedial physical education provision. These institutions can also undertake the tasks of pedagogical-professional services including consulting, disseminating teaching and pedagogical methods, facilitating training, in-service training and self-education of and organising related courses for them. They can provide information and counselling services for pupils, learning communities and students’ self-governments providing them with information necessary for asserting their rights, and education administrative, economic, legal etc. information. Within the framework of these unified institutions a unit providing pre-school or general school education can also be organised. Concerning the supporting measures these are the same irrespective of what type of education the special needs pupils

¹⁹ Act on Public Education Article 34. a), b), e), g) and h)

receive (segregated or integrated). In both cases the pupils and the service providing institutions are entitled to the same rights.

The *Act on public education* specifies additional services and regulations ensuring positive discrimination that serve the educational provision for special needs pupils:

- Schools educating special needs children may determine the length of period required for acquiring the teaching material of a grade, which can be longer than a school year. It has to be set in the local curriculum of the school.
- In calculating the average number of pupils in a class or group special needs pupils have to be taken as two or three depending on the type of the disability, i.e. the maximum number of pupils in a separate class organised for them can range from 7 to 15, and in inclusive settings the obligation to apply this multiplier ensures smaller class sizes.
- In the institutions participating in educating special needs children (irrespective of whether education is provided in separate settings or together with non-SEN pupils) additional developing activities have to be organised for pupils with severe and lasting disorders of cognitive functions or behaviour development that do not originate from organic disorders. Depending on the type of disability the time frame for these rehabilitating activities is set at 15-50 percent of the time (number of lessons) defined for obligatory teaching, while the time frame for developing activities is 15 percent of the obligatory teaching time. This time frame can be re-grouped for various grades and classes during a school year or teaching weeks.
- School heads are entitled to exempt special needs pupils from being assessed in some subjects or parts of subjects based on the recommendation of the expert and rehabilitation committees. In case of exemption the development of the pupil concerned has to be ensured according to an individual development plan. At the secondary school-leaving examination these pupils can choose to take another subject instead of one they are exempt from (in accordance with the regulations of the examination specification).
- Special needs pupils are entitled to longer preparation time at the examination, and are allowed to use all the aids they used during their studies (typewriter, computer, etc.). In certain cases the written examination may be replaced by an oral test or an oral examination by a written one.

In the past decade differentiation and personalisation have appeared in the practice of an increasing number of mainstream institutions as well. According to the act on public education the pupils struggling with adaptation, behaviour and learning difficulties are also entitled to receive – provisional or permanent – differentiated school education and additional services so that they can successfully complete compulsory education, although their individual abilities may not deviate from the average to the extent that they could be classified as special needs or disabled pupils.

Additional services are primarily provided by educational counselling and logopaedic services. Provision of educational professional services is regulated by the ministerial decree 14/1994. (VI.24) of the Ministry of Culture and Public Education.

Following the general regulations of the governmental decree on the admission procedures of higher education institutions special needs students are entitled to all the exemptions and additional services that they are entitled to during the secondary school-leaving examination – more time for preparation, use of aids that were used during secondary school studies, replacement of oral tests with written ones or replacement of written tests with oral ones. The special needs applicants are entitled to preferential treatment and receive extra scores in all forms of initial training and higher-level vocational training. To participate successfully in the admission procedure and to receive the extra scores defined by legislation the applicants have to furnish proof that they are entitled to preferential treatment. In cases when the candidates were disabled during their secondary school studies and based on that they were entitled to exemptions and/or allowances the expert and rehabilitation committees are entitled to furnish proof of the disability.

According to the *Act CXXXIX of 2005 on higher education* disabled students are entitled to being prepared and examined in accordance with their disabilities and they should receive assistance in their fulfilment of obligations arising from their student status. When appropriate, they should be exempted from the obligation to take certain course-units or certain parts thereof or to undergo assessment. If necessary, such students are exempted from the language examination or a certain part thereof, or the level or the level related requirements of such language examinations. Disabled students should be given more time to prepare at the examination, and should be offered the opportunity to use aids at the written test (typewriter, computer, etc.), or if necessary, to have, in the case of such students, a written test instead of an oral test, or an oral test instead of a written one. The exemption under this subsection is exclusively granted in the context of the condition justifying such exemption and may not result in exemption from the fulfilment of basic academic requirements that are requisite to the award of the professional qualification certified by the Bachelor and the Master degree, or of the vocational qualification evidenced by the certificate of higher-level vocational training. To assist disabled students the higher education institutions appoint a coordinator and determine in their statutes the provided and allowed aids, services and the rules pertaining the use of the additional normative grant for the disabled.

According to the *Act XXXXVII of 2001 on the textbook market regime* all special needs (disabled) pupils are entitled to free textbooks.

Families raising permanently ill or severely disabled children are entitled to a higher amount of family allowance according to the *Act LXXXIV of 1998 on family support*. However, not all families raising special needs (disabled) children are entitled to this higher amount of family allowance. Only those families receive this higher amount of family allowances that raise children requiring constant or increased care and supervision due to chronic illnesses or severe disabilities defined by the ministerial decree 5/2003 (II.19.) of the Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs. (The decree also stipulates which institution – specialist health centre, expert and rehabilitation committee – is entitled to verify the chronic illness or severe disability.)

According to the *Act III of 1993 on social management and social care* the chronically ill or severely disabled child whose parents are entitled to a higher amount of family allowance is entitled to public health care certificate. Those with public health care certificates are entitled to certain free medicines or medical aids defined by a decree issued by the minister for health. According to the *Act III of 1993 on social management and social care* the adult relative who

takes care of a severely disabled person unable to take care of him/herself – without an age limit – or a chronically ill person under 18 years of age is entitled to care allowance. The amount of care allowance is defined in the percentage of the current minimum of old-age pension (80-130%). The period of receiving care allowance is calculated as time of service when the amount of old-age pension is determined. The *Act LXXXIII of 1997 on the services of the compulsory health insurance* and the government decree 85/2007. on the allowances in public mass transportation entitle disabled children and if necessary a maximum of two persons accompanying them to free use of all urban domestic line passenger services when the purpose is the travel is to participate in a rehabilitating activity or development.

In Hungary *a considerable number of students fail* at public education institutions. An increasing rate of failing pupils explains the national professional interest and the increased attention concerning this area. From the aspect of progression drop-outs from general schools, those completing general school but leaving education before the age of 18 (the maximum age of compulsory education), drop-outs from secondary schools, those who struggle with learning difficulties, special needs pupils and adults above the age of compulsory education for whom it is crucial that they could complete their education while working under special conditions designed for them – all belong to this group of failers.

Although the *intentions to create equal opportunities* regard all the above as one target group, an increased attention is due to the pupils who do not (cannot) have all the opportunities in education that are available for their peers. These are the children whose parents are socially disadvantaged have low qualification (below secondary level); the families (and their children) who live in economically disadvantaged settlements, regions, and who do not have chances to improve their situation partly because of lack of institutions and partly because of low mobilisation opportunities (and intentions); young people living in residential institutions or children's homes, who can make up for the cultural and existential disadvantages stemming from their situation only in long years and if they are fortunate; the marginalized (criminalized) young people whose way of life keeps them from entering the world of education; the children of the immigrants who have arrived in Hungary recently. The disadvantages of belonging to the biggest minority, the Roma minority are manifest partly in the inequalities in schooling and partly in the discrimination on the labour market in addition to many other factors causing disadvantages.

