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The Institutional System of Adult Education in
Hajdú-Bihar County in the Light of the Historical
Tendencies in Hungarian Adult Education

- Theses of the Ph.D. dissertation -

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AIMS AND CIRCUMSCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC

“...In the beginning of the 1990s it seemed that tertiary training held the future. By now we can see that this question is more differentiated. It seems that by the tertiary education becoming multitudinous, a new level of training shows up on the horizon” (Kozma 2000:5). This **fourth level** is adult education. The experts’ discussions about the invisible expansion of this scope give the topicality of the dissertation. In advanced industrial countries annually half of the adult population takes part in some kind of training. In these countries the number of participants is bigger than the aggregate number of the registered primary and secondary school students. Now we have reached the phase of the history of education, where emphasis is transposed from education to continuous training (Belanger 1999:109).

The central topic of the paper is the part on Hajdú-Bihar County in the adult educational atlas research, but the analysis of the theoretical background is also included. The topic of the research belongs to the sphere of **education**, in which pedagogy is the theory (and practice) of the training of children, andragogy is the education (training) of adults up to old age, and gerontology is a special pedagogical activity for old people (von Bergen 1972). Formulated from the Greek words *aner* (adult, man) and *agoge* (leading, training), andragogy refers to „the theory and the relevant practice aggregating the principles of education, self-education, teaching, and self-training of adults” (Benedek – Csoma – Harangi 2002:35).

In Hungary three expressions are used in the field of **andragogy**. The first one (felnőttnevelés) means the complex personality development of adults; the second one (felnőttoktatás) puts the greatest emphasis on theoretical knowledge; and the third one (felnőttképzés) is focuses on the development of practical competences. These three terms in English speaking territories are all named adult education. In the empirical part of this paper based on the third point of the Hamburg Declaration (1997), we use adult education primarily in the following meaning: “Adult education denotes the aggregate of all the learning processes, let them be formal or others, with which people’s – whom society they belong to considers adults – abilities develop, knowledge grows and professional qualification reaches a higher level or is led towards another direction, so that they could satisfy their own needs and that of society. Learning in adulthood includes formal education and continuous training, non-formal learning and the wide sphere of informal and occurrent education which are available in a multicultural learning society, where theory and practice based approaches are acknowledged” (Harangi – Hinzen – Sz. Tóth 1998:9-10).

German experts claim that “Adult educational institutions have given the chance of training to many, whereby participants became democratic citizens and contributed to a great extent to our country having become a democratic state” (Bohn – Schumann – Stang 1996:17). Equality of opportunity in the field of adult education has to be provided on a high level in Hungary too so that it can become a democratic state. The dissertation is closed with one of the theses of the UNESCO Conference in Paris, that unambiguously summarizes the role of adult education and its future importance: “professional training and especially the training of adults plays a major role in the strengthening of social coherence, and the treatment of all the social and hidden ethnic and other problems, because without them there is no balanced economic development and stable society” (Harangi – Hinzen – Sz. Tóth 1998:85-86).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background can be divided into three large phases that provide taxonomic and conceptual clarification and a sketch of the historical development. It is based on works published in the scope of adult education, education, history, sociology and economics, proving the multi- and interdisciplinary feature of the paper. This integrating point of view is absolutely accepted among the adult education researchers. Experts agree that “*the necessity that these phenomena can be scientifically approached and analyzed adequately only in a multidisciplinary way follows from the complex economic, social and cultural coherence in adult educational processes*” (Durkó – Szabó 2000). Since the paper concentrates entirely on the national situation, primarily Hungarian sources are used. The presence of English sources comes from the comprehensive feature of the topic, the presence of German ones follows from the German antecedents and the effects of German samples on Hungarian adult education.

Adult education in the **first theoretical unit** is placed in the system of education and in the ISCED system adverting to the competence based education too. After that, the three notions of Hungarian adult education that are often used simultaneously in practice, though concentrate on different scopes, are defined. Even though the notion of adult education dominates because of the adult education atlas research, it can not be applied uniformly. During the historical overview in different historical ages, different emphasis was put on the training of adults, so the three different expressions for adult education have been applied according to the sentiments of the given age. In the overview of conceptual basics the theoretical tendencies, research areas, and the Hungarian researches are summed up. They are all extremely diverging and complex, therefore only the sketch of a schematic picture of the situation can be drawn. Still, their presentations are inevitable. The same principles are applicable to the presentation on the fields of adult education. Since the empiric part includes the research of the institutional system, it is important to display the institutions where formal and non-formal, school system or non-school system and general or vocational adult education is present in national context.

