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# SUMMARIUM

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## MEDIA RESOURCE POLICY IN EDUCATION

The current issue of *EDUCATIO* is concerned with new media resources in education. There are two possibilities to deal with this issue. How should we use the new media resources in classrooms and in schools? This is the first possible approach. The second is: how should the education system as a whole – on local as well as national level - adapt to the new world of media? The two approaches are linked to each other. Through the process of learning, teachers and students have to get experienced with new media resources, to discover their advantages as well as their limitations; without this, the education system cannot be changed. It is important that the education system as a whole to be adaptive to the new world of media, so that teachers and students will be able to use the new resources in the proper way throughout the learning process.

The first approach – referring to the use new media resources in teaching and learning – involves practical questions which are often present in the Hungarian pedagogical science publications. The *EDUCATIO* discussed this topic last time in its Vol. 6, Nr 4. (1997) issue. Since that, new resources appeared, as the world of media changes constantly. Those who, on the other hand, wish to get information about the practical application of new media resources can rely on numerous Hungarian publications (the international publications are, of course, also available and accessible). One of the popular topics for researchers in pedagogical science (and pedagogical psychology) is the use of media resource technology in practice and the scientific experiences involved in this. In the Vol. 6, Nr 4. issue of *EDUCATIO* some results have already been presented.

However, we could read less about media resource policy up till now, although policies regarding the media in education are crucial for the application of resources in the teaching and learning process. The basic question posed by media resources in education is – as we already mentioned – the accommodation of education to the new and changing environment of the media. What sort of education is needed in this new environment, and what are its possibilities? How is it possible to regulate education, teachers, students and the owners of institutions when virtual institutions are born (like distance education or virtual university)? How does the system of qualifications change (what are the needed qualifications) in this new media environment? How is it possible to finance the introduction of media to schools? How should teachers get qualified in order to be able to change the teaching and learning processes mentioned before? What form will the relationship between the Internet providers and public education take? Will public education still be a “national issue” in this new media environment? What can we do to be receptive to, or to prevent ourselves from the global influences of the media? These are the questions that a new media policy can raise, and the present issue of *EDUCATIO* makes an attempt to answer some of them.

Péter Tibor Nagy describes, in a historical perspective, how new media resources first appeared in Hungary (*The History of Media Resources in Education*). This historical overview – introducing the present issue of *EDUCATIO* – presents the media resources in time, beginning from the introduction of compulsory education (1868) to the end of the II World War (1945). As the author emphasizes, media resources have always been necessary tools of teaching, and there have always existed some sort of resources (from church icons to the used farming tools). However, we can only speak about resource

policy in education since education became compulsory. Resource policies have always been shaped by two factors. One of these was the range of resources offered – the actual world of media – which continuously challenged schools, their owners and the regulatory governments. The other factor was the response of governments (or authorities) to the new and changing media resources (they either invested into new resources or on the contrary, they banned their usage).

A good example is that of historic maps, which continuously change according to the way new governments understand and intend to teach their own legitimacy. These resources – globes, maps, relief maps, etc. – represented a profitable challenge for the new governments. However, in order to use them, they were compelled to change them. In the Hungarian policy this has also meant the simultaneous redesigning of curriculum and teaching methodologies. Thus, the appearance and development of new resources made the media resource policies be in continuous process of transformation. The author also discusses the messages included in certain resources, the acquisition policy (leading to increasing or declining equity), and problems related with provision in public institutions.

At the beginning of 1970's the Hungarian government negotiated with the UNESCO and with the UNDP about setting up an institution that would contribute to the distributions across Hungary of teaching techniques and technology; and would also perform regional information and coordination duties regarding these. The Ministry of Education funded the Center of Teaching Techniques in 1973, with the objective to coordinate the creation and distribution of technically up-to-date teaching materials. Besides, the center also launched a training program in technology of teaching and carried out R&D works in the same field. These preparations had made possible in 1975 that Hungary joined the ICEM (International Council for Educational Media). What was the effect of these international relations on the Hungarian media resource policy? The article written by Klára Tompa (ICEM and the Hungarian Educational Resource Policy) is trying give answers to that question.