2.2 Public policies

a./ What are the current dimensions of the phenomenon of exclusion from and within education? What kind of indicators and data are used to inform inclusive education policies?

The inclusive approach appeared first in education and initially a narrow interpretation of the concept was connected to the education of special needs pupils. At the same time the term 'exclusion' was used solely in the sense of expelling pupils from schools for various offences. Both inclusion and exclusion was in close connection with everyday practice when the terms were first used.

Since the turn of the millennium segregation within the school, the separation of pupils along ethnic and social positions has not been reduced despite all policy intentions, changes in

regulations, and additional normative grant for integration. Despite the considerable public spending on developing this sector (e.g. Sulinet Comenius programmes) the effectiveness of education has not increased.

Although the network of separate special institutions in general provides good quality education, it is increasingly criticised because it does not promote the social integration of their children to appropriate extent, and often acts as a ‘parking place’ reducing the life chances of the pupils. *In the school year 2006/2007* the act on public education was amended concerning the recognition of disabilities and the ministerial decree 14/1994. (VI.24.) on education obligation and pedagogical services definition of disabilities was also modified. The public education policy decision behind the changes in legislation was made following a continuous increase of the rate of pupils classified as ones with special educational needs – due especially to disorders of psychical development, and the recognition of the fact that there were considerable differences in the rate of special needs pupils among the counties. As the number of children classified as special needs pupils based on disorders of psychical development was five times more than five years before and because of the considerable differences among the counties the rules of diagnostic work were revised²⁰, and the whole population concerned was re-examined in 2007²¹.

The measures stipulated – among others – that those concerned had to be re-examined according to strict criteria and the special needs diagnosis can only be maintained if it is justified by a permanent or severe disorder of cognitive functions or of behavioural development. If the permanent or severe disorder of cognitive functions or of behavioural development cannot be traced back to organic causes, and the pupil concerned receives special education in a separate class or school, measures have to be taken to place the pupil in a mainstream school in the following school year so that they could learn together with others according to general requirements in an integrated way. This measure serves the prevention of unjustified segregation. The measures of the past years – professional measures, changes in legislation, the re-examination of special needs children with permanent and severe learning difficulties due to disorders of psychical development – have also been aimed at achieving the above objective. 31,918 pupils with permanent and severe learning difficulties due to disorders of psychical development were re-examined. In 10,606 cases neither adaptation, learning, behavioural difficulties nor special educational needs were diagnosed.

²⁰ *In Hungary national and county level committees decide on the physical, sensual, mental, or speech disorders. The visual, hearing, and speech examination expert and rehabilitation committees operate on national level, and expert and rehabilitation committees examining learning abilities operate both in the capital and in the county centres. The head of the committee is a remedial teacher in the field of disability. The members of the committee are psychologists, and specialised doctors of the field. They prepare an expert opinion about the child and make a recommendation for the institutions of pre-school and school education as well as the special requirements in connection with the education, training and skills development of the student. These committees do not only recommend students to be placed into specialized classes or institutions but they are the ones also to recommend integrated education for students. According to the Act on equal opportunities the parents of students with special educational needs have the right to choose the institution and influence the decision making about where their children are placed. In case of disagreement between the expert committee and the parents decision is made in a procedure defined in a ministerial decree.*

²¹ *The Act on public education distinguishes between two groups of children entitled to special care:*

- *children and pupils with special education needs (disabled);*
- *children and pupils struggling with behaviour or learning difficulties.*

In addition to these two groups legal and professional measures also promote the effective education and teaching of the disadvantaged, primarily Roma children.

Rate of children with mild mental disability						
School year	Total number of children, pupils with mild mental disability		Total number of children in pre-school and full time school education		Rate of children and pupils in the percentage of all children, pupils	
2001/2002		37 942		1 837 963		2.1
2002/2003		38 517		1 818 935		2.1
2003/2004		38 253		1 806 950		2.1
2004/2005		36 550		1 784 224		2
2005/2006		35 246		1 758 097		2
2006/2007		33 984		1 729 175		2
2007/2008		32 482		1 708 125		1.9

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture (2008)

b./ Which inclusive education issues have been are, or are going to be relevant for educational policies in your country?

In Hungary many initiatives have been taken, which considerably increased our knowledge on the processes and developments in public education. On the one hand there have been numerous data collections, researches, actions based on using up-to-date research methodologies and a series of analyses exploring the processes in public education have been prepared. On the other hand all this happened without a conscious strategy, in an uncoordinated way, without considerable reflection on the process of creating and using this knowledge and the quality of the created knowledge is very uneven.

Inclusive school is a constantly developing system, and at a given point the quality of the state of inclusiveness can be described along criteria like the degree of decentralisation, applying open organisational forms, wide variety of teaching and learning tools, professionalism of school management and teachers, inclusive interpretation of differences among pupils, quality improvement, and other features of managing a school (conditions, legislation, social environment).

The aim of establishing and operation a public education quality management system is to lay the foundations for and constantly improve an effective, efficient and equitable public education. By emphasising equity the system to be developed:

- serves the evaluation of the educational and education development objectives defined at various levels of content regulation and the continuous feedback of the results,
- serves the operation of a planning-feedback cycle by making the results of assessments available for all the actors of public education,
- makes it possible for all the actors of public education governance to share responsibility for the effectiveness of the services and put the principle of accountability into practice.

The areas of quality assessment at maintainers' level include: effectiveness of the pedagogical activity of institutions, institution management, achieving the objectives of pedagogical programmes, work of the head of the institution. A major function of quality assessment at

sector level is the development of regular national assessment of pupils' achievements, system of examinations, system of public education indicators and preparing public reports. Together with the system of selection indicators and monitoring the assertion of pupils' rights as well as national thematic evaluations of the current objectives of education policy quality assessment may be a guarantee for developing good practices.

Legislation related to the operation of institutions and financing education is favourable for educating pupils with disabilities in an inclusive environment. The current reforms, development objectives emphasise that the conditions of integrated education be created in as many institutions as possible and to promote this a comprehensive action and development plan has been developed. Increasing the responsiveness of schools to inclusion opens up new possibilities for the social learning processes of all – disabled and non-disabled – children. Seeking new ways, institutional innovations result in considerable quality improvement of the work of the schools open to inclusion.

Institutional quality assessment, institutional self-assessment is rarely aimed at evaluating inclusion specifically. In addition to the mandatory duties of schools related to quality management the reason for starting a (self)-evaluating process can be a change in the management of the institution, joining a national development programme, re-organisation of the institution, an intention to meet the expectations of the maintainer, dissatisfaction within the institution, problems indicated by the assessments of pupils' competences, change in the composition of pupils, intention to meet the expectations of parents, improvement traditions of the school or anything else. Accordingly, the weight of preparation for inclusion in the development may be very different by institutions.

