

Diversity of Curriculum Implementation Tools in Hungary

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Facts about Hungary

- Population: 9,9 mill
 - Density: 106 persons per km²
 - Students per teacher: primary 11, secondary 12
 - Expenditure on education: 4,4 pst. of GDP
 - Teacher's salaries compared to other full-time tertiary-educated workers (ratio): 0,55
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ABSTRACT

The major foci of the Hungarian education systems development are ensuring the effectiveness of education, increasing its efficiency, and ensuring equity. In order to achieve this goal, a new system of governance has been built into the education system. Since 2010, this new system of governance has included vigorous state engagement and centralization. In this paper, we describe the new curriculum-related tools that serve more coherent and complex content regulation, preparation, support, and control. The two most important indirect tools of the new content regulation system are the complex method of educational program development and the new generation of textbooks that is being created by the state textbook development program.

The government facilitates preparation for the new curricula by introducing a new teacher training system and assisting teachers with professional advice concerning: curriculum implementation materials, education programs, best practices, and reference institutions. Government also provides support for teachers by professional advisors, dissemination and adaptation of good pedagogical practices, support for individual-level horizontal exchange of experience between teachers.

The government monitors the accomplished work of schools and teachers based on the new curriculum with the following tools: the new teachers' inspection and performance assessment system and the development of a system of students' learning outcome requirements that supports performance evaluation of institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social changes that have occurred between the second half of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century pose a serious challenge for European education systems. In knowledge-based societies, the role, interpretation, and creation of knowledge have fundamentally changed. Knowledge has become a decisive driving force of the economy. Its production is no longer primarily realised through individual efforts, but rather through the networking of various knowledge-producing groups. The central focus of the development of the Hungarian public education system is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of education and to guarantee equity. In order to achieve this, beginning in 2010, the government – which prefers a stronger state – has been developing a new system of public education management, which means greater state engagement and centralisation as well. The latter has also influenced curriculum development, which we have shown in last year's yearbook (Horváth, Kaposi and Varga, 2013). In this paper, we describe the tools which aim to serve more coherent and complex content regulation, preparation, support, and monitoring connected to the new curricula. Our essay shows how the Hungarian education management system tries to create an education system in which all schools would get enough professional support, and in an appropriate measure, to achieve the objectives of the curriculum, and in which the work of all schools is evaluated according to the same quality criteria. The measures taken by our government to attain this goal include curriculum and textbook development, the reform of teacher inspection, teacher education, and the professional support of teachers.

2. INDIRECT CONTENT REGULATION THROUGH CURRICULA, NEW GENERATION OF TEXTBOOKS, AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Former governments only accomplished immediate content regulation in public education through the creation of curricula. In order to promote successful implementation of the new curricula, the new management expanded the range of tools for state content regulation with two tools: state-led textbook development, the aim of which is to create a new generation of textbooks, and complex education programs development, which facilitates the spread of the new education organisation forms appearing in the new curriculum system.

3. THE NEW GENERATION OF TEXTBOOKS

As last year's CIDREE yearbook editors pointed out, often “unintentionally, textbooks have quite an input-regulative effect on teaching practices, representing

‘self-imposed prescription’” (Kuiper and Berkvens, 2013). Hungarian public education has traditionally been driven by learning tools, that is, textbooks influence pedagogical practice (teaching) in a much greater measure than the regulations that determine their development. In light of this tradition, the target system of the revised policy considers textbooks and all tools that carry content as determining. One of the reasons for doing so is, as an American textbook researcher put it, “changing textbooks is the most economical and effective way to improve the content of work in the classroom and teaching.”

The Hungarian government declared its intention to take on an increased role in education in 2010. Consequently, in the Public Education Act adopted in 2011, the government committed itself to making textbooks available for students free of charge, from grade 1, as of 2013, in a phasing-out system. New content regulation tools that came into force (the new National Core Curriculum, frame curricula and directives) imposed new directions, namely balancing the development of European key competences with the acquisition of contents in areas of knowledge based on national traditions. As a further objective, putting value-based education in the centre was articulated, which, in the long-term, can result in the harmonization of individual and public interests as well as the strengthening of a sense of social belonging.

