



DOI: 10.18427/iri-2016-00

The Causes of the Decrease of Population in the Primary and the Secondary Socialization in Hungary¹

József BENDA

**Institute of Education Research and Development, Budapest,
Hungary**

The fact that the population of Hungary has been on the decrease for several decades now foreshadows an unpredictable social crisis. Population policy strategies based on traditional demographic approaches have not been successful; therefore, it is reasonable to search for other types of underlying relationships.

According to our research, the ability of parental care develops in the first year of one's life, as a result of the harmony experienced in an undisturbed relationship between the mother and the child. This period of developing the ability of secure attachment is the basis of the social character of a person. When this first phase is missing, such harm may be done which is difficult to make up for later. An appropriate approach during this first year of one's life builds a strong foundation which helps to create social relationships. This is the basis that will help a person to start a family, become a parent, study as well as create a personal and social system of values, and thus it provides the background to the reproduction of the whole of society. This age-old natural process was interrupted in Hungary due to aggressive industrialization in the 1950s. Women were shepherded to the workplace, so tens of thousands of babies grew up without the possibility of appropriate secure attachment. This deficit of attachment has been passed on in the generations that have followed, which, according to our hypothesis, is one of the main reasons of the depletion of the population in our country.

Besides the shortcomings of early socialization, another group of causes lies in the way our school system works. The written and unwritten rules of our schools had focused only on instruction for decades, and have only started to concentrate on planning children's social processes as well. Creating relationships, developing trust, empathy, love, as well as enhancing communication, cooperation, conflict-resolution skills and embracing a culture of pro-social behaviour is still something lacking from our schools. And yet, these are the very characteristics that would be the

¹ This article was based on the author's book 'A szakadék szélén' ('At the edge of the abyss'). Budapest: Gondolat, 2015.

most important blocks of foundation on which the ability of finding one's partner, living together with one's partner and looking after children would be built.

Finding the causes of the decrease of population that lie in socialization provides the opportunity – instead of only the flickering hope – of fighting this phenomenon. By planning and changing these processes consciously we may be able to stop or / and even turn this tendency around.

The lack of a foresightful policy and professional intervention in the field may prove to be fatal to the future of Hungarian society. It may lead to a demographic catastrophe, mass emigration, the bankruptcy of social welfare systems, the destruction of the provinces and the collapse of Hungary as a state.

Introduction

When we investigate our nation's economic potentials, international weight and lobbying capacity among European peoples, there is hardly any doubt that the number of population is a determining factor in connection with these (Vukovich, 2000). The declining number of children and the aging population are already obstructing the sustainability of education, health and social care. The continuous decline of the number of birth cohorts is substantially increasing the burdens of those economically active and might demolish the developed norms of cooperation and solidarity between generations in a few years – and all this might lead to a growing wave of emigration and other unforeseeable consequences and burdens.

With respect to natural population growth we are in the lowest 10% among 224 countries of the *world* (KSH, 2012, 20) and have stood among the last ones in *Europe* in the last decades. If we compare ourselves to the Visegrad group of post-Socialist countries we can see that throughout the 1990s fertility declined continuously and substantially in them, growing again after 2000 – except in Hungary where population shrank after 2000 the same way as before it.

Our inability to cooperation, to give birth to and raise the next generations in mental and bodily health will lead to the vanishing of all cultural and material capital our society has built up in the last thousands of years.

In spite of several government measures to stop the negative trend since 2010 we still cannot speak about a real turn and this shows that *we are yet to discover some of the deeper structures and reasons in the background.* This is why besides the factors already researched and known *we have to investigate some other ones, too, those we have given less attention to* so that we can reveal the deeper motives of the behavioural decisions and ways of thinking of the declining population.