Consequently, a (self)-evaluation package for inclusion has to be suitable for explicitly serving the education and development of special needs pupils but it also has to be suitable for ensuring the assertion of inclusion aspects are in a total, "guided" self-evaluation process. As the current regulation of quality management concerning the areas of criteria for self-evaluation provides little guidance, in order to ensure suitability the starting points of the package "How accepting is our school?" to be developed in the framework of SROP²² are the areas used in the central programme aiming at the development of a system of public education quality management but not defined by legislation.

The institutional self-evaluation package for inclusion is the distillate of the existing experience of Hungarian public education accumulated through decades, in two senses of the word. On the one hand it is in a technical sense. The network of self-developing schools, COMENIUS quality assurance programme, vocational school development programme, institutional developments started in the framework of the first National Development Plan and other institutional programmes accumulated considerable knowledge and experience in the field of institution-level development based on self-evaluation. On the other hand the package relies heavily on the content of development, on the national and international experience concerning the inclusion of special needs pupils. The inclusion programme of the National Development Plan (which included collecting good practices as well) and the increasing participation in international cooperation related to inclusive education made the rich repository of relevant knowledge available.

²² Social Renewal Operational Programme

Indicators that facilitate specifying the aims of institution development – effectiveness of learning, satisfaction of partners, management of learning, teachers' work, operation of the institution – are developed in the implementation of the development plan and provide data for educational decision-makers, too.

c./ What groups are considered to be most vulnerable to various forms of exclusion from and within education? Who are the excluded groups that current policies have yet to take into account?

The general objective of inclusion efforts is that all education policy measures and procedures promote and encourage the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils exposed to exclusion including special needs pupils as well. All this can be achieved in appropriate policy framework and through appropriate assistance to teachers.

Challenges require the reconsideration of the balance among the various objectives of the *assessment system*. Creating a balance among the three different evaluation processes (evaluating the monitoring of the levels, evaluating the early identification of demands and the evaluation of informing the learning and teaching processes) is the key to development. The future task of educational policy will be to improve the assessment system so that it could promote, encourage inclusion and not hamper it potentially. The institutions cannot always ensure the provision of the professional service prescribed by legislation for the special needs pupils learning in mainstream schools in an integrated way. This is often due to lack of professionals related to the geographical region where the institution is. Recently, with the expansion of integration the net ensuring special care is being created and transformed. In some regions and at certain ages special help does not reach all pupils that would need it. Especially critical are the period of progression from pre-school to school, and all other subsequent changes of environment setting high requirements, like choosing a school, changing schools, further studies.

Therefore the improvement of the cooperation of *partners participating in pedagogical development* (pupils, teachers, other experts, parents, maintainers) and the organisation of the cooperation of various counselling services built on shared concepts and intra-professional basis is re-evaluated. Creating cooperation among service providers, establishing cooperation among pre-schools, general schools, centres for pedagogical counselling, special schools and mainstream schools is a key issue. Another key issue is that professionals have to be found who can manage innovation necessary for integrated education and are able to develop the conditions in which cooperation can strengthen. Constant motivation and improvement is encouraged by supporting the implementation of best practices.

Creating, increasing and supporting *commitment to integration*:

Assisting the teachers of the integrating institutions, building a supporting parental attitude – developing professional and intra-professional cooperation (teachers, special education teachers, mainstream schools, special schools) building up professional services on the basis of the best special institutions, encouraging cooperation, personalisation of the learning processes, individualisation of the learning process, managing the problems of access to secondary education for special needs pupils, drop-outs, early school leaving, lagging behind, career guidance, assisting employment within the institutions (vocational guidance, contacts with parents, civil organisations, employers).

In *public policies* several measures have been initiated to support the disabled and their socio-economic integration (creating jobs with state support, purchasing cars at discount prices, making public institutions accessible for the disabled, family allowance for families raising disabled children). In the past decade educational policy has also strived to promote equal opportunities for pupils entitled to special care both by legislation and budget means. Parents have been given more rights related to the enrolment of their children to schools, flexibility of progression in the school system has been increased, schools more time has been allocated to rehabilitation and development, additional services have been expanded and a new per capita grant has been introduced for integration.

In spite of all these measures the socio-economic integration of special needs pupils and those entitled to special care are hindered by several factors. Following the change of the political regime the employability of pupils completing their studies in special or integrating institutions has weakened even compared to its level before. In the mainstream society solidarity with this formerly nearly invisible (isolated) social group was not common and it recently it has been sporadic, moreover – partly owing to the difficulties that the majority of the society has to face – lack of solidarity has become more common.

Although successful inclusion has become a key issue in educational policy, its implementation is not easy as there is considerable counter-interestedness in school integration of the disabled on both sides – in the mainstream schools on the one hand and the special institutions that are proud of their responsibility and quality work on the other.

d./ In what ways do current educational reforms address inclusive education?

The three means of national educational governance (aims, pressure and support) are in accordance with the objectives of the medium term strategy for public education development of 2003 connected to the development of the National Development Plan for receiving the EU resources. The major areas of development include improving the quality of education, supporting the development of the teaching profession, promoting the use of ICT tools, improving the physical conditions of education, improving the cost-efficiency and management of public education, improving teacher training and in-service teacher training, supporting the dissemination of school-level educational innovations and good practices. .

The *long-term strategy* defines the most important priorities the directions of development and the related vision of public education development in Hungary for the period of 2005-2015, which may serve as a basis for elaborating strategic tasks and tools. The strategy focuses on how public education can contribute to increasing competitiveness and social cohesion and defines school improvement as a crucial task in this respect. Acquiring competitive knowledge and reducing the inequality of opportunities are defined as major objectives of development.

The most important document of *developments in the near future* – planning the use of EU funds – is the New Hungary Development Plan defining two major objectives to remedy the most acute problems of Hungary: the expansion of employment and the establishment of the

conditions of sustained economic growth. Six thematic and are regional priorities are defined related to the objectives, and one of this priorities (social renewal) focuses on improving the quality of human resources development. Ensuring access to quality education for all is a part of this development including content development, e.g. the development of problem solving skills, digital literacy, universal planning, language skills, natural sciences and life skills. Coordination of training and the demands of the society and the economy, and the development of entrepreneurship and management skills are also important aspects. Related to implementation major objectives are defined including support for the introduction and implementation of complex pedagogical programmes, development of a measurement and assessment system, renewal of initial and in-service teacher training, introduction of socio-efficient forms of organisation, promotion of territorial cooperation, and support for the integrated teaching of disadvantaged pupils.

Related to ensuring access to *quality education* for all major tasks include development of basic competences, labour market competences (mainly the improvement of foreign language skills, digital literacy, mathematical and science literacy, life skills and entrepreneurship skills. In implementation up-to-date, innovative forms of teaching (e.g. forest schools, green schools in the countryside, experiential learning) are supported. Major objectives include the consequent continuation of the content reforms started in the framework of the National Development Plan I, further dissemination of competence-based education, new forms of learning and digital literacy, introduction of an assessment and evaluation system for measuring pupils' and teachers' achievements, connecting the formal and informal systems and modernising initial and in-service teacher training.