The newest textbooks are characterised by the paradigms of lifelong learning (LLL) and life wide-learning (LWL), the widespread use of information communication technologies, the application of the experiences collected during previous curriculum implementation processes, and the gradual expansion of knowledge sharing platforms and learning networks. At the same time, newly produced textbooks diverge more and more from original textbook ideas, as the new focus is no longer the simple transmission of knowledge, but rather the development of study skills. New textbooks are concentrating on *solutions facilitating meaningful learning* (No author – Iskolakultúra, 2011) and focusing on the applicability and transferability of knowledge acquired in various situations and areas of knowledge (Molnár, 2002). In our country, the education management mandated that the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (HIERD) begin developing a new generation of knowledge transfer media (textbooks, digital learning and teaching tools, and knowledge repositories) in the framework of a research and development project. The new concept focuses on the changed notion of knowledge and learning, activity-centered material acquisition, age-adjusted language, and system of pedagogical tools.



The concept emphasizes that textbooks are to pay particular attention to raising motivation by highlighting the essence of the topic and also by systematizing individual or group tasks that facilitate exploration of previous knowledge. Moreover, well-structured study materials, problem raising texts, figures, graphs, tasks and questions encouraging students' reflection, and the visuality and design of textbooks should all support learning. The textbooks are written using teamwork (pedagogical development experts, methodology development experts, teachers, and IT professionals) and by utilising the experiences of a one-year pilot program, they will become the common development results of a network of researchers, developers, and teachers.

The textbook writing process is also defined by the fact that, parallel to the development of paper-based textbooks, a high capacity, easily accessible digital platform is developed (National Public Education Portal). This results in paper textbooks with less content, since many elements previously included in textbooks, (figures, activities, questions) are now accessible via this electronic platform, in a much more attractive visual format, (such as 3D, for example). The portal not only allows teachers to show students a variety of sources of knowledge in class, but also boosts learning motivation with interactive tools (web 2 function). It makes it possible for textbooks to function as e-books and the use of mobile applications creates an opportunity for life-wide learning (Csapó, 2006). Besides, the set of tasks accessible on the portal are differentiated, thus making it possible for individually tailored tasks to facilitate meaningful learning and provide accurate feedback on students' individual performance.

Ongoing, state-supported textbook development in the HIERD can entail a number of professional advantages and positive social effects, as opposed to market-driven textbook publishing. First, it can guarantee that the developmental objectives and the contents of the framework curricula appear intelligently in textbooks, that academic circles (universities) and cultural public institutions (museums, archives) are actively involved, and that textbook development is connected with the nationwide expansion and diffusion of the use of information communication technologies. Second, the overall quality of textbooks can improve, since quality assurance is built into the process (writing – pilot – feedback – correction), which is a more effective tool than a single accreditation procedure. Finally, there are advantages to printing a large number of copies which cannot be overlooked: it can serve as an important cost-effective factor. Moreover, making sure that textbooks are given to pupils and are then reused several times from year to year is also important for

a number of reasons: it saves paper, it is environmentally friendly, and it serves sustainability. Furthermore, the accelerated rate of the distribution of free textbooks can improve equity in the educational system.

Developing the new generation of textbooks started in 2013 and according to plans, textbooks prepared in this program will be widely available for the public education system by 2020.

4. INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Education programs are complex systems which provide full-scale guidance and a supportive environment for pedagogical work in a given field. The definition of an education program is included in Government Regulation number 110/2012 (VI.4.), on the publishing, implementation, and application of the National Core Curriculum:



The education program

6. §(1) The education program is a seven-component system elaborated based on a given pedagogical concept. It supports the planning and organisation of education, allows for reaching the educational objectives set in the National Core Curriculum and a given framework curriculum, and facilitates the processing of content components. It covers at least one subject, one or more fields of knowledge or pedagogical periods.

