

*DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING: SYMPOSIUM TO HONOUR THE
WORK OF FRANÇOISE CAILLODS*

*LES ORIENTATIONS DE LA PLANIFICATION DE L'ÉDUCATION : SYMPOSIUM
EN L'HONNEUR DU TRAVAIL ACCOMPLI PAR FRANÇOISE CAILLODS*

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*IIEP's Contributions to the Transformation in Hungary
A Personal Account*

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IIEP's Contributions to the Transformation in Hungary

A Personal Account

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Contributions I

I first got acquainted with IIEP in the 1970's. The director at that time was Michel Debeauvais whom I had met before at a conference. I did not dare to just walk into his office – he was a reserved man – so I was looking for someone who could introduce me to him. I happened to be in Paris for a research seminar and there I met a French teacher, a Hungarian immigrant. She told me I had no reason to be shy, since IIEP was an international institution open to all who are interested.

That was the first time I was at 7-9, rue Eugene-Delacroix, in the respectful XVth district of Paris. I did not speak any French – even now I understand a little. This increased my nervousness. The main reason for my uncertainty was that I had heard a lot about IIEP in Budapest. It was in 1970 that the *World Crisis* book by the founding director *Philip Coombs* was first published in Hungarian. Those in charge for educational policies and planning were all eager to read this book (at least in the Ministry for Education, but I believe it was also read at the Party Headquarters as well as at the National Planning Bureau). After 1968, the Kádár-regime (Hungary's 'socialist dictatorship') began to see the issue of education as very important. Soon a party decision was made about education. In those professional circles who were allowed to come closer to policy-making it was common knowledge that IIEP was doing something significant – educational planning. We also needed their knowledge and experience for an effective 'building of Socialism'.

Many of those experts applied for training programs organized by IIEP; some were supported by the Party leadership, some were not. *József Nagy*, one of my young professors at Szeged University – who later became my colleague and friend – spent ten months at IIEP. After his return he was proudly showing everybody the calculator he bought in Paris. We had never seen anything like that before. We were not allowed to travel abroad, especially not to 'the West'. Coombs' book and the calculator made its impact. Experts, policy-makers and party officials all thought of IIEP as the 'treasury island' of educational planning. A place where they already know what we would need in order to build socialism. And they might even tell us – if we ask them the right questions.

I was not sent by anybody to visit IIEP. Even the fact that I was allowed to participate at a conference on education in Paris, was a wonder itself. I was in my early 30's – the best age to immigrate illegally into the 'free world'. I wasn't even a party member; moreover, my family (deported after the war) was not politically reliable according to Party judgments. I used to be a village teacher who became a journalist, later an educational expert, and then worked at the

Hungarian Academy of Sciences. But why would an ex-teacher go to IIEP – the citadel of educational planning? Especially since he was not invited, nor sent by anybody (including the Hungarian Ministry and the Party). I was nervous as I stepped through the gate.

Michael Debeauvais was slightly surprised but he didn't look like. He generously passed over the fact that I didn't know any French and even my English was poor. He remained aristocratic and distant, but was very helpful. He listened to me as I was explaining why I came to IIEP. I did not mention the political context, and he did not ask me about it; clearly he was well-informed. On my part, I emphasized educational planning and how much need there was for this in Hungary. I mentioned that I was running a unit at the Academy of Sciences for school network analysis. After contemplating a while, Debeauvais suggested that I should get acquainted with *Jacques Hallak*.

Why him of all people? This, in fact, raised from a nice misunderstanding. Both Debeauvais and I misinterpreted an English expression 'school mapping.' In Debeauvais' vocabulary, this expression referred to the practice of collecting statistical data on an institutional level by local education planners. It was developed and applied (by Jacques and his colleagues) as a method of data gathering for countries with no reliable statistics on education. My own interpretation of 'school mapping' was totally different. I thought it meant the cartographical representation human geographical analysis of a given school network – and this caught my imagination.