Considering the demographic, social and economic changes and in order to improve the cost-efficiency of *primary and secondary education* reforming the organisation and administration of education is inevitable. Therefore special attention is given to the introduction of new organisational solutions supporting the rationalisation and integration of institutions and to meeting the special demands emerging as a result of the decrease of school age population.

To achieve the horizontal objective of the development of the educational system based on the *reform of content regulation* programmes and cultural domain modules are to be developed that meet the requirements of inclusive and differentiated education. Accordingly, the programmes to be developed have to allow of different paces of progression, use of various tools of diagnostic assessment of pupils' achievement, taking into the account the specific interests of pupils and individual profiles, partly replacing textbooks with varied teaching materials, and group work of pupils. The major criteria according to which the in-service programmes for recommending and using the developed programmes are recommended and evaluated include familiarisation of teachers with the adequate pedagogical tools and ensuring their usability.

The priority programme 3.1.1. of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SROP) “”21st Century School – development, coordination” is aimed at solving the governance and coordination problem how large-scale developments can be introduced, disseminated in an effective and efficient way and how can the wide use of innovation supported in the conditions of a highly decentralised public education.

Long-term objectives of the programme include

- creating an inclusive system of public education aiming at the development of all pupils' abilities and capacities to the maximum

- implementing inclusive teaching and education
- promoting the social integration of special needs pupils, cumulatively disadvantaged pupils including the Roma youth.

Short-term objectives

- Ensuring equal opportunities for special needs pupils, cumulatively disadvantaged pupils including the Roma youth, by implementing inclusive education and promoting their progression in public education, improving their educational and labour market opportunities.
- Expanding inclusive education, disseminating teaching practices in public education ensuring discrimination-free learning environment by creating special conditions.

2.3 Systems, links and transitions:

Following the change of the political regime the Hungarian processes were formed in a special field of force characterised by increasing differences in incomes, rapid social restructuring and related low-level solidarity as well as free choice of school interpreted as a basic right. Research data of the second half of the 1990s proved that “a considerable ratio of people regarded it natural, moreover desirable that the education system mirrors the social differences, supported early selection, strong competition for admission or the development of an elite sector.” (*Halász, 2006*)

a./What are the main barriers (e.g. economic, political, social) to inclusive education?

In the second half of the 1990s the education policy in Hungary that was to serve the reduction of educational inequalities was characterised by the lack of strategic thinking and the use of very few tools. Responses to questions were usually restricted to regulations concerning the school structure, using financing tools restricting to changing the structure the amount of “per capita quotas”, and more recently curriculum policy. Supporting school-level programmes through various channels was also a popular tool of the educational policy.

Although these early intervention, vocational training and general educational programmes could prove to be a real treasury of pedagogical and organisational experiences concerning inequalities, owing to the lack of adequate mediating systems (as external evaluation, information system, practice-oriented in-service teaching training, financing that could serve the priorities of educational policy, etc.) these models have remained isolated and have had very little impact on the whole of the system if any.

In the 1990s one of the main features of the *educational policy related to inequalities* was the lack of synergy between various tools, which would have increased the impact of the individual tools. Changes in legal and content regulation, financing, assessment system, the system of teacher training and in-service teacher training, textbook publishing and pedagogical services followed the logic of these subsystems or served strategic objectives that did not necessary contradict the requirements of a more equitable education but did not specifically served them, either.

The subsequent *programmes aiming at developing education* did not constitute an organic system and rarely was a programme launched that aimed specifically at reducing inequalities. Such programmes were the 'Roma Education Development Programme launched in 1995 and a Phare program started in 2000 "to support the social integration of cumulatively disadvantaged, mainly Roma youth". The programme exclusively supported schools through tenders. Introducing a per capita grant for integration and the establishment of the National Network of Integration in Education also serve the promotion of chance-increasing education for the Roma. Intentions of strengthening synergy, the connections of various integration programmes follow an appropriate direction. One of the essential preconditions of an educational policy aiming at reducing inequalities is the development of mechanisms that explore these inequalities. The development of such mechanisms has started in Hungary but is still in a very early phase. The development is made more difficult by the fact that the information-related demands of not only the national educational governance have to be met but also those of the county-level, regional planning, school maintainers and individual schools. The major elements of such a system include a *national assessment-evaluation system* (its national methodological centre was established in 1999), an *external evaluation system* (some school maintainers experiment with operating such mechanisms in the framework of territorial quality assurance systems) and the *dissemination of a school-level methodological culture* based on nationally accepted standards and serving the identification of disadvantaged or special needs children, which would promote the development of more efficient institutional programmes and ensuring additional financing for them as well.

To achieve the objectives of *priorities of educational policy* at institutional level (i.e. not through curriculum regulation, assessment or teacher training) various tools have become common in the education system in Hungary. The most important tools include: *using financial incentives, operating systems of various earmarked support, and developing service providing institutions*. The common feature of both the additional support included in the system of financing education (incentives) and the targeted support provided by the Foundation for Modernising Public Education and the county public foundations for public education development is that it depends on the absorption capacity of the educational institutions how efficiently the financial support that these institutions receive through various channels is used. These supports are efficiently used in institutions where the necessary conditions: information, means and external support are available, while in other cases the quality and efficiency of the supported programmes is questionable.

Another problem connected to the various target programmes is that owing to lack of information it is difficult to find the institutions that should be given priority in receiving the related support and developments in the interest of reducing inequalities. In this way it can easily happen that the support for quality assurance of ICT use *increase inequalities within the system instead of reducing* them because the support is received by well-prepared, active and initiative-taking institutions. A third problem related to the target programmes is that the tools used are not coordinated. The various incentives, target support and active pedagogical services are rarely connected and therefore their impact cannot be reinforced.

b./ What are the most important facilitators of inclusive education?

A main objective of the educational developments of the EU is to ensure an optimum supply of educational opportunities for children with special educational needs, which is adjusted as

much as possible to individual needs, abilities, in which the educational supply offered for the mainstream is available for them as well, and which increases their labour market opportunities as well. The challenges and tasks of Hungarian public education policy related to integration serve the dissemination and effectiveness of integrating education. The main trends of integration development include:

- creating a balance between integration and segregation,
- adopting measures aiming at reducing exclusion,
- developing teachers' competences school organisations, and
- introducing rational financing.

The Hungarian public education policy incorporated in its plans the comprehensive objectives of education policy adopted by the European Union. The medium term strategy of public education development of the Ministry of Education was also determined by the National Development Plan (NDP). The medium term development objectives and priorities include:

- developing key competences and laying the foundations for life long learning
- reducing educational inequalities,
- improving the quality of education,
- supporting the development of the teaching profession,
- promoting the use of ICT tools,
- improving the physical conditions of education,
- improving the cost-efficiency and management of public education,
- improving teacher training and in-service teacher training,
- supporting the dissemination of school-level educational innovations and good practices.