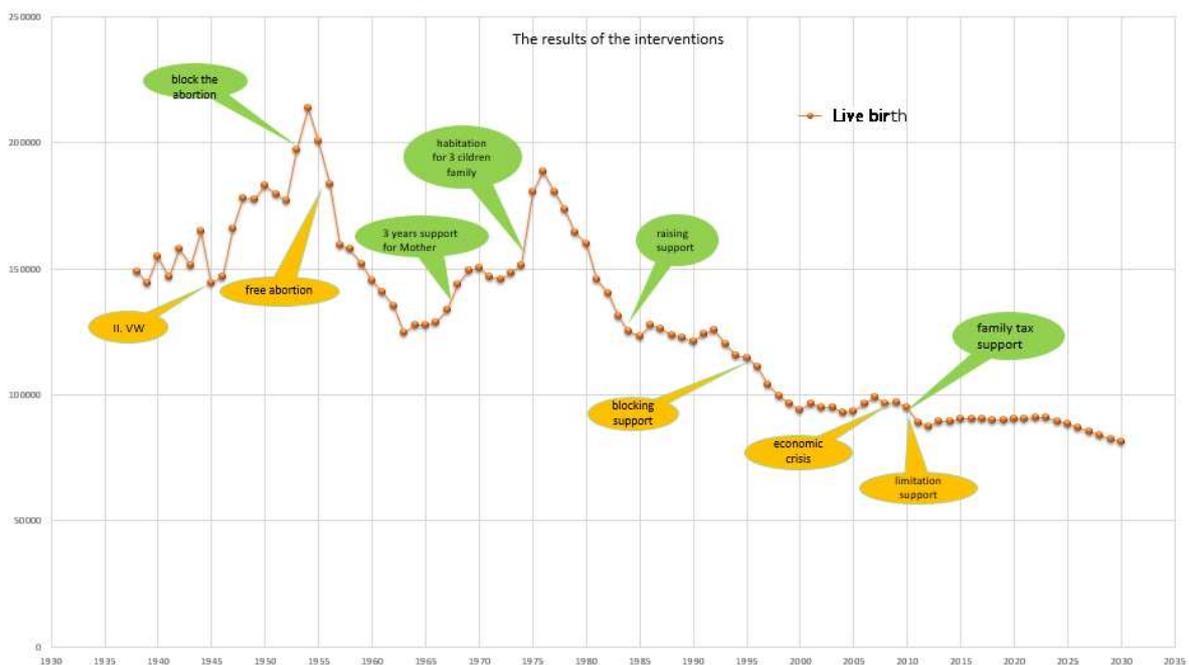
For this reason *we will analyse the history of relational socialisation* in this study. We will seek to describe some changes on the micro level in the mentality of the population that could determine the macro trend – we will

look for possible connections between factors of these two levels. We will search for the components of processes with a complex, transdisciplinary method using the aspects and possibilities of developmental psychology, epigenetics, social psychology, historical demography, sociology and pedagogy.

The effectiveness of population policy interventions

Live birth data (Graph 1) shows that attempts to influence the trend have hardly been effective this far (Andorka 2001). The basic supposition behind the vast majority of such measures was that the birth of children is mostly an economic question (Kapitány 2008; Vukovich, 2000). This is why the measures taken to influence it (like child benefit or paid child care leave schemes such as GYES, GYED, GYET) were economic in nature, while factors of personal decisions that were connected to the belief system, personal mental state or personal life history were not taken into consideration.

Graph 1. The effectivity of the interventions in the number of births



The decisive elements of life history: Socialisation in the family

The infant's ability to bond already begins at the moment of birth and it is organised as a behaviour by the age of 0.5-1 year. This ability is one of the decisive elements of the adaptation to social environment (Bowlby, 2009, 116). The attachment patterns consolidating in the first years are manifested from childhood at every age of a person until death.

John Bowlby identified 3+1 patterns of attachment that are formed as a result of the relationship between mother and child.

1. *Secure attachment*. The individual trusts in the mother's availability and helpfulness. She will satisfy his or her needs, dispel fears and remove pains. Securely attached children perform better in school, have greater attention capacity and their cognitive, behavioural and affective attitudes are better (Larose et al., 2005, 280).
2. *Anxious-ambivalent attachment*. The child can count on his or her mother only erratically. For this reason he or she is in a state of angst, uncertainty and has a sporadic communication. The child devotes a big part of his or her *energy* to finding safety and not to discovering or learning.
3. *Anxious-avoidant attachment*. If the child cannot count on his or her mothers' help he or she will adapt to the perceived need of self-sufficiency². The extension and depth of emotional injury depends on the beginning and the length of separation from the mother.
4. *Disoriented attachment*. This is characteristic of abused and grievously neglected babies³. Numb minded, monotonous actions and random stoppages can be experienced in their behaviour.