In the **second theoretical unit** the historical processes of adult education are grasped, which called for the formation of methodological principles. The development of the contemporary Hungarian institutional system of adult education roots in the past, in the history of adult education. It is evident that the effective exploration and analysis of the institutional system is impossible without knowing the significant events, institutions and people in the past of the adult education. This elementary knowledge helps us understand the basics of the development of the studied institutional system, find the historic roots of the current tendencies and pose them as an explanation for today’s phenomena. Most of the Hungarian adult education researches prepare the through exploration of only one segment in this field. It is doubtless that several comprehensive historical analyses in short form also can be found in certain summaries (Csiby 1987; Zrinszky 1996; Benedek – Csoma – Harangi 2002), but since they are mostly schematic, emphasizing a few significant events and people, this research aims at carrying out a much more detailed work. In a dissertation whose central topic is the empirical analysis of the institutional structure of adult education in Hajdú-Bihar County, the presentation of the historical background is primarily important in its problem historical concerns. Therefore, the most significant events, institutions and people are presented here from the antecedents to these days with a chronological overview of the data. Because of extent limitations it can not mean completeness, the historical studies can never be considered finished. It is a continuous cognitive process, thus in the discussed periods only the most important above mentioned elements are involved. In the centre of the focus those factors are which served as ground for the contemporary forms of adult education and its

institutions. Direct evaluations or justifications are not attached to the individual data, since the central aim of the paper is not the evaluation of historical facts and the production of the history of adult education, but to be a problem raising unit. It has to be clear that the scope of adult education was for a long time – and in its numerous points has been up today – organically connected to scopes of education (v. ö. Mészáros 1981). In its formation, adult educational tasks were primarily attached to the basic functions of the educational and cultural institutions (e.g.: education of the illiterate, social activities and literary activities). In its theoretical concerns writers and thinkers dealt with this topic associated with other spheres of thinking. The institutional system and the academic theoretical grounding that primarily concentrates on adult education and views it as its basic function evolved very slowly. Adult education has a tradition in Hungary: it serves the development of the entire personality, helps her/him find her/his way and living and provides her/him a kind of embedding into society and family.

The **third theoretical unit** is the continuation of the second one: the story told from the antecedents goes on. The phenomenon that effects adult education to the highest extent today is unemployment. Its quantitative, structural, causal, social-psychological aspects, the experiments and possible treatments carried out in the European Union and in Hungary are described. The conclusion of the chapter opens a new dimension for the treatment of unemployment: investment into social capital makes it more bearable and treatable for people. This realization can be drawn parallel to the final conclusion of the historical unit, that is, the entire personality development of the unemployed in the examined area, Hajdú-Bihar County is discussed.

THE METHODS AND THE PROCESS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The **starting point** of the research was the fact that there is little information available about the (general, professional, political and cultural) situation and necessities of Hungarian adult education. State or ministry level overviews concern only individual institutions. These data are available for cultural centers, the regional continuous training centers, the Hungarian Folk High School, the organizations of the folk high schools, and for civil organizations. But an overall overview is missing about the structure of adult education, the structure of the continuous training market that evolved since the change of system. This deficiency is perceivable for the educational politics and education organization as well. During conversations and events partners working in adult education expressed their sorrows for this deficiency that they consider an interfering factor in the development of Hungarian adult education. But up to now there has not been a single institution, which had carried out a study relevant to this topic or could have been able to finance it. However, individual research plans, which were under process or just before accomplishment (puzzle – or patchwork – methods), contribute fruitfully to the creation of the whole image (Hinzen 1997).

The **aim of the whole empirical project** was to survey the institutional part of Hungarian adult education with organization-sociological devices. The antecedent of the research is a thesis – tutored by *Jörg Knoll* at the University of Leipzig in Germany in 1996 –, which measured the adult educational institutions in Cottbus with standard questionnaires embedded into city analysis (Zocher 1996). Adapting this to the Hungarian context the **adult educational atlas research** was built up. In the research the expression **adult education** refers to the comprehensive interpretation of education, training, teaching and learning of adults, in which adult education has general, political, cultural and professional purposes.