Expanding integration does not involve the elimination of the institutions of special education. There are children with special educational needs who will need special school education in the future as well. Teachers of mainstream schools undertaking integration teaching and wishing to acquire new competences count upon cooperation with special education teachers. Special education teachers are the ones with special knowledge and thus can help mainstream institutions. The special schools are the institutions where trainees can have their practice and they also serve as bases for impairment-specific in-service training as well.

The *current reforms, development objectives* emphasise that the conditions of integrated education should be created in as many institutions as possible. The achievement of this objective has been facilitated by the National Development Plan recently. Planning for longer periods than budget cycles and taking into consideration new elements as well, international conciliation procedures and managing the projects serving implementation – all these constituted new challenges that had to be faced. The National Framework of References – the New Hungary Development Plan 2007-2013 – was adopted by the Parliament in 2006. The developments outlined in the New Hungary Development Plan 2007- 2013 are still aimed at increasing the rate of children participating in integrated, inclusive education. In this respect the views of the experts of the mainstream institutions on the one hand, and the special education institutions on the other, are much nearer now.

A major source of the effectiveness problems of Hungarian public education is the knowledge-centred teaching material. Changing this practice – developing and disseminating competence-based programme packages and in parallel with this the creation of the (infrastructure and human) conditions of teaching competence-based teaching material

facilitates the effectiveness of educating special needs children in an inclusive setting. The legal conditions have been created, and now the professional preparation of inclusive institutions is in the focus.

c./ What specific approaches and measures have been adopted to make the education system more inclusive?

Among the general schools there are school communities and teachers with a genuine inclusive attitude. And while the teachers' public is occupied in pro- and anti-integration discussions, several alternatives of promoting the social integration of disadvantaged and special needs children have been developed in the school practice, which are effective (e.g. Gárdonyi Géza General School in Nyíregyháza).

Among the policies aiming at *reducing inequalities in education* one of the most complex one is the issue of equal opportunities of Roma pupils. Up to now no educational policy conception has been developed that would offer a strategically reconsidered response to all the problems behind the educational failures of the Roma pupils (discrimination, social situation, minority rights, quality of education). Three elements of the educational policy tools have to be mentioned, which are especially important from the point of view of Roma pupils. One is a *clear anti-discrimination policy* involving the prohibition of discrimination, which is more efficient and easier interpretable for the actors of education than the present prohibition, the elaboration of procedural rules including appropriate guarantees and sanctioning for breaching the rules, continuous and institutional monitoring all the open, institutionalised and hidden forms of discrimination in education and launching programmes aiming at the elimination of all school practices that can be classified as segregating or discriminative. A second element is *ensuring minority rights in education* involving the inclusion of Roma communities and organisations into educational policy development and related decision-making; offering the opportunity of learning Roma languages and Roma culture when there is demand and strengthening the multicultural character of the mainstream education. The third element is the *support system* providing welfare services related to education and serving the mitigation of differences of opportunities caused by bad social and economic positions and to a great extent by belonging to the Roma minority.

The effectiveness of programmes aimed at reducing inequalities in education is decreased by the fact that they are hardly ever evaluated by independent, external experts. Therefore no information is available on the impact of the programmes launched for members of minority groups or disabled pupils and on the impact of the considerable amount of financial support spent on catching up, or compensating disadvantages. Participants in the programmes receive feedback neither on the effectiveness of their work nor on the models that have proved to work.

d./ What specific approaches and measures have been adopted to make the education system more flexible in order to offer additional educational opportunities to those who have dropped out or have not attained an appropriate level of qualifications?

A considerable number of pupils drop out from various types of secondary educational institutions (though to different extent) before completing secondary education. This causes problems both in the short and the long term at the level of the individual and also the society – each year 2.3-6 percent of secondary school pupils repeat a year. From among those who do not complete education young people not completing even general school constitute the biggest problem as they have no chances at all to be successful on the labour market – especially if they do not continue their studies later, either. The situation is not any better

when secondary education is not completed as in this case as well they are regarded as those having general school qualification only or a completed 10 years of education at best and as such have little chances on the labour market.

Similar is the situation when pupils in their school career repeat years more than once. In case of over-age pupils the chances increase for

- leaving the school,
- finishing studies after the (incidental) completion of the school or the very risky suspension of studies,
- becoming a private student (or being “classified” as a private student), which also increases the risk of dropping out.

The features of those dropping out of school (or not continuing their studies) include:

- a great majority of them live at small settlements or the peripheries of towns or in less prosperous parts of towns (slums),
- parents have low school qualifications – with the exception of very few – most of them have general school or (less marketable) vocational qualification,
- the labour market positions of the parents are weak, there are many who are unemployed or threatened by unemployment – due to lack of qualification,
- low qualification of the parents, lack of motivation for learning and inactive status – all this hinders the creation of learning environment inspiring for learning at present and in the future. Therefore in these families a motivating environment supporting learning (at home as well) cannot be created.
- therefore the families of pupils dropping out of schools are hit by poverty, which does not favour continuing studies.

Experiences concerning the methods that school could use to make these pupils successful vary. It is certain that there is no coherent central or institutional-level support policy in this field. Schools have not prepared for developing such policies as they have received no or very little external help. It is almost certain that the reason why the existing practices cannot show up solutions that could be used widely is that the school problems of disadvantaged children *cannot be solved solely by tools that are of pedagogical character and are directed to school. For solving this problem a complex (pedagogical-professional, mental and social) support system is required, which is directed to both the pupils and their families.* The implementation of the priorities defined in the Social Renewal Operational Programme can provide opportunities for developing a support policy aiming at complexity.

In Hungary the *national assessments of basic competences* measure the basic competences (reading literacy, mathematical literacy) of each pupils in the selected grades. The aim of the assessments having been administered three times since 2001 is that the standards, procedures used in the assessment convey new content development demands for teachers and also support the local assessment practices. The improvement of the local assessment practices has been facilitated by that fact that the tools and the nationally evaluated scores are available for the institutions so that they can assess the achievements of all their pupils based on the centrally processed data.

In Hungary a considerable number of pupils drop out from various types of secondary educational institutions (though to different extent) before completing secondary education. This causes problems both in the short and the long term at the level of the individual and also

the society – each year 2.3-6 percent of secondary school pupils repeat a year. This would not be an unfavourable rate in itself if it could be taken for granted in the system of public education that there is opportunity not only for repeating a year but also for successful continuation of studies after it but the unfavourable distribution of the rate of year-repeaters between the grades does not show this. Especially high is this rate in the first year of secondary education – grade 9 – and is reduced to a minimum in later grades. Based on this it can be predicted that with high probability those students can complete secondary studies successfully who have completed grade 10.

The causes of *early school leaving* are similar in the case of pupils belonging to the mainstream society and those with special educational needs. The most typical four reasons are:

Learning problems can emerge in both groups of pupils and they can lead to failure, year repetition and finally leaving the schools. There are signs that show quite early that there may be problems in completing the requirements in certain subjects. Such a sign is the constant under-achievement of the pupil in a subject, failures of attempts of correction, and these show that intervention is necessary. If there is no intervention or its efficiency is low, it is very likely that the pupils concerned will not be able to increase their achievements by themselves.