Changes in the circumstances of family socialisation, women's employment

In the period between the two world wars motherhood was seen by women as their true vocation. This situation changed after 1948. The base of fast industrialisation was cheap female work force - and this was supported by the ideology of „women's equality“. The number of women employed in industry multiplied. In 1949 58.3% of women were housewives and by 1983 5.8% of them were that (Koncz, 1985:43). By the 1980s 82% of women of employable age were employed⁴, which was 20% above the average of the European Union (Frey, 1999:17) and so it reached the possible maximum.

Until 1967 mothers were forced to return to employment at the end of a *6-week-long paid child birth leave*. Nurseries attached to workplaces were built in great numbers from the 1950s. These had different types like daily, „weekly“ and „monthly“ ones. Mothers „checked“ their children in the nursery (like a coat in the checkroom) on Monday morning and they

² If the child loses his or her mother after six months of age, when there is an already developed attachment pattern, he or she would strongly demand love further, but his or her disappointment will press him or her even then to be „unfaithful“. Adults with such a traumatic separation in their past won't have close attachments, fearing a new separation, their trust in secure relationships having been shaken (Bowlby, 2009, 54).

³ If the loss of the mother happens before six months of age in the child's life this will gravely hurt his or her emotional bonding ability: he or she might develop to be an emotionally poor personality (Bowlby, 2009, 54). 8-9 month-old babies growing up in an institute only „lie or sit with eyes wide and vacant, motionless faces staring blankly as if in a constant daze“ (Ranschburg, 1993, 74).

⁴ Data from the 1984 Microcensus (KSH, 1985, 121, 155).

returned them to their „home“ on Saturdays. They could breastfeed their children every four hours. Not even the catering for the children’s physiological needs was comprehensive enough among such circumstances. Generations were brought up without properly educated caregivers, without proper care and physical circumstances in the constantly overcrowded nurseries.

Consequences

The number of births began to free-fall from 1954⁵ (See Graph 2, Generation A). Nine years later the annual number of children born was already 100.000 lower. The free fall stopped in 1963. A positive tendency began with the introduction of GYES. (This new paid child care leave scheme was introduced in 1967 and 10-13 thousand more children were born because of that.) This new tendency was further strengthened by the *baby boom* generation reaching childbearing age around 1969 and some housing policy measures in 1973⁶ (see Graph 2, Generation B).

It seems that the generation born between 1950 and 1967 suffered distortions of personality in great numbers because of the violent disruption of attachments with their mothers. A substantial part of them have a common memory, as an emotional base: „motherlessness“, the lack of intimacy, the lack of intimate family gatherings, the lack of ability to have close relationships – although these latter are necessary for happy marriages and having children, as we have already seen⁷. The consequences of separation appear in several series of data (like number of marriages or divorces) and their effect can be observed throughout several generations (Németh, 2013).

⁵ Besides putting women into employment this period also meant the building up of Communist dictatorship. The members of the higher and middle classes who had not emigrated were interned in great numbers, their wealth being confiscated. The wealth and land of more well-to-do peasants were also confiscated. A system of espionage served to terrorize the citizens who were collectively relabelled as “population”. Masses were shepherded from village communities to newly built cities and into small flats, with multigenerational families being separated and so having children being made even more difficult. After the 1956 uprising 163 thousand people emigrated, most of whose were also young and so this reduced the population of childbearing age, too.

⁶ Families with 3 children got a flat within 1 year.

⁷ The most important factors necessary for a marriage according to young people are “reliability, love, mutual appreciation, a good sexual relationship and similar way of thinking - things that are connected to the harmony of a relationship” (Székely Levente, 2013, 70; Dukay-Szabó et al., 2013).

Graph 2. The effect of womens' employment on their children's marriages and on their descendants



Source: KSH, 2012.

The number of births corresponds correctly to the years while the data series of marriages and divorces are shifted 22 years earlier. This way the nuptiality rate of the given generation can be seen very well. The graph shows that

- 94% of the generations born around 1954 (Generation A) still marry but they cannot reproduce their own number (from then on there is an annual shortfall of 10-26).
- the number of divorces increases continuously in Generation A.
- only 51% of Generation B (Spéder – Kapitány, 2007) (See Graph 2 where zone I shows the number of omitted marriages). Our supposition is that the reason behind this lack of marriages was the attachment disorders developed by this generation at an early age and that these disorders were inherited by the next generation, too.