Given the fact that I used to teach in a village, I did not have much knowledge on educational statistics. What I did have knowledge on was the school and the village surrounding it. I wrote my dissertation on the disadvantageous situation of the village children living around me. That was the period when social structure research and the study of social mobility began in Hungary. However, my hypothesis was different from most sociologists' at that time. In my book, I was trying to demonstrate that it was not individual students who were in advantageous or disadvantageous situation but whole schools. Moreover, not just schools but also the villages and towns surrounding them. I was trying to develop a new method to demonstrate my view. The term 'school mapping' made me enthusiastic. I thought it was exactly the method I was looking for.

At that time, Jacques worked a few floors below, and had a personal office. From the office of the director-general I was sent straight to him. By then I felt braver; and one needed not too much courage to speak to Jacques. He was quite inquisitive, open and active. He could hardly wait to hear what I had to say and started asking questions immediately. He was eager to listen to my answer, and then immediately raised another question. In the end, I wasn't sure who does the main talking and who is the listener. It felt like I was explaining to him the relationships between educational planning and educational politics in Hungary. To put it an other way I was talking about the relationship between experts and politicians.

Finally he handed me a book about school mapping, and walked out of the room. I thought he wanted me to take a deeper look at the book. But he was back in a minute along with a pretty lady, *Francoise Caillods*, who was his assistant at the time. That is how I first met Francoise.

That conversation built the basis for a long professional relationship, even though it all began with a misunderstanding around the term 'school mapping.' At that time, experts were only allowed to contribute to Hungarian politics if they were able to quote figures (today we would call this 'evidence based' research and policy). The Party politics was directed by *János*

Kádár but they were the statistics that showed the reality. And, even in the area of education, these statistics were only known by the 'planners' (that is, the experts). They were the ones who provided the figures to the Party's decisions (or, better, for advertising and 'selling out' those decisions)

All this was happening in the capital of the country (Budapest), where the statistical and planning offices were (and are, even up to the present day). The schools, teachers and students, however, were elsewhere, too – everywhere in the countryside. Their circumstances were only known by those who visited them. (These people were the 'sociologists' at the time.) There was a great need for collecting institutional level empirical data. This is what I learnt from Françoise Caillods, Jacques Hallak and the school mapping.

IIEP, as a Unesco institute has never had anything to do with party politics and state ideologies. Neither did I learn anything there about how to prepare a 'change in the regime' (as the political transformation was called). What I learnt was how one must and can be a useful and efficient expert (one of the kind who, back then, were simply called education planners in Hungary). An expert who cannot be left out from important discussions and decisions, because she/he knows something that the party doesn't have information about. This 'something' was the reality itself: the life of schools, teachers, students, parents and employers; the life of cities, towns and villages where the schools were situated.

All this did not have to prevent us from being supporters of the existing regime. The Party in fact, thought we were. There was a certain characteristic to the *Kádár*-system that distinguished it from other Eastern European political systems. The Soviet leaders made more allowances to *Kádár* and his regime than to other countries' political leaders. This was a result of the 1956 revolution when the people of Hungary revolted against the Soviet system. The Soviet army attacked them with a force greater than that of the 2nd World War (!) – and defeated them. However, following the 1956 events the Soviet leaders to a certain extent favoured Hungary. They allowed *Kádár* to consult with experts who had important knowledge about Hungarian society. For a long time they thought that, by doing this, they were strengthening the regime (and they were); but on the long-range, they were also preparing its fall.

What was it about school mapping that prepared the fall of the system (a ridiculous question itself)? It represented decentralization versus centralization. With the help of school mapping, I learnt the method of collecting local statistical data on education. No politics, no ideology, no opposition, and no anti-Communism; we merely worked with reliable statistics, using scientific analyses. However, these statistics began to point out unexpected facts. They indicated that there were growing inequalities between the different areas and schools of Hungary, even though the Party stated in every document that differences had been diminished. Our field researches indicated that, in certain areas, the population changed completely: in a period of ten years, many Gipsy (Roma) students appeared in the schools – nobody knew how. Yet the Party's documents did not even make a hint at this fact. (In the *Kádár*-system there was no official discourse on poverty or the Gypsies.) Our field studies showed that less and less young people chose vocational training, although the Party would have wished for everyone to become an industrial worker, sooner or later. Industrial workers were considered to be the real supporters of the Party (the 'ruling class').