(2) Parts of the education program are:

- a) The pedagogical concept, which is a document explaining the reasons for developing the pedagogical system, its objectives, and the place and method of its application;
- b) The learning-teaching program, which is a pedagogical plan that explains the objective of the system in the spirit of the concept, its requirements, its contents, the time frames of the learning process, suggested methods and tools, organisational patterns that can be used and which refer to means and tools of assessment;
- c) The description of teaching-learning units, the detailed explanation of the elements of the learning-teaching program;
- d) Tools which carry both information and tasks, and enable the realisation of planned activities;
- e) Assessment and its tools, which are in line with the contents of points a)-d);
- f) Training programs specifically developed to equip teachers for the implementation of the given program;
- g) Support, advice, professional meetings, maintenance of the program.



A recent international comparative survey that examined the education system of 13 countries showed that education programs are unique Hungarian innovations. In international practice, it is very rare for all the 7 elements of education programs to be directly linked together during education development work (Sió et al., 2013). The introduction of the notion of education programs and the initiation of their development show that the Hungarian education management endeavours to provide coherent frameworks and support for teachers from as many angles as possible, including all sides of pedagogical work.

It is apparent that the education program is a complex system which unifies the tools of curriculum implementation including the theoretical basis and supports tools of everyday pedagogical work and elements supporting the introduction of the new practice and its later application.

The first group of educational programs are developed for the Bridge programs, which occurred for the first time in the Hungarian education system in 2013. They provide a transition towards vocational or secondary education for students who have not completed their basic education by the time they reach the minimum school-leaving age or adults who would like to re-enter school without having completed their basic education. The second group of newly developed education programs are programs for extended schools (HIERD, n.d). By supporting the spread of extended schools (as a form of organising school), the basic objective of the government is to guarantee equal chances for all children in having access to those extracurricular activities which are necessary for unfolding their talents, overcoming their learning problems, and developing their social skills. The Public Education Act specifically defines extended schools as follows:

Extended school: a form of organising school in such a way that classes are evenly distributed between morning and afternoon sessions, taking into consideration a balanced workload for students (HIERD, n.d).

That is why education programs are developed: to support the systems of extracurricular activities in extended schools (HIERD, n.d). These programs differ from previously mentioned education programs not only in the fact that they are made for extracurricular activities rather than classes, but also in that their development is carried out by the active involvement of partner schools, which try out the content elements of the program in their everyday practice. These developments

are realised in a research – development – innovation framework in which the actors become actively involved from the very beginning of the process. Research studies preceding the development of the education program have explored practices already existing within the areas to be developed, and education programs are put together based on experiences. Education programs are developed in cooperation with 55 schools. The schools are not only involved in the development of the programs, but also carry out the testing of them in practice; moreover, they actively participate in finalising the programs according to feedback. Professionals from the HIERD provide continuous professional support, training, and networking opportunities for schools participating in the program.

5. TRAINING TEACHERS FOR A PROFESSIONAL LIFELONG CAREER: RESTRUCTURING THE SYSTEM

As another supporting tool of preparation for the new curricula, the government has introduced a new teacher education system, which adjusted teacher training to the demands of public education.

The character and role of knowledge, as well as its connection to the economic sector, have changed in developed, knowledge-based societies. In these societies, knowledge functions as the driving force of the economy. A new demand has emerged for knowledge to be describable in terms of competences, and the job market has also expressed competence-based demands (European Commission, 2010), which in turn increasingly determine education. The changing perception about learning outcomes has a serious effect on the processes of teaching and learning, since it restructures emphases and changes roles and functions. It also results in a new pedagogical approach (Adam, 2008; Kennedy, 2007): the role of teachers as people sharing knowledge has shifted towards the role of people who support learning.