The relationship with ICEM had more and less intensive periods. However, ICEM could strongly influence the Hungarian educational resource policy through a former buffer institution, which was the Hungarian Center of Teaching Techniques (HCTT). This institution was able to mediate between the needs of ICEM and the reactions of Hungarian policy; as well as between the needs of Hungarian educational policy and the international developments. The center have sent and received experts, who trained Hungarian teachers. As a consequence, by the turn of the 1970's and 1980's Hungarian teachers not only could be trained by ICEM, but could also participate in the work of other UNESCO institutions. All these had a strong influence on the elaboration and introduction of the 1978 national curriculum. Educational technology have also come into use in teacher training, and its development became general in teacher training institutions and schools.

The study authored by Ilona Liskó (Educational Resource Policy and the World Bank) reflects on the influence of a World Bank credit upon the educational resource policy in Hungary. The credit served the transformation of the Hungarian system of vocational education. Before the change, students were enrolled in vocational education beginning from age 14. After lower secondary school they had to choose: better students went to high-schools, students with lower performances continued their studies in secondary vocational education. However, this setup did not correspond to the Hungarian law, according to which education was compulsory until the age of 16 (vocational education could not be considered regular school). These vocational training institutions had to be transformed into secondary school institutions, where students below the age of 16 were provided similar education as in other high-schools. According to the new system – supported by the World Bank credit – young people could only specialize for a profession after the age of 16.

How did all this affect educational resource policy? The author asked 70 school principals about their expectations towards this transformation, with especial regard to learning processes. The elaboration of curricula for vocational education lasted between 1998-2001. During this time, with the collaboration of teachers from 116 schools, they elaborated curricula for 104 different professions. The work began with a thorough training in Hungary, and was followed by study tours in Canada, Ireland, England, the Netherlands and Denmark, where teachers could get informed about the Dacum technique and the module system. These experiences influenced the way teachers planned, searched for and acquired the

new media resources. The case study suggests, that the intervention of international institutions can indeed influence and change the system of education in a country (or can even give rise to resistance among the participant teachers).

The article of Éva Tóth is concerned with the effect of the new media environment on educational resource policy of governments and schools (The Internet and the Learning Processes). The writing gives a review on the history of spreading of computers and the Internet in Hungarian schools, and discusses the policy considerations of this process.

Different countries have adopted different strategies to help the acquisition of computer usage skills. There is no reliable evidence on which strategy is more effective on the long run, or which is more efficient. In some countries informatics have become compulsory or is one of the optional subject matters. Another strategy is to use informatics as a resource for other subjects. The third strategy would be to include informatics as part of other subject matters (for example in mathematics, of technology classes). According to the fourth strategy schools are given the autonomy to decide how they want to teach informatics. In Hungary, the Sulinet program began in 1997. In the framework of this program the central government supported the free Internet access for every school. The development reached higher secondary schools in great numbers (lower secondary schools joined the program later and in smaller numbers). In the framework of the program, schools were provided with computer laboratories. Nevertheless, the program had its drawbacks as well: teachers have found that classes with computer assistance needed too long preparations; most teachers were not qualified well enough for teaching with computers; institutions were not equipped well enough to teach informatics as part of other subject matters; computer laboratories could not improve the traditional way of teaching. All these problems have brought to the surface the need for a new school-system and a new teaching system.

András Buda in his article discusses the social effects of the new media environment (Media and Society). According to the author, computers and the Internet raise social inequality and polarizes students, teachers and the society as a whole. Although opportunities are similar, but the performances and the provision of computers are different. Likewise, the time each person can afford to spend with a computer, and the quality of the Internet connection can be very different. One of the main questions is, therefore, how equal the opportunities to use new media resources are? The other question is: to what extent can schools and different social groups benefit from the given opportunities?

How new media resources could contribute to decreasing social disadvantages? The author describes international experiments that illustrate what role can computers play in the reduction of large cultural differences. However, a closer analysis of these experiments show that all such experiments can have both positive or negative results. In the case of positive results disadvantages disappear – or at least they have less effect. In the case when negative results are shown, the community is likely to be divided into a cultural elite group and a mass falling behind, both groups being segregated from the community itself.

The articles all point to the fact that educational resources are not only tools for teaching, but they became an important policy matter. The new media environment asks for a new media policy for education from the part of the educational government. The new policy could, on one hand, mediate the effects of the globalizing media according to the needs of the Hungarian education. On the other hand it could change the education, so that it accommodates the new media. The question remains: is it possible to integrate the new media resources into a traditional educational environment? Or should the traditional educational environment completely change before it could accommodate the effects of the new media? This long-ranging question cannot be answered in a single governmental cycle. Only a longer developmental period can produce enough results to give a solid answer to this problem.

*(text of Tamás Kozma – translated by Ágota Szentannai)*