In short: school mapping enabled us to get acquainted with the real processes of education in Hungary, and those processes were signaling in advance the decline of the regime. The first

phase of the Kádár-regime was in the 60's. The system gradually became more and more open. Then, the second phase was in the 70's, when the establishment gradually became more and more rigid. The third, and last, phase was the 80's, when the system, together with its leader, became weaker and weaker, until finally, in 1988, it was dying (just as Kádár himself). I became acquainted with IIEP in the period when the regime was becoming rigid. The opposition was less and less tolerated. Planners and experts were not allowed to tell their opinions, only the facts they found during their research (and sometimes not even that). Evidence-based studies, like school mapping, somewhat loosened up the system. This is how IIEP contributed – unintentionally and unwillingly – to the political developments in Hungary.

Contributions II

If I count all the years, I was a member of IIEP's Governing Board as well as a member of the Council of Consultant Fellows for 15 years. My memberships date back to 1992. Following the political transformation, I took another trip to Paris, and decided to pay a short visit to IIEP. By then, Jacques Hallak was the director-general – and he invited me to become a member of the Governing Board (he nominated me).

This sounds all too simple, although it wasn't. Before that, travelling to Paris was not only a question of money but, just as much or even more, a political issue. Hungarian tourists were allowed to travel to 'the West' only once in three years, and had to ask for a travelling permit from the Hungarian Ministry of Domestic Affairs (the ministry of the police and secret police). A travelling permit for every three years was considered a major advantage compared to the neighboring countries under Soviet occupation, where this wasn't possible (they did envy Hungary for it). Once they had the permit of the Ministry, tourists were allowed to exchange a very limited amount of their money (usually into USD dollars). An individual was only allowed to exchange 50 dollars, even if based on an artificially low rate. Citizens were forbidden to own US dollars or any convertible currency. In case they were found to have some, they had to face serious prison sentences. One could not travel very far from Hungary with 50 dollars, of course, except if they received help from someone abroad (which was also suspicious in the eyes of the establishment).

All this suddenly came to an end in 1989-90. My country was the first from the Eastern bloc, whose citizens were given free passport containing a visa that was valid in most countries of the world. This is how I travelled in 1992 – freely. I had gotten rid of all my previous anxieties, both subjectively and objectively speaking. I was really happy about Jacques' invitation. I had a vague feeling that this invitation came in the same package with the sudden „freedom” following the political transformation. (And maybe it did.)

My professional career changed. When I was first elected a member of the Governing Board I was the director-general of HIER (Hungarian Institute for Educational Research), a position which didn't come easily, since I wasn't enough of a Marxist-Leninist, nor a member of the Party (This opinion I discovered from my personal documents that I received subsequently from the Party's records.) At our institute, everybody was a slightly suspected person at that time, since we were doing the kind of experts' activities (field researches, case studies) that the Party did not ask for, though it did not forbid it either. The outcome of my second visit to Paris was that I tried to shape our institute to become similar to IIEP. My efforts were largely helped by the regular meetings and consultations that I had with Jacques Hallak and his colleagues, including Françoise.

HIER, where I worked as director-general between 1990--2000, was a curious institute. It was founded in 1980, following the direct order of *György Aczél*, Kádár's deputy for education, culture and science. The idea was that, those who were critical of the educational policy should tell their critical observations and their information directly to the Party, and not to others, in secret. So they gathered the critical minded researchers, and they founded an institute providing them with a regular income. They could freely – at least, relatively freely – do research on educational praxis and policies, including government policies. In exchange, they were obstructed from publicity and from the real political life. Criticizing educational policies was allowed, yet the criticism was never (or rarely) made public. There was no internet yet. 'Samisdats' existed, but all those who published their findings without permission risked losing their jobs. (Later we found out that some were continuously observed by the secret police.)

With the political transformation, everything changed. Research and criticism became natural, and all obstacles to publishing were eliminated. The researchers and experts could choose or criticize not just 'the Party' but several different political parties. From then on, it wasn't one single Party and the secret police interfering into the life of the institute any more, but party politics in general. The workers of the institute looked around confused. The Party, which was feared but which also asked for their advice from time to time and, in return, offered them a living – did not exist anymore. It was always the opposition political parties that were curious about their criticism, while they were paid by the governing parties and the government. It was a trap.