Non-subject-related problems include lack of motivation, slow working pace, lack of diverse learning paths, behaviour and adaptation problems. In the absence of external support and appropriate solution these may also lead failure in the given subject.

Differing socio-cultural backgrounds of pupils, lack of the use of sources of culture, lack of support for learning in the family, rejecting the pupils' demand for love and support, stimulus-free, dreary ways of spending leisure time can all be causes of school failures. If the home environment of the child is such that the educating impacts expected by the school are missing or if the character of the child is shaped by social influences that are not in accordance with the developing impacts of the school, in many cases these appear as missing abilities.

School leaving may also be caused by *conflicts* between the pupil concerned and the teacher or among pupils.

Dropping out of school is the most serious consequence of school failure, because its long-term consequences can hardly or only with considerable time and costs be remedied. It should not be neglected that school leaving may fundamentally change the relation of the pupil to learning and that of the pupil to school. In several cases it can be observed that it is very difficult to achieve that those who failed at school rejoin the world of learning.

Low qualification or uncompleted school involves dangers for all pupils but the opportunities of special needs pupils are further decreased after failure. In these cases there is less than average chance for the effectiveness of a later correction.

The real danger is when school drop-outs are disintegrated from the school and related communities, which may have negative consequences from the aspects of possible continuation of studies and incidental labour market integration.

In more difficult cases it is not only the professionalism and humanity of the teacher that (may) help overcome the problem but the great majority of learners' community and the institutional environment can ensure considerable support as well.

2.4 Learners and teachers:

In Hungary school age population has constantly been decreased since 1990 and as a consequence the number of pupils in public education has also been decreasing. However, the decrease in the total number of pupils in public education covers considerable differences. Between 1990 and 2006 the number of teachers working in pre-schools and general schools decreased by 10 and 12 percentage points, respectively, and the decrease in the number of pupil was even more significant, 17 and 21 percentage points. There was a more significant decrease in the number of teachers between 2000 and 2006 than before, which may be connected to pay rise for public servants. Schools can (and intend) to employ fewer teachers when pay levels are higher.

a./What new approaches to teaching and learning are being implemented to increase educational opportunities for all, improve student learning outcomes and reduce disparities?

In Hungary pupils are enrolled to grades according to their age. However, there are huge differences in the development of pupils belonging to the same age group. In years the difference in the intellectual and social development of children entering school education is more than five years, which is doubled by the end of grade 10 (as public education has become mass education). The consequence is the selection, segregation and low level of achievement determined by the starting level. The traditional pedagogical culture takes the differences granted and cannot handle extreme differences in development.

In the interest of improving effectiveness and promoting equal opportunities the selection mechanisms have to be reduced, the pedagogical culture renewed, and the pedagogical activity fundamentally transformed. The renewal of pedagogical culture can mainly be promoted by developing new classroom management methods. Methods leaving the boundaries of frontal work and enhancing understanding, application, capacity building and motivation were needed. Inclusion, integrated teaching of heterogeneous groups cannot be implemented without expanding the repertoire of *differentiated teaching methods*.

Using the systems of organisation of learning outlined by cooperative learning ensure that the criteria of quality human development – individualisation, cooperation, authentic feedback, using a wide range of thinking abilities – are met in an efficient, effective and equitable way in the case of all children while keeping and retaining pupil diversity. Owing to their flexibility and practical principles such an inclusive educational environment and conditions can be created, which model the operation of an inclusive society in its practice.

At entering school education the various *diagnostic and screening* functions, the formative and criterion-oriented character can be strengthened. This may help the early recognition of problems and the application of therapeutic procedures, differentiated developing methods through which it can be achieved that no child is left behind. Diagnostic assessment serves first of all the monitoring and assisting the development of the child, enhances the personalised exploration of problems in time and helps to find the appropriate additional activities. Such a system is DIFER (Hungarian acronym of Diagnostic System for Monitoring Development, see: Nagy, Józsa, Vidákovich és Fazekasné, 2002, 2004), which is available in all general schools in Hungary.

b./ In what ways is the curriculum being designed and organized to respond to diversity of learners?

It is a century-old claim of researchers of pedagogy and psychology that curricula should be adjusted to the development of children. In the past decades researches on the educational theory have provided masses of information for preparing well-grounded curricula and thus the opportunity has been created for switching over from designing content-centred curriculum to designing pupil-centred curriculum. The concept of developing programme package was first formulated in the summer of 2002 in the document “Modernisation and programme development”. Based on the research and assessment data of the past period the authors proved that public education had to be modernised and claimed that there was need for innovation building on a new concept of knowledge responding to the challenges of the considerably changed cultural environment.

The tools of content development in Hungary include the National Core Curriculum, the optional framework curricula recommendations and the local curricula of the institutions. The National Core Curriculum as a strategic document defined new content development directions as of September 2004. The recommended curriculum alternatives are developed by a system of service providers that help design local curricula. Optional framework curricula recommendations and related teaching programmes ensure that the institutions learn the contents and principles defined by the National Core Curriculum and incorporate them in local regulations. The central content regulating documents define the educational objectives according to which the effectiveness of the separate institutions and the whole public education can be evaluated and assessed.

In designing their own pedagogical programmes and local curricula schools take into consideration: the regulations of the Act on public education and the National Core Curriculum that apply to them, the selected framework curricula, the national programme of education in dormitories, the local educational objectives and opportunities, the expectations formulated in the maintainers’ Quality Management Policy document, the expectations of parents and the features of the pupils that they educate.

The programme packages developed in the framework of the *Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the National development Plan* serving the dissemination of competence-based education and aiming at reducing the inequalities in education as well as the development of the system of in-service teacher training enhancing the implementation of these programme packages take into account the interests of both special needs and disadvantaged pupils (see more details in section 1.1b).

In the framework of the National Development Plan such *programme packages* were developed for *pre-school and school* education by the implementation of which competence development has got into the focus of Hungarian public education. The teaching programmes, the teaching aids preparing for knowledge that can be mobilised and applied in the long term as well, were developed in 7 competence areas according to three models. The seven competence areas are: text comprehension and text creation, mathematical literacy, foreign language literacy, social-life competences, career building competences, ICT and pre-school education.

The development of programme packages were developed and piloted in various phases. The products of the first phase of the development were received by the institutions of Regional Centres of School and Pre-school Development. More than a hundred schools and pre-schools (1,380 teachers) piloted the programme packages and helped finalise them. Starting in the autumn of 2006 the teaching aids were applied in the framework of new tenders (HRDOP 3.1.3 and 3.1.4) by several thousand of teachers and pupils and 21 service providers organised preparatory courses for 6,300 teachers of 1,600 institutions.

