

THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
AND ITS COORDINATION

Dr. György Ágoston



Educational research institutions

In Hungary, as in other countries, the major bases for educational research are the educational research institutes and the education departments or institutes of higher education. Some interdisciplinary educational research /e.g., on psychology of education, sociology of education, economics of education, etc./ is also carried out at institutions for the various individual disciplines.

Four large central educational research institutions exist in Hungary: the National Institute of Education, the Educational Research Institute at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Educational Research Centre of Higher Education, and the Institute of Popular Education. Besides, there are national research centres at the National Education Library /doing research on comparative education/, the National Institute of Vocational Guidance, the newly-established National Research Centre for Educational Technology and various institutes for research on methods of vocational training.

Among the education departments /or institutes/, the most important are those of the universities and colleges of university status. Special mention should be made of the departments of education at three universities /Budapest, Szeged and Debrecen/, which look back on a long tradition. They train teachers for senior secondary schools. Other universities with education departments are the Technical University, Budapest, and the Agricultural University, Gödöllő, where engineering teachers for the specialized training colleges for

non-graduate engineers are trained. Finally, there are departments of education at the Academies of Art and the colleges of physical education.

From the point of view of educational research, the most important among the colleges not ranking as universities are the teacher training colleges offering 8 semester courses /5 colleges plus one branch/ and those offering 6 semester courses /10/. The former train teachers for the upper grades /age groups 10-14 years/ of the eightgrade basic school, while the latter are for teachers for the lower grades /age group 6-10 years/. In recent years, some technical universities have also opened teacher training departments for prospective technical teachers. The centre for research on special education is the Training College for Teachers of Handicapped Children at Budapest, which has a four-year study course. The Training College for Kindergarten teachers are further significant centres of educational research. There are 4 such colleges and 3 branches.

In the field of interdisciplinary research, important research work on educational sociology is done at the Sociological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and on educational sociology at the Psychological Institute of the same Academy.

In addition to the central institutions mentioned above, groups of teachers at the universities and colleges, as well as regional institutes, do research on teaching methods for individual school-subjects. The afore-mentioned institutions invite practising educators, and even entire schools /pilot schools/ to participate in various ways in their research activities. Certain schools may even be given permission to conduct educational experiments themselves, if they have a suitable concept and the necessary facilities.

For a comparatively small country like Hungary, all this adds up to quite a wide and intricate network. We know from experience how difficult it is to get an overview of all research activities, to obtain full information of where and what research work is in progress and how it is conducted.

And it is an even more difficult task to organize, plan and coordinate all these efforts.

Organization and coordination of educational research up to 1973

For a long time, the planning and organization of educational research followed the system outlined below. Apart from some additions and alterations, this system has been retained in the concept described in the next section. Every research institution is required to submit to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences a research plan covering 3-4 years and based on the general regulations of the Ministry concerned. At the end of the plan period, a progress report on the realization of the programme must be presented. The latest research plan covers the years 1972-1975.

The method of selecting research topics and dealing with them depended /and still does depend/ on the specific nature of the research institute. Institutes attached and directly responsible to a Ministry /e.g. the National Institute of Education/ are inevitably influenced in the choice of their research topics by the current needs and requirements of their Ministry. Equally, the implementation of their programmes is affected by ministerial policy decisions, which are binding on research. The research groups at the research institutes of the Academy of Sciences and the university departments, on the other hand, are in principle free to choose their own topics. It is, of course, understood that society and public opinion among scholars expect researchers to select themes which will foster the economic, social and cultural development of the country. This feeling of responsibility, the consciousness that through their research work they are contributing to the economic, social and cultural progress of their country, stimulates educational researchers and inspires them to resolve the problems of formal and informal education arising from the recent economic, social and political development of our society, and to help improving, in content and methods, the activities of our educational institutions. A balance must

thus be established between the freedom of research and the needs of the country.

A significant characteristic of the research work done at the education departments or institutes of universities and colleges - as distinct from the institutions exclusively engaged in research - is that, having a direct interest in the training of teachers and other students of education, they must endeavour in their research constantly to modernize their educational training programmes in accordance with new scientific developments. The selection of research themes was, and still is, directly or indirectly guided by the reports and resolutions relating to the education system, cultural life and educational research which are put out from time to time by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the competent government authorities and the ministries.

Such a guidance function was exercised by the Commission for Education of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which periodically drew up and distributed suggestions for research topics taking into account the above-mentioned documents and the research needed for the further development of education.

The Commission, of which the directors of the central research institutes and the heads of the education departments of universities are members, also coordinated all educational research within the limits of its possibilities. Essentially this coordination consisted of the following:

The heads of the above-mentioned institutions sent their research plans /covering 3-4 years/ through their competent authorities to the Commission, which studied them from the point of view of theme and feasibility. If two or more research groups had planned research on identical or related subjects, the Commission drew their attention to the necessity of coordinating their work and the need for cooperation. The research institutions were expected to heed such advice. At the end of the plan period, the Commission evaluated the overall results on the basis of the progress report.