We had to learn a new role: the role of the politically neutral expert's. It wasn't the ruling parties or the opposition parties that we had to work (or should have worked) for, but the government. What we had to serve was not one or the other party or the government, but the education of the nation itself. There were two ways meeting the challenge. One was the 'market'. As education began to enter the market in the 1990's, more and more of the staff left HIER. The younger colleagues, who had more initiatives, began to try their fortune 'on the market'. They became school consultants or advisors to the school owners; they founded consulting firms or joined consulting companies. The second way was that the Institute becomes the government's advisor – not meaning to criticize the government, pointing out the education lags, but to support it (policy analysis). In about the same period of time (the first half of the 1990's), all our fellow institutes had to face this dilemma.

Among others, it was IIEP that helped to solve this dilemma. IIEP, as I have mentioned, never engaged into politics. It did not express any opinion pro- or against the change of the system. Its experts visited Hungary every once in a while (once I hosted Françoise, and much later Jacques, as well), but the main field of IIEP's activity has always been the developing countries. However, even if indirectly, the Institute assisted us in meaningful ways. Among other things, it posed an example for us on politically neutral professional work that focuses on education exclusively. For instance:

IIEP created a forum to all those professional views that supported or debated the importance of educational planning in Eastern-Europe, following the change of the system. The change opened up the market economy in these countries, while planned economy disappeared. Many believed (and still believe) that there was/is no need for educational planning either. They say that education must also be controlled by the market. Demands, and not needs determine the development of education. Educational offer is considered more important than educational

provision. This line of thought considers education a service, whereas the other view thinks education is a public good, and the institutions are a part of public commodity. Such debates were quite frequent whenever we discussed IIEP's plans and strategies in the directing board. (For example, I can recall the lecture held by János Tímár from Hungary who analyzed the relationship between educational planning and work-force planning. János Tímár remained a committed advocate of educational planning, whose opinion was repeatedly asked by IIEP in this matter.)

The scientific, professional and educational political prestige of IIEP largely contributed to the fact that, following the political transformation, every Hungarian government paid increased attention to international educational relationships. I do not claim that IIEP and UNESCO became the only protagonist of educational politics in Eastern-Europe after 1990. Several international actors showed up in this region, from the World Bank and its institute, through EDI, OECD and the European Council to the European Union. The majority of these institutions came with money (in the form of World Bank loans, or Tempus and Phare projects, as well as through foreign pressure (OECD). However, IIEP has continued to represent the same tested norm or standard that we have come to know and trust. The occasional visits and a few common events have deepened this relationship.

IIEP founded a deposit library at HIER and at other research institutes as well. Through this, it raised our attention to all those world-wide changes that began in the 1990's in the area of education. The experts and intelligentsia of the countries in transition were engaged with their own situation and problems. Naturally, as a result of the change in the system, the political elite also changed. For them, every educational connection and issue was new. The continuous information activity of IIEP greatly assisted Eastern-Europe not to seclude itself from the world in terms of educational affairs.

There is one last important thing for which I am personally thankful to IIEP. By becoming a member of the directing board, I gained an insight into the structure and operation of an international institute for research and development. Previously, I had not had any such knowledge. I didn't know –I couldn't know – anything about how such institutes of research and development work in the West. Our institutes were – more or less – organized according to the soviet system. So I tried to re-organize HIER based on the model of IIEP.

It was through my membership in the directing board of IIEP that I learnt why such directing boards are important in the first place. Earlier I had only heard of them – now I experienced what they meant. Upon my return to Hungary I tried to organize a scientific board for HIER. I had not known why the Institute needed a founding document. Now I tried to modify it so that the scientific board could make decisions regarding final issues. My step caused general surprise both at the institute and at the ministry. During the subsequent operation of the Institute – whenever a new minister came – it was revealed how important these things were. (In the 1990's, almost every second year there was a new minister of education in Hungary. And HIER was controlled directly by the minister of education.)