The number of births from the marriages of generation B is enormously reduced (the annual shortfall of births is 25-87 thousand children – see Graph 2, Generation C, zone II). Line III means the number of children necessary for sustainable development.

Socialisation in the school, the effects of the „hidden curriculum“

Researchers analysing the demographic effects of schooling concluded that „to the higher degree a woman is educated, the lower the number of

children she has”, and they can see existential dependence as the reason for this (Faragó, 2011). Socialisation at school through its system of effects can influence the development of children’s cognitive abilities and their decisions on choosing their couples or having children – similarly to the effects of family socialisation. So let’s investigate this system of effects of schooling!

„Schools” mean an exceptionally complex, composite system with contradictory tendencies and developments existing at the same time. Therefore we should use this notion cautiously, avoiding sweeping generalizations. But besides extreme diversity there are obviously some general phenomena that can be found in several schools.

The effect of schools deserves attention because the majority of research has found evidence that attachment patterns developed in early childhood (secure, anxious-ambivalent, anxious-avoidant, disoriented) can determine later life paths only to the extent the earlier experiences get reinforcement later. A securely attached child – supported by brothers, sisters a loving family at home – can suffer some negative effects in an unfriendly school environment that destroys attachments – but he or she can recover from that in a few years (Hunyadiné et al., 2006, 85). But a child with anxious-ambivalent attachment – who is even a single child in a lone parent family – can also meet the school culture of competition, rivalry and defeating rivals. In such cases we can expect different results: *the system of values and the mentality of this child might become permanently deformed, resulting in loss of trust and isolation. Social relationships might mean insecurity, angst, fear and the risk of repeated humiliation for this child and as a consequence he or she will avoid creating couples’ relationship – and we can see the consequences of this in the demographic data.*

Socialisation at school, the „hidden curriculum” has already been researched for decades, investigated by many worldwide and in Hungary, too, using different research methods, as we can see in the literature (see Coloroso, 2014; Hunyadiné et al., 2006 etc.). We focus on research conclusions that can count as influencing factors in connection with childbearing and marriage patterns of the population and which appear in several grades and school types of the system.

The way Hungarian schools work conspicuously lacks the flexibility that is necessary for personal success, for the maintenance of family harmony and for social integration (Halász, 2001) and perhaps this is their most serious deficiency. Leaving their place in the classroom, speaking or expressing their opinions freely are not possible for pupils even today. Social compassion, solidarity, expression of trust or defending, encouraging, supporting each other – all of these are forbidden. The majority of our schools lack a pro-social culture of behaviour, the development of conflict management and other social skills – although these would be the most important basic pillars in the fields of choosing one’s partner or caring for one’s children⁸. Rather than teaching pupils how

⁸ This is still general today inspite of this alternative method of organising studying being available in practice in Hungary at least for 25 years by now and that the efficiency of

to build their relationships, teachers teach them that they can count only on themselves, that they should study more, defeat the weaker and reach higher education, because it is this way that they will get ahead in life.

Teachers usually care personally for 6-10 year old children in schools but after this, for the older pupils a new kind of system works where lessons cause alienation, and at university the system of credits further reduces the possibilities of personal relationships. Pupils show the lack of the latter more and more throughout their school years: they turn against each other, against themselves, against teachers – and these surface as psychosomatic symptoms, worsening school results, absenteeism, causing self-harm, attempted suicides, substance abuse and several forms of aggression outside of the school hours. According to research results the number of personal relationships of children continuously decreases throughout school years and by 16 years of age 28.1% of students have no friend at all, and 98.9% have no personal relationship with any of the teachers (Zsolnai, 2001:60).

Worse and worse consequences appear throughout the years and this whole phenomenon is summed up as „black pedagogy“ by experts. The results of a representative survey show that the vast majority of children have experienced some grievance at school. The majority of these harms and injuries are caused by teachers but the number of ones caused by children’s peers is also substantial. The usual contents of harm are humiliating punishment, unjust evaluation, depreciation of one’s personality, verbal aggression, physical aggression, failure of giving help and baseless insinuation. Consequences appear as shyness, worsening personal relationships, *unprocessed* self-accusation, somatic and mental illnesses, worsening school results – and no one helps students to manage these.