The organizing and coordinating work carried out by the Commission was useful. If the results were not entirely satisfactory, this was mainly due to the fact that the

Commission had no funds at all at its disposal. It had, therefore, no means of financing research on subjects it considered important. It did not even have the necessary administrative personnel to keep detailed records of on-going research.

In general, educational research was financed out of the budget of the institutions of which the educational research establishments formed part. University departments or institutes, for instance, received the funds for their educational research from the budget of the university concerned. Hence the resources available for such research were very modest.

For a long time there was, regrettably, inadequate purposeful and organized cooperation between educational policy-makers and researchers. As a result, some decisions on education policy lacked the necessary scientific foundations, such as prior scientific experiments, comparative or historical research, and had afterwards to be withdrawn or revised. This lack of coordination between research and educational policy had, of course, direct repercussions on research. Nevertheless, educational research has in many respects been beneficial to educational practice in schools and to education generally.

The somewhat unsatisfactory state of affairs described above is reflected in a highly significant party document. In a resolution passed in 1972, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party found it necessary to make the following statement on the situation of the national education system and the requirements for its further development:

"The organizations entrusted with the direction of the education system have no long-term overall development plan. Consequently, no definite concept of educational policy or of the school system has been evolved, and measures taken have been of a supplementary nature to meet temporary needs. Important educational policy decisions were taken without prior experiments or investigations taking national and international experience into account and analyzing the latter in the context of our national conditions."

This resolution also expressed dissatisfaction with the results of educational research. It not only put the

unsatisfactory situation on record but also urged implementation of the resolution in the interests of educational development, thus initiating a new phase in the development of educational research in Hungary. An excerpt from this resolution is given below:

"Educational research must be considerably developed. Extension of the institutional basis for research and planned building-up of a research cadre are essential pre-conditions for the solution of our educational problems. This also requires better coordination of the available research capacity.

The foremost task of educational research is to investigate the problems existing in the school system and in general education, and to help resolving these problems. Particular attention should be paid to the 'basic'/compulsory 8-grade/ school, to vocational guidance, all-round development of individuals' potential and abilities, and furtherance of specially gifted children.

There is a need for intensified efforts to ensure that weighty policy decisions will be based on scientific foundations, and that educational planning problems will be clearly reorganized and examined. To provide a practical basis for educational research and further training of educators, pilot schools must be established. The teachers participating in this experimental work should receive material and moral support.

To enable educational research workers to carry out these tasks successfully, corresponding work must also be expanded, or in some cases initiated, in the sciences bordering on education."

Organization and coordination of educational research since 1973

Following this party resolution, the government issued regulations designed to further the development of educational research and to improve its organization and coordination.

In 1973 the Council of Ministers considered, for the first time in the country's history, the question of educational research. It decided that educational research for the development of education should be added to the previous five main fields of research of national importance. Accordingly, a sixth national research plan was adopted. The Council of Ministers accepted the long-term /1973-1990/ research plan which had meanwhile been worked out by experts and researchers

in the field of education, and set up an Interministerial Coordination Committee with the following terms of reference:

- cooperative harmonization of research within the framework of the long-term plan
- organization of the systematic evaluation of the interim and final results of research projects and periodical discussion of the progress reports by education experts
- selection and assignment of the persons to be responsible for the individual research projects
- a recommendation to the Minister of Education regarding the allocation of funds for this research work.

The above-mentioned long-term plan which was approved by the Council of Ministers is an important document. Whilst it is not possible in this paper to give a full account of its contents, mention should be made of the wide range of research it encompasses, namely:

1. Fundamental structure and educational issues involved in the long-term development of the Hungarian education system.
2. Continuous up-dating of the contents and methods of school education.
3. Basic questions concerning the living conditions of pupils and students, their communities and their activities in youth organizations.
4. Organized learning and further training of adults within the education system.

Each of the above research areas comprises 4-6 sub-areas consisting of several specific research themes. The long-term plan is divided into medium-term planning periods and outlines the various tasks to be accomplished in each of these periods.

The organization and coordination of the work to be done in the four above-mentioned research areas has been entrusted to coordinating institutions who will invite any research group that could make a successful contribution to take on a specific task.

The Interministerial Coordination Committee now has at its disposal substantial funds to finance its work in accordance with the principles referred to. As a result, the research

groups receive separate financial resources for the research assigned to them by the Committee. Twice a year the afore-mentioned coordinating institutions have to submit progress reports on their research area together with an account of the amounts spent. In this account they may also request additional funds or, if their allocation has not been fully utilized, suggest that the balance be transferred to other research groups for use in their own work.

The Interministerial Committee also has its own organizational and administrative machinery, the so-called programme section which permits the public to gain an insight into the research in progress. It also publishes information sheets describing the current state of educational research on the basis of the progress reports that have been submitted.