Thus state, marketing and civil organizations can all be traced in our research. The word **atlas** means sketches of maps, and it includes accounts on the institutions based on the processing of the standard questionnaires (cf. Bajusz – Hinzen – Horváthné 1998:61). The current creators of adult educational atlases (AEA, in the adapted project: Weiterbildung Atlas, WBA) had to find out, compile and evaluate the detailed information concerning the institutions in terms of structure, legal form, finance, supply, staff and participants. The individual continuous training atlases had to enable a national overview and comparison. The organizers gave free run of the results for the participating adult educational institutions; municipalities; ministries; national, educational, cultural and research institutions; civil organizations; universities; colleges; associations and other interested institutions. It was considered eligible to continue the conversation and the counseling about them. This way, the project could contribute to the research on the development of the continuous training market, which includes the general, professional, political and cultural adult training in national, county and local level. Indirectly, it gave information about the qualifications expected from the jobholders in the institutions, which are important from the aspects of the development of the university students' training and the already employed people's continuous training (aims, contents, methods, curriculum). Finally, it could serve as a starting point for new research projects, and it helped further develop the adult education departments of the participating universities (Janus Pannonius University FEEFI – University of Pécs TTK FEEFI from 2001, Kossuth Lajos University – University of Debrecen from 2001) and colleges (Juhász Gyula Teachers' College – Juhász Gyula Faculty of Teachers' College of the University of Szeged from 2001, Teachers' College of Jászberény – Faculty of College of Jászberény of Szent István University from 2001, Faculty of Teachers' College of ELTE). But the aim of the research is not the explanation of the numerous changes on the scope of adult education and the exploration of its context, but to draw a picture of the situation. By the compilation of adult educational atlases, the research group wished to contribute to the exploration of the institutions of the Hungarian adult educational market and the collection of its basic data, which hopefully helps outline tendencies in the new situation (cf. Bajusz – Hinzen – Horváthné 1998:61).

As far as the **research method** is concerned, the accumulation of data was based on questionnaires that were filled during conversations with the employees of the given institutions in the presence of commissioners. Primarily the following adult educational and continuous training institutions were involved:

- private adult educational and continuous training institutions
- various chambers
- trade union educational institutions
- folk high schools
- TIT associations
- technical schools and institutions of higher education
- church maintained continuous training institutions

By the interviews with the representatives of the adult training institutions, the aim was achieving a quantitative overview about the continuous training situation in the cities. A standardized, central questionnaire was used, which was modified only in case of interpretational problems. The same questionnaire was applied in both phases of the research. Results revealed from the second phase and presented in the dissertation became important, because they tested if a questionnaire adapted for a county town can be used for smaller towns too.

Based on this, the **setting up of the empiric part** begins with the description of the research. In its frame the research antecedents and phases are presented, and the comparative possibilities chosen are also revealed. The demonstration of the results is grounded by the

detailed presentation of the questionnaires and the research process. The most significant empirical part of the paper is the description of the adult educational atlas of Hajdú-Bihar County. But first of all, the socio-geographical description of the county is demonstrated: after the historic and geographical overview all the society-forming elements are described: in terms of settlement networks, population, infrastructure, housing, education, culture, churches and economy. It is followed by a presentation on the results of the aggregated data of the county and each comparative aspect (settlement typological differences, territorial differences, differences between profit-oriented and non-profit institutions). But beyond that, the presentation of the county towns' adult educational atlas and the summary written by means of the database of adult educational organizations assessed by the Adult Training Act (2001/CI.) can be considered an empiric (though secondary) element in the dissertation.

In the **first phase** of the research aiming at the creation of a national adult educational atlas, the survey of county towns was carried out. The leaders of the research were: Heribert Hinzen, director of the Project Office of the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association in Budapest; and Dénes Koltai, the director of the University of Pécs FEEFI. During the work one researcher had one or two districts in Budapest, while each county town was explored by one individual researcher. This way a significant research group of 40 contributors was set up. They were mainly undergraduate university or college students or young lecturers. In this phase the author of the dissertation took part in the exploration of Eger.

As the experimental example of the **second phase** the adult educational atlas of the towns in Hajdú-Bihar County was accomplished (except for the county town, since its survey had been completed in the first phase as mentioned above and its results are included in the aggregating paper). The work was carried out by the students majoring in cultural and adult educational management at the University of Debrecen. Between November 1998 and December 1999 the surveys were made with the help of five undergraduate students. All 16 towns in the county were explored, and the data of the county town was completed. Among those 16 towns it was only Létavértes, where no adult educational institution was found; and one other (Nyíradony), where the director of the only institution did not wish to give an interview. But information concerning 14 towns of the county about the adult educational institutions was gathered. Completing this task, almost 50 students worked on the surveying of the villages (65 settlements) in Hajdú-Bihar County between September 2000 and August 2001. Altogether 17 adult educational institutions were found in 14 villages. Földes (3) and Biharnagybajom (2) have more than one institution, in the other 12 settlements (Báránd, Csökmő, Hajdúbagos, Hajdúsámson, Hosszúpályi, Kaba, Komádi, Nyírábrány, Nyíracsad, Sárretudvari, Szerep, Vámospércs) only one was found in each. Thereby, all the settlements of the county (one county town, 16 other towns + 65 villages, altogether 82) were explored and 158 institutions were found.