Shortly: IIEP provided us with a model on how it is possible to successfully cooperate with the administration, without the risk that either the ministry or the experts lose their own identity. All those forms, processes and agreements that I learnt from IIEP have always been successfully applied in Hungary, following the change of the regime.

What IIEP did for the change of the regime – and for education – in Hungary, is seemingly not much. Other international organizations that I mentioned above, have seemingly done a lot more than this. Compared to them, I would like to emphasize the teacher's role of this institute. IIEP offered an international standard, atmosphere and relationships for all those who visited it regularly. By influencing individual visitors, members, friends, students and readers, it did not only create a high prestige for itself, but to all those who benefited from this impact (including myself). Indeed: IIEP helped us to try to solve educational dilemmas on an international level and using international methods – in the midst of the political change.

Contributions III

The year 2000 definitely meant the beginning of significant changes for me. My membership at the Directing Board of IIEP expired (although I continued to stay in touch with the institute). I also stepped down from the director-general position at HIER. I regained my status as a university professor (The University of Debrecen, Hungary). Later, HIER was re-structured and merged with other institutes under the Ministry for Education. More important than the personal aspects is the fact that one phase of the transition was over in Hungary, and another began. In the area of education, this new phase could be best described by the so-called Bologna Process.

The political transition of 1989-1990 was and will remain a determining experience for many of us, and a great number of studies have been published about it (mainly in Germany and Eastern Europe). The reason for this is that, subsequently, many different opinions have taken shape regarding the transformation in Eastern Europe. According to one view, it wasn't even a real change. What we call the 'change of the regime' was, in fact, the speeding up of certain processes that had started earlier. The events that speeded up in 1989-1990 in world politics and in Hungary had been already prepared in the 80's. The Kádár-system collapsed but not because of political transformation; rather, because it had grown old and weak, and its leader died shortly. All this was a fortunate coincidence of everything that happened in world politics.

According to this view, the educational transition began as early as in 1985 (this was the last education law passed before the regime's collapse). In Hungary, educational decentralization and school autonomy had started already prior the change of the regime. The political transformation partly helped but also partly hindered the peaceful unfolding of this process. (The obstacles were caused by the political fights on education between conservatives and liberals, socialists and Christian democrats.)

According to the other opinion, the political transformation can be viewed as a longer historical process. This period started in 1989-1990, when Hungary exited the Soviet sphere of interest. It ended in 2004, when the country was admitted into the European Union. According to this view, the meaning of the political transformation was that Hungary could move from the Soviet economic and military sphere of interest (Warsaw Pact, CMEA) into the Western sphere of interest (NATO, European Union). Therefore, the change only began, but was not completed in 1989-1990. According to this view, the goal and significance of the political transformation was Hungary's joining of NATO and the European Union. Everything that happened between 1990 and 2004 took place in order to prepare the country's joining the EU (Hungary received NATO-membership earlier).

The way this view appeared in educational politics was the following. The political transformation tumbled the earlier political structures of education. Rival school maintaining institutions appeared in Hungary, too; the most spectacular of all being the return of the churches as school maintaining institutions. Educational enterprises appeared, especially in the field of professional training. Uniquely in the region, public education was managed by individual local governments and not by the Ministry for Education. As a result, there were as many possible public education systems as there were local governments – at least according to the law. The Ministry for Education, in order to regain control over schools, developed a curriculum frame, and demanded that the students of different schools take more and more common exams. Meanwhile, the influence of the government was decreasing. The place of the Ministry for Education was gradually taken over by other ministries – especially the Ministry of Finance – and by the so-called buffer organizations. This tumbled situation was stopped by the country's joining of the European Union (Hungary joined EU in 2004, along with nine other countries).

My opinion on the political transformation in Eastern Europe – and Hungary within it – differs from the above mentioned two lines of thought. This view is based on the studies that I have conducted since 2000, primarily referring to the changes in the higher education policy (minority higher education, accreditation policies, the situation of the Bologna-process in Central-Europe). The change of Eastern-European higher education systems draws a new image of the whole political transformation. According to this, the political transformation in Eastern-Europe took place not in one or two but, rather, in three phases.