In addition to these activities, regulations concerning the development of educational research and the utilization of research results have been issued. The Council of Ministers has ordered pilot schools and basic schools to be designated for this purpose. The pilot schools offer to the institutions carrying out educational research the possibility of conducting continuous research in various fields over a number of years and to compare the results. Upon request of a research group, the Ministry responsible for the type of specialist school concerned will determine which schools are to serve as pilot schools. The task of the basic experimental schools is to pass on to teachers undergoing further teacher training the results of experiments, to present these in practice and to popularize their modern, or modernized, methods and up-to-date teaching materials and equipment. Both the pilot schools and the basic experimental schools enter into formal agreements with the research institutions precisely defining their duties and an adequate financial compensation for the work involved.

The educational research directed by the Interministerial Coordination Committee, /which is designed to develop the national education system/, does not, of course, constitute

the totality of educational research done in Hungary. There is also research on theoretical, historical, comparative or even on specific empirical themes that may be of importance, for example, on the development of university education, which does not feature in the plan that has been described. Any research institution, any department of education may do research outside this central plan, and the financial resources required for this purpose by university or college institutes or departments must also be secured. In principle these research establishments are at liberty to decide whether or not they want to accept a research assignment under the central plan. Of course, if they decline, they will receive no funds from the budget of the Interministerial Coordinating Committee.

The obligation for research institutions to make 3-4 year plans and to submit progress reports and accounts remains. However, these medium-term plans are now integrated within the long-term plan.

At present, two years after its approval in 1973, the long-term plan is being revised in the light of experience gained during that period. Educational research in Hungary has taken great strides forward as a result of the 1973 decision of the Council of Ministers and its implementation. It has been possible to mount large-scale and expensive research experiments. As an example, I should like to mention the research done at my own Institute. From the university budget I receive only a modest financial contribution to this work. But my Institute is participating in three national-level projects under the central plan. They are the following:

1. Experimental testing of the training model for compensatory pre-school education.
2. Experimental investigation of a possible model for differentiated senior secondary /"Gymnazium"/ education.
3. Criteria and methods for scientific evaluation of pupils' achievements.

In the last few years I have obtained substantial amounts for this research work from the research fund, both for the

purpose of appointing researchers, research assistants and administrative staff, and for project-tied expenditure. Furthermore, two experimental basic pre-schools to test the proposed model of compensatory education, and three pilot senior secondary schools /Gymnazium/ have been assigned to me. The teachers participating in these educational experiments receive a very adequate fee for their cooperation.

Организация и координация педагогического исследования

Дьёрдь Агоштон

После характеристики основных венгерских учреждений, ведающих вопросами исследований в области образования излагается система организации и координации исследований в области образования в Венгрии, существовавшая до 1973 г. Поскольку, к сожалению, имело место недостаточно целенаправленное и организованное сотрудничество между руководящим персоналом в области образования и исследователями, в результате чего некоторые решения по политике в области образования были лишены необходимой научной основы и впоследствии были отменены, Венгерская социалистическая партия трудящихся приняла решение относительно исследований в области образования, которое явилось стимулом для новых мероприятий в этой области. В соответствии с этим решением правительство издало правила, направленные на дальнейшее развитие исследований в области образования и улучшение их организации и координации. Совет министров постановил осуществлять исследования в целях развития образования, помимо предыдущих пяти областей исследований национального значения. Был разработан план исследований на период до 1990 г. и учрежден Межминистерский комитет, с функциями организации, координации, финансирования и администрации, который будет осуществлять деятельность с помощью "программного секретариата". Кроме того, в настоящее время в Венгрии существуют также другие формы помощи исследованиям в области образования, в том числе организация экспериментальных школ и теоретических занятий, специально для целей исследований.

STRUCTURE ET COORDINATION DE LA RECHERCHE
ET MATIERE D'EDUCATION

György Ágoston

Après une introduction des principales institutions hongroises s'occupant de la recherche pédagogique, on trouve une description de l'organisation et de la coordination de la recherche pédagogique en Hongrie jusqu'en 1973. Comme il existait malheureusement une coopération trop ambitieuse et mal organisée entre les planificateurs et les chercheurs de l'enseignement et qu'il en résulta que de nombreuses décisions du domaine pédagogique manquèrent de bases scientifiques nécessaires, de sorte que l'on dut les retirer ultérieurement, le parti socialiste ouvrier hongrois fit passer une résolution concernant la recherche pédagogique afin de permettre de nouveaux développements dans ce domaine. Conformément à cette résolution, le gouvernement fournit des règlements destinés au développement ultérieur de la recherche pédagogique et à l'amélioration de son organisation et de la coordination. Le Conseil des Ministres décida d'adjoindre la recherche en vue du développement de la pédagogie aux cinq domaines de recherches d'intérêt national. On a établi un plan de recherche s'étendant sur une période allant jusqu'à 1990 et un comité interministériel se charge des fonctions d'organisation de coordination, des finances et de l'administration, qui doivent être mises à exécution par un "secrétariat des programmes". On fournit donc un autre appui à la recherche pédagogique hongroise qui comprend des écoles pilotes et des établissements de base spécialement destinés à la recherche.