These well-known and tolerated anomalies of the way Hungarian schools work severely harm the skills of children and youth in the fields of building relationships, choosing partners, managing their personal life and caring for one’s children. They do not support the learning of mutual appreciation and tolerance that are necessary for building up a family, or the forms of manifestation of unconditional love, commitment to one’s chosen partner, or learning the roles of father and mother caring for, educating, encouraging and supporting children. Especially those children suffer from these circumstances who are born out of wedlock and have no brothers or sisters, so they don’t get proper support and behavioural patterns to follow from their families, either.

When looking for the decisive components of demographic processes then – besides economic speculations – we should also pay attention to the circumstances of socialisation of generations in early childhood and later at school because these might influence their ability to choose partners and

this method is proven by experiments and that besides supporting pro-social behaviour it also very effectively ensures reaching very good results in learning. Besides this method we can know other similar and proposed methods from literature but they still are not spread much in Hungary.

care for children, their system of values and their behaviour at least as much as economic factors do. *We should consider these factors all together because only this way can we find a solution to the demographic crisis.*

The main direction in solving the crisis: building a family friendly and child friendly society. If we can believe Bowlby's research results – which are widely accepted – then we can see that the ability of human personality to give and accept love is created, built up and consolidated in the undisturbed state of the early and sensitive relationship between mother and child (in a relationship that is partly coded genetically and is partly in the unconscious). The forming of this ability ensures the continuity of life, its „divine message“ for the individual, for the family and for society (Tornielli & Galeazzi, 2015:38) – a message the Christian world celebrates every Christmas and the masterpieces of fine arts express again and again through centuries.

The mystery of the continuity of human creation is coded into the relationship between mother and child. So it is our interest in a national strategy to ensure that it work undisturbed and this seems to be the only viable way of handling the demographic crisis in the long run. This influences personal possibilities of one's life, demographic questions and social trust – but beyond these it also determines a nation's economic capacity and the spiritual dimensions of a people's spirit.

Besides the familial culture of rearing children schools and universities have an immense role to play in this. „Education cannot be reduced only to technical knowledge, it must also serve the comprehensive development of the human person.“ (Pope Francis, 2014) Thus the changing of the way of working of schools is desirable so that, as a result of this change, it will become liveable, joyful, cooperative and avoid exclusion⁹ (Benda 2002, 2007) and this way schools will be able to put the Hungarian population on a track of increase within 15-20 years.

What is needed for all this *is a quality-oriented development of the system of state institutions*, the building up of a modern model of „pupils' organisation“, the development of a sensitive state that is as frontrunner in the world regarding human, organisational resources and inner operational processes of and can properly play its role in building culture and nation.

Urgent tasks

Immediate action is needed besides long-term programs (such as changing schools). The time factor is decisive. Looking at the age structure of the Hungarian population one can see that the populous cohort of the Hungarian

⁹ A paradigmatic initiative of developing school and community with the name Humanisztikus Kooperatív Tanulás (Humanistic Cooperative Learning) began in 1982 and was aimed at developing a solution that is able to realise in practice the ideals of education built on loving relationships and of effective learning. It combines the commandment of love of the New Testament with the most modern theories of sociology, social psychology, developmental psychology and reform pedagogy of our days.

baby boomers is 38-40 years old in 2015. Younger cohorts are becoming smaller by 5 thousand year by year.

We will never be able to reach a turn in the number of the population with the smaller cohorts any more – we will be late if we do not seek for the solution in the proper direction or if we wait further for „good luck” or if we begin the unavoidable changes only two years from now.

A decisive question is whether we will be able to influence the way of thinking and the situation of the most populous generation within one or two years (!) to the extent that couples in it will decide to have at least one more child.

Thus it is very urgent to discover the geographical arrangement of this cohort. Knowing it we will make a plan specifically designed to suit its social strata and to create the conditions to eliminating problems in a short time.

We have showed the data series of the demographic crisis threatening the existence of our nation in this study, and the discoveries and explanations about that. Then we wrote about the decisive processes of attachment theory about the early attachment between mother and child and how they influence the ability to rear one’s own children. We unveiled the family policy effects of the 1950s, then we took a look at the way schools work and the socialisation processes built in their hidden curriculum. We finished by formulating proposals for an alternative scenario.