For all competence areas recommendation were also prepared to facilitate the inclusive education of special needs children/pupils. The novelty features of the programme packages included the holistic approach, change in the proportion of acquiring knowledge and developing competences, possessing a wide range of knowledge, conscious reflection on new information, ensuring the diversity of learning and teaching strategies, cooperation coming into the front, efficient preparation for adult roles and for lifelong learning. The key concepts included: creativity, creativeness, differentiation, cooperation, empathy, equal opportunities, responsibility, communication, conflict management, community participation, critical thinking, independence, self-reflection, problem-solving and social solidarity.

The *National Core Curriculum* is the basic document for the school education of special needs pupils as well. In preparing their pedagogical programmes the schools can apply the National Core Curriculum according to the local characteristics. The educational, teaching and developmental contents outlined in this basic document are necessary for all children despite the differences among the pupils. The differences among the pupils are taken into account in developing the local pedagogical programmes. Disability is a type of difference, which requires more kind differentiation than the usual content and procedure differentiation, the application of special procedures and additional pedagogical services. The aims, tasks, contents, activities and requirements related to the development of special needs pupils have to be defined in the pedagogical programme of the school, in the quality management programme of the institution, in the local curriculum, in the teaching-learning programmes connected to thematic units, plans, and in the individual development plans.

The whole educational system of the public education institutions participating in the *education of special needs pupils* is determined by comprehensive, long-term habilitation/rehabilitation objectives and tasks, which are included in the documents of the institutions. The habilitating and rehabilitating activity is conducted in an open learning-teaching process shaped and organised in team work, which requires the use of procedures, time frames, tools, methods, therapies depending on the needs of individual children or groups of children.

The factors influencing the content of the habilitating, rehabilitating activities include: the type, severity of the disability, the time when it was formed, the age, the health, psychical, and mental state of the special needs pupils, their abilities, capacities, developed skills, cognitive functions, and existing knowledge.

c./ In terms of curricular time, how many instructional hours per year are dedicated to learning reading in the early primary grades? During how many years?

The framework curriculum of primary education was prepared according to the approaches and principles of the National Core Curriculum; this is what was made more concrete – creating in this way a uniform starting point for local curricula. As it is of grounding character the development of *basic skills and competences* essential for acquiring knowledge and mastering the complexities of everyday life is defined as the most important task. The content of the *knowledge* necessary for this is selected from among the scientific information important from the aspects of national traditions and future, which is to be acquired by pupils in a natural environment through life-like experiences. The knowledge acquired in this way is characterised by flexibility, and applicability for the requirements of the given age. Such knowledge is called competence. Starting the development of *key competences* is another important task of primary education.

The *introductory phase of school education* is defined by the National Core Curriculum as a two-year period (grades 1-2) – and the precondition of successful transition from pre-school to school is that the first two years are oriented towards more time-consuming forms of organising activities and learning characteristic for pre-school education. In the areas of motivating for achievement and developing competences the regulation gives ground for individual interests and allows of the management of the differences that are considerable at this age.

In the *starting phase* (grades 3-4) the learning-teaching processes determined by the achievement expectations become more accentuated. Motivation and organisation of learning focus on the achievements expressed in the developed tasks of the National Core Curriculum. The function of the *grounding phase* (grades 5-6) is to ground the key competences, abilities necessary for school education. This is in this phase where knowledge (and the process of teaching) is getting more structured, which requires the targeted grounding of competences necessary for and related to this type of learning.

In grades 1-4, 27-32 % of the instructional hours can be used for first mother tongue education, in grades 5-6 this ratio is 17-24%. Developing tasks of mother tongue education include reading and the comprehension of a written text. Although there are more than ten textbook families available for teaching reading, assessments – e.g. Monitor-assessments – have signified since 1986 that there are problems with the comprehension skills of Hungarian pupils. It is true that in most schools the conscious, planned development of reading skills finishes after grade 4, although it is well-known that this ability can be developed throughout our whole life.

The continuing phase of teaching reading (grades 5-6) may have a considerable role in developing comprehension skills and where necessary the basic skills can be strengthened on the differences within the education system can also be reduced. In grades 5-6 – with extending the period of developing basic competences – 25-40 percent of instructional hours has to be used for strengthening the basic skills.

d./ How can teachers be trained and better equipped to meet the learners diverse expectations and needs?

The key actors of the implementation of educational policy objectives are the teachers. Continual development has a decisive role in the methodological preparation of them and in making them sensitive to problems. In Hungary the present system of in-service teacher training was established by a governmental decree in 1997²³. Teachers are obliged to take part in 120 hours of accredited in-service teacher training in every seven years in order to ensure their professional development and to achieve the pedagogical aims of their institutions in a more effective way. The system operates on “market” base: accredited courses (supply) are offered by teacher-training institutions, various service providers and profit-oriented companies, and teachers can choose according to their needs (demand). Participation in in-service training is supported by the budget: the institutions receive earmarked budgetary support for in-service training in the rate of the number of teachers, to the extent defined in the budget bill.²⁴

Based on research data²⁵ it can be said that – although in Hungary only 30% of teachers participate in in-service training – class teachers teaching 4-8-year-old children take part in the highest rate in these trainings. In the last three years the most popular courses were the ones related to the individual development of children, and the education of special needs children. Among the methodological courses the most popular ones focused on the use of cooperative techniques and many teachers took part in ICT-related training.

The in-service training courses supporting the implementation of the *priorities of the educational policy* also appeared in the supply. Such were the courses related the central programme of Measure 2.1 of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme of the National Development Plan “*Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Disadvantaged Pupils in The Education System*” for the teachers engaged in educating disadvantaged, mainly Roma and special needs children and pupils. The direct aim of the developments planned in the programme was that by practice-oriented training of 11,500 teachers and professional supporting pedagogical work efficient practices of the inclusive education of children with diverse educational needs and diverse backgrounds could be disseminated. In addition to training programmes sulINova Agency for Educational Development and In-service Teacher Training helped the development of efficient institutional models of inclusive education of disadvantaged pupils meeting the criteria of the Integrational Pedagogical Framework of References (IPR) by developing and providing professional and network services. The programme ensured support for the pedagogical and institution development work first of all for the 270 public education institutions that had won tenders in 2004-2006 in the tender component of the measure. However, the integration know-how resulting from the programme will be available for all public education institutions. In the tender component supporting the inclusive education of special needs pupils and the adaptation of integration programmes about 180 public education institutions became suitable for inclusive education until 2008 – with the help of the professional services of the central programme. Central

²³ Government decree 277/1997. (22. 12.) on in-service teacher training, teachers’ post-graduate, professional examination and benefits and advantages of teachers participating in in-service training.

²⁴ Dr Polinszky Márta (2003): *A továbbképzési rendszer sajátosságai Magyarországon*. www.sulinova.hu

²⁵ Cseh Györgyi (2006): *A tanítóknak szóló pedagógus-továbbképzések szerepe a személyre szóló nevelés megvalósításában*

programme 2.1.1 took steps in initial teacher training as well in order to increase equal chances for disadvantaged and special needs pupils to strengthen the methodological competences and pedagogical contents necessary for the efficient implementation of efficient inclusion. Therefore it offered applicable training programmes for higher education as well.