The first phase lasted from approximately the end of 1988 till 1993-1994. This was the period when Eastern-Central Europe exited the Soviet sphere of interests and became independent – for the first time since the beginning of World War 2. The exit and the independence generated huge confusions in both the economy and politics (market economy, parliamentary democracy). This is what many emphasize when pointing out that this change came from above, from outside of societies, therefore it did not change the societies themselves that were involved in it. They normally forget that great changes also took place and their influence is felt up to the present. In Hungary, in the field of education, the result of one of such changes was that local governments themselves were able to found schools and became responsible for enrolling their residents in education. The Hungarian law on local governments is unique in the region. It gives such competencies to local governments that are impossible in neighboring countries (perhaps with the exception of England and Scotland).

As a result of this change, civil organizations also became stronger in Hungary and Eastern-Central Europe. In the area of education this meant that many new institutions were founded by civilians. Ethnic communities, different churches, local governments and all sorts of enterprises tried their hands in founding schools and creating higher education for their communities. Such initiatives of the civil society became successful only when supported by local politicians. This period saw many political carriers setting out from civil movements for education. Those initiatives became successful whose leaders were successful politicians. (It is usually the reviving civil society that creates a sense of confusion which leads to comments on how the political transformation caused a big chaos.)

What IIEP knew and suggested was pushed in the background after the political transformation. Balanced professional work, politically neutral educational planning and long-term forecasts are needed in a world where changes are relatively slow, hardly visible on the surface, and only cryptically perceivable. In turbulent times there is a need for quick decisions

and responses to the challenges of the market or the community. Politicians and change agents replace experts and education planners. The expert is striving to find and reveal tendencies – as learnt at IIEP. The change agent, on the other hand, is trying to catch the moment. This is what his career rests on (and this was not taught at IIEP).

I would call the second phase of the regime change consolidation. This period lasted from approximately the middle of 1990's till the country's joining the EU. This phase saw the evolving of institution structures of politics – including educational politics. Professional politicians appeared who didn't want to change schools or found new ones out of pure enthusiasm or commitment. They learnt all the techniques of parliamentary policy-making, and built their connections with the appropriate interest organizations and international organizations including in the area of education. They started to form a circle of experts in education, on whom they could rely in their policy-making. The Eastern-European governments were trying to regain their influence over education, which they had lost in the first years of the political transformation. They liked to talk about creating a smaller (and cheaper) state. Meanwhile, however, they were trying to centralize educational politics, with the means of all sorts of methods: frame curriculums, accreditations, finance reforms, and the modifications of education laws. Governments (especially the new Eastern-European states like Slovakia, Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia) were trying to shape an education system that expresses their national identity. They were striving to create education systems that were different from the ones they had been forced to use earlier.

Joining the European Union stopped the Eastern-European states' endeavors to shape their national education systems. This is, if you will, the third phase on the political transformation. As members of the European Union they were suddenly confronted with the fact that they had to participate in the creation of a mutually compatible education system. In the higher education, this endeavor is represented by the Bologna Process. During this process, a European Higher Education Area is formed which, in everyday language, means compatible European higher education. In the European Higher Education Area, the institutions are graded by quality assurance agencies, independent from individual governments. The Maastricht Convention would not allow the European Council to do so. Therefore, they create buffer organizations that submit the new resolutions to the ministers for education of the interested countries. The resolutions of the Bologna Process become legitimate when the concerned countries put them into law. This way, the illegitimate international educational politics receive legitimacy at the national level. Meanwhile, individual countries gradually give up their endeavors to create their own education system. The newly joined countries are at the bottom of a hierarchy managed by invisible hands (in the shape of buffer organizations). Everyone feels they are voluntarily taking part in this.

The role of IIEP gradually faded in the countries that joined the European Union and the European Higher Education Area. Its function has been taken over by other international organizations (mentioned above). However, one of its messages will not fade – at least for those who have participated in its activities for a longer period of time. Overall reform plans that rely on governments--and are initiated by governments--are fragile and easily fail. Real changes take place on a deeper level; for instance, on the level of institutions, teachers, students, parents and local communities. This is what IIEP's message has been and will remain for all those countries that are in the process of enrolling into new structures and/or wish for fast results.

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