References

- Andorka Rudolf (2001). *Gyermek, család, történelem*. Budapest: Századvég.
- Benda József (2002). A kooperatív pedagógia sikerei és szocializációs lehetőségei Magyarországon I–II. *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 52 (9), 26-37.
- Benda József (2007). *Örömmel tanulni - Humanisztikus kooperatív tanulás*. Budapest: Agykontroll.
- Bowlby, John (2009). *A biztos bázis, a kötődéelmélet klinikai alkalmazásai*. Budapest: Animula.
- Coloroso, Barbara (2014). *Zaklatók, áldozatok, szemlélők: az iskolai erőszak*. Budapest: Harmat.
- Dukay-Szabó Szilvia, Ádám Szilvia, Susánszky Anna, & Gyóttfy Zsuzsa (2013). *Gyermekvállalás fiatal felnőttek körében: vágyak kontra tények*. In Szántó Zsuzsa, & Susánszky Éva (Eds.), *Magyar lelkiállapot* (pp. 227-243). Budapest: Semmelweis.
- Faragó Tamás (2011). *Bevezetés a történeti demográfiába*. Budapest: Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem. Retrieved from http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/tamop425/0010_2A_09_Farago_Tamas_Bevezetes_a_torteneti_demografiaba/adatok.html [31.10.2016].
- Ferenc pápa (2014). Beszéd az Európai Parlamentben. *Magyar Kurír*, 2015. november 25. kedd 15:08. Retrieved from <http://www.magyardurir.hu/hirek/ferenc-papa-beszede-az-europai-parlamentben> [31.10.2016].
- Frey Magda (1999). Nők a munkaerőpiacon. In Pongrácz Tiborné, & Tóth István György (Eds.), *Szerepváltozások. Jelentés a nők és férfiak helyzetéről* (pp. 13-35). Budapest: Társaság.

- Halász Gábor (2001). *A magyar közoktatás az ezredfordulón*. Budapest: OKKER.
- Hunyadi Györgyné, Nádasi Mária, & Serfőző Mónika (2006). *Fekete pedagógia*. Budapest: Argumentum.
- Kapitány Balázs (2008). A „GYED-hatás”. Az 1985 és 1996 közötti családtámogatási rendszer termékenységre gyakorolt hatása. *Demográfia*, 51 (1), 51-78.
- Koncz Katalin (1985). *Nők és férfiak*. Budapest: Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa; Kossuth.
- KSH – Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (1985). *Magyarország 1984*. Budapest: KSH.
- KSH – Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (2012). *Magyarország 2011*. Budapest: KSH.
- Larose, S., Bernier, A., & Tarabulsky, G. M. (2005). Attachment State of Mind, Learning Dispositions, and Academic Performance During the College Transition. *Developmental Psychology*, 41 (1), 281-289.
- Németh Zsolt (2013). *Búcsúkerülő? Konferencia-előadás*. *Új Város Online*, 2013. szeptember 6. Retrieved from <http://ujvaros.eu/post/12382> [31.10.2016].
- Ranschburg Jenő (1993). *Szeretet, erkölcs, autonómia*. Budapest: Integra-Projekt Kft.
- Spéder Zsolt, & Kapitány Balázs (2007). *Gyermekek: vágyak és tények*. Budapest: KSH Népessegtudományi Kutató Intézet.
- Székely László (2014). *Az alapvető jogok biztosának Jelentése az AJB-1378/2014. számú ügyben*. [Manuscript]. Budapest: Alapvető Jogok Biztosának Hivatala.
- Székely Levente (2013). *Magyar Ifjúság 2012*. Budapest: Kutatópont.
- Tornielli, A., & Galeazzi, G. (2015). *Ferenc pápa: Ez a gazdaság öl*. Budapest: Jezsuita.
- Vukovich Gabriella (2000). A népesség reprodukciójának, a népességszám alakulásának és befolyásolásának kérdései. In: Cseh-Szombathy László: *Népesedés és népességpolitika*. [Manuscript]. Budapest: KSH.
- Zsolnai Anikó (2001). *Kötődés és nevelés*. Budapest: Eötvös József Könyvkiadó.