In addition to the central programme the achievement of the objectives of Measure 2.1 were enhanced by implementing tender programmes as well. On 25 February 2004, the first tenders appeared for supporting the inclusive education of special needs pupils (HRDOP 2.1.2) and supporting the integrated education of disadvantaged pupils (HRDOP 2.13. and 2.1.4.) These so-called first round tenders were followed by others in 2005 and 2006.

The main objective of the development programme enhancing *Equal Opportunities for Special Needs Pupils* is that with the expansion of inclusive education children could learn in a school which is suitable for inclusion by right of its operation and where the organisational and content frames of inclusive education are created as well as the conditions in which the educational needs of all pupils could be met. To achieve this a support system is required, which facilitates the development of the pedagogical systems of the institutions, the training of teachers, the adaptation of programme packages, the change in the attitude of the inclusive and the external environment. The package of measures developed for ensuring equal opportunities supported the institutions undertaking the integration of special needs pupils through tenders and central programmes.

The developments brought about in the framework of the central programme enhanced the establishment and renewal of a supporting pedagogical system, the means of which supported the institutions at the level of concrete pedagogical practices and activity. Programme packages that were developed as a result of development included:

Developing a programme package for teacher training

- The pedagogy of inclusion is not an organic part of teacher training in Hungary. The training programmes related to the education of special needs pupils are offered in the framework of special education major – occasionally in inclusive education. Some higher education institutions are open and there have been initiatives for familiarising students with the pedagogy of inclusion. However, no training models have been developed that would be incorporated into teacher training and would familiarise teacher trainees with the competences that could help the implementation of inclusive education.
- The programme package developed for initial training contains the professional and theoretical basics as well as the methods, procedures, techniques, therapeutic activities building on them and the educational and legal background – all this from the aspect of special educational needs and by showing the characteristic features as well.

Development and implementation of in-service teacher training programmes and training programmes for experts

- All teachers engaged in the implementation of inclusive education find themselves in new situations, in which their existing competences and well-tried practices cannot fully satisfy the special requirements of the development. The target groups of the in-service trainings are mainstream and special education teachers. In integration the special education teachers have to use their competences in situations of which they have no experiences. Therefore the knowledge and experiences exchanged in professional cooperation are very important.

Trainings to increase social sensitivity – the reason behind offering such training is the recognition that the successful inclusion of special needs pupils has implications outside the walls of the school as well. It concerns the intra-professional areas connected to the integration of children, the various services and policy areas. The assertion of the rights of the disabled and their social inclusion depend on that as many actors engaged in integration as possible learn about the factors that make inclusion really successful.

Local decision-maker have a crucial role in this process as at local levels they coordinate the policy tasks in which inclusive education appears as a very sensitive element. To achieve social integration it is necessary to secure the support and coordinate the work of civil organisations operating at local, territorial level and that of groups of trades that can provide special services. The information and knowledge required for this can be acquired in trainings.

Development of the know-how of integrated education, developing an data bank and service programme package

- The educational programme packages are developed for teaching certain subjects on the one hand and for facilitating pedagogical work in cross-curricular areas on the other. The additional special contents that enhance the inclusive education of special needs pupils are parts of the programme package. The developed programme packages get into the data bank and institutions engaged in inclusive education can apply for their adaptations.

Developing new methods to prevent early school leaving

- In Hungary considerably fewer special needs students participate in secondary education leading to a secondary school leaving exam and/or more prestigious qualifications. Along the achievement-centred Hungarian secondary school education the inclusion of special needs students can hardly been implemented. To manage the causes of mass failure and ineffectiveness the programme development undertakes to conduct research and to develop a development conception following this research.

Transfer of the knowledge accumulated in the special institutions to the mainstream

- Reinforcing the intention of the mainstream general schools to engage in inclusive education opens up new perspectives for the social learning processes of the special needs children and the non-impaired pupils attending mainstream schools. Seeking new ways accompanying inclusion, institutional innovations result in considerable quality improvement in the mainstream school as well. Effectiveness depends largely on to what extent the development supply of the institutions providing care for special needs and mainstream pupils can be connected and coordinated with the available professional services and also to what extent new areas can be opened for children and young people by creating cooperation between the family background and the local environment.

- Pupils' self-assessment, forming teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusive education, the objectives, basic principles and methods of differentiated education, the share of work in the classroom can be enhanced by showing and evaluating examples. To achieve this development of evaluation materials, aids tests, programmes has started in the changing special education institutions.

e./ How can the formal and non-formal learning environments be more effectively organized in order to ensure the inclusion of all learners?

If traditional pedagogical culture remains unchanged, the advantageous situation that has started to shape will gradually disappear in a few years and a situation similar to the current one will be restored. The traditional school takes the pupils out of their natural social environment, seats them behind each other and thus isolates them because the predominantly knowledge-transferring teaching can only be realised if pupils listen to the teacher. This system is hit by severe problems (especially because total new generations spend most of their time in the artificial environment of the school isolated from each other receiving transferred knowledge). Three severe problems are worth noting. This system is highly de-motivating, generating an increasing amount of discipline problems, which are ever more extreme in their manifestations. The younger the pupil the less efficient is teaching through information transfer. At the same time this system does not allow of facilitating the development of social skills and competences (especially that of cooperation).

School heads are entitled to exempt special needs pupils from being assessed in some subjects or parts of subjects – with the exception of so-called practical subjects – based on the recommendation of the expert and rehabilitation committees.²⁶ A very important passage of the act is that in case of exemption the school organises individual activities for these pupils in the time frame defined by the law. The pupil is assisted in catching up according to an individual development.

Hungarian experiences show that the effectiveness of the inclusive education of special needs pupils depend essentially on the applied elements of the pedagogical-methodological culture²⁷. Pedagogical culture is renewed in the framework of teaching-learning strategies, methods, tools, aids, procedures of organising education. Inclusion is achieved by showing empathy towards children, change of attitudes, integrated approach, using differentiated pedagogical methods that take into consideration the personality of the child, diagnostic approach, procedures of organising learning, and applying the principle of differentiated education in everyday practice.

In inclusive education the school undertaking inclusion plays an active role. In the teaching-learning process the individual development of all pupils in the class are emphasised, taking into account the special needs, rhythm of work, abilities of each child. It is easier to accept a child differing from the others in such a class which is seen by the teachers as a community consisting of individuals as school work is not directed primarily to those with average performance.

In the best inclusive institutions there is unequivocal commitment in the institutional practice, teachers' roles have been reconsidered, teachers' competences have been enriched. The teachers of inclusive institutions regard it very important to establish (individually, or in community) the motivational basis necessary for education and development, to find the most adequate individual methods and appropriate techniques for the development and differentiated teaching of special needs pupils, to seek alternative solutions for a given educational problem and to cooperate with parents, social partners and other professionals.

²⁶ Act No LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education, Article 30 (9).

²⁷ Research data prove that that chances of the special needs pupils considerably increase when there are special strategies in the mainstream school, teachers are well-prepared in methodology and opportunities are offered to correct learning paths within the institution. (*Kőpataki-Mayer-Singer, 2007*).

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