The settlement researches based on the same sample provided proper ground for **comparison**, and the opportunities it offered were used from various aspects. In terms of the comparative aspect for example it is enabled now (by grouping the institutions on basis of type of settlement they belong to) to survey the differences between the institutions in county towns, other towns and villages. Territorial contrasts in the county became another comparable aspect: differences between the area of Bihar and Hajdúság concerning the adult educational institutions. The area of Bihar has half the territory with 1,5 times more settlements, although most of them have small population (on the average 1900 inhabitants per village). In contrast, the area of Hajdúság is heavily urbanized, which is perceivable in a national scale (cf. Beluszky 1999:312). But its large number and density of population is due to the county town, though it unambiguously has a big number of towns and only few villages. These differences are mirrored in the number of the adult educational institutions

found, especially in relation with the connection between the number of settlements and the number of institutions in the area of Bihar. The difference is much smaller regarding the population: there is one institution for 4464 inhabitants in the area of Bihar, while in Hajdúság the latter number is 4236. (The county average is 4279 inhabitant/institution.) The third comparative aspect that seemed useful was the analysis of the features of the profit-oriented and non-profit institutions. The fact that more than 70% of the surveyed institutions had non-profit features gave reason for this choice. It considerably determines the nature of adult training in Hajdú-Bihar County; therefore these institutions are examined separately.

MAIN OBSERVATIONS

1. The **continuous training market is dynamically developing in Hungary** owing to the growing needs, the multiplying offers and the institutions mediating them. Among others it is proved by the researches of the AEA. The task of politics and government is to create a frame by legal regulations and decisions on training policies. This frame is supposed to structurally form the adult training sector into lifelong learning (Hinzen 2000:115). This task is completed by the Adult Training Act and the adult training register whose most topical data (from the end of 2004) are analyzed in the first part of the summarizing chapter.
2. But this is still not enough: where **investment into education** and training is missing, society can not provide conditions for the continuous development of the economic and human resources. Thus the breakthrough can be reached only by the development of education (Samuelson 2000:527). The related new phenomena and tendencies are summed up in the last unit: the system of adult education has been undergoing continuous change and development since 1989, and the Act in 2001 only pushed it further.
3. During the research the adult **educational interpretation of unemployment** was clarified. People living in the empirically examined area (Hajdú-Bihar County) seem to get over the employment crisis more easily than those living in other parts of the country. In search for a reason the importance of social capital (Bourdieu 1998; Coleman 1998) has to be emphasized and by this the fact that in this area talking about the theoretical or practical training of adults (felnőttoktatás – felnőttképzés) is not enough. The approach oriented at the whole personality (felnőttnevelés) has to gather ground: people have other needs beyond knowledge, such as making contacts and forming community.
4. Examining the theories of capital, it is visible that capital exists in both material and in acquired (incorporated) form. For its accumulation time is needed, and it indicates a kind of subsistence tendency (Bourdieu 1998). Considering the existence of both the economic and cultural capital, in this research in this area the **social capital** proved to be the most important. It can be converted into economic capital under certain conditions, and it is mostly “*based on belonging to the same group*”: it is acquired through social contacts; therefore its size depends on the extension of the network of those connections that the individual is able to use and on the size of the capital possessed by the individual’s contacts. A delegate of a group exploits not only her/his own personal power, but also that of her/his group. Social capital comes from the relations between individuals.
5. Various resources can create social capital. In this respect in Hajdú-Bihar County the presence of recoverable obligations are stronger, expectations are predictable, informal information channels work better and the system of norms is more conservative. The

reason for this is that in this area less people live in a unit of territory, and therefore the principle of acquaintance is more dominant than elsewhere (cf. Beluszky 1999). Social capital is available for these people and it makes problems like unemployment more bearable for them. Communities (family, friends and neighbors) help them get through their difficulties, they know that they can count on the others and they shall not be abandoned (cf. Coleman 1998:14-17).

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