Consequently, teachers have to cope with new challenges in a different educational environment. However, the increased value of knowledge and the more direct connection between education and economy makes the effective teacher's work extremely important. Therefore, initial teacher training and continuous professional development, regulation of public education, teacher training and employment, accreditation and quality assurance, and systems of wages, promotions, and motivation must all create one single system (Stéger, 2012).



Perhaps the most important result of the recent reforms regarding teacher training is that thinking about teacher training has fundamentally changed in Hungarian education policy. A broader perception of teacher training, which is not limited to teacher training that takes place solely in higher education institutions (which, by the way, are also being transformed by the reforms) has gained prominence. In line with the paradigm of lifelong learning, the concept of teacher training in education policy includes the idea that the development process covers the whole continuum of a teacher's lifelong career, which is realised in the framework of a system complete with professional and financial rewards.

The introduction of the Bologna system (dividing the five year degree into a Bachelor's and Master's) in teacher education in 2005-2006 has received a great deal of professional criticism, both from the side of higher and of public education. In addition to the declining application numbers, the most commonly articulated problem has been that shifting the majority of pedagogy courses to the MA level, as well as teaching disciplinary subjects in a two-cycle mode, (that is, with different numbers of credit points, one as a major and one as a minor), did not serve the aim of increasing the prestige of the degree, and did not allow for acquiring proficiency in general pedagogical or in specific professional subjects, and thus did not improve upon the effectiveness of the former teacher education system.

In addition to these problems, the reform of 2006 caused an overflow of degrees in the training market which did not meet the needs of institutions for teachers. The structure of degrees became fragmented and disintegrated into exciting but narrow areas of expertise, which has undermined the amount of career choices of general knowledge subjects with long historical traditions (history, literature, and mathematics). Teacher training institutions offered degrees with specialisations which public education was all but unable to make use of, and the appearance of which detracted from the prestige of teacher training, as well as from its social image. Furthermore, the divided training made it difficult to develop all three components of the teaching profession (discipline, didactics related to the specific field, and pedagogy and psychology) in a harmonised manner. The unified Master teacher degree suggested that the subject-specific part of teacher degrees is only of secondary importance. Thus, a sharp criticism was formulated by educational researchers, namely that the role of pedagogy in teacher training has been overemphasised; yet, it does not sufficiently prepare teachers for solving pedagogical problems and for inclusive and differentiated teaching (Radnóti and Király, 2012; Laczkovich, 2009).

The concept of developing teacher training, based on the 2011 National Higher Education Act, assumed that the reform of the training system must be defined by a balance between continuity and necessary change, the professionalisation of the teaching career, quality assurance of the degree, and an increased consideration of the need for public education and of the demands of the job market. From a professional point of view, the most important objective of the transformation must be effectively preparing teachers for their chosen professions.

As a result of the aforementioned concept, development of a new teacher education system (similar to the pre-2005 system) has begun, which returns to the non-divided and dual degree structure (5+1 years at universities, 4+1 years in colleges), puts more emphasis on practical training (1 year), and with the extended training time (5 or 6 years), provides an opportunity to balance the proportion of the two specialisation tracks and for teaching pedagogical-psychological knowledge continuously and with more emphasis put on it.

In the new training system, introduced in September, 2013, students choose two specialisations at the beginning of their studies, with the same amount of credits for both tracks. They can only choose minor tracks (art history, philosophy, ethics, communication etc.) as second specialisations. A specialisation has two possible outcomes: basic school teacher or secondary school teacher. Thus, the first three years of the dual degree teacher training system are built upon common, identical requirements for 180 credits. The choice about the level of outcome (basic school or secondary school) should be made in the third year. Practical training, now a semester, doubles to a whole year for both basic school and secondary school teachers, which enables students to prepare for their professions in a real pedagogical environment. The goal of the increased and more emphasised practical training time is to guide students to a school environment where they can get a teaching job after graduation.

The National Higher Education Act ordered the establishment of teacher training centres. Their role is to ensure cooperation between actors involved in teacher training. This includes coordinating the work of pedagogy and psychology professionals as well as representatives of various subject fields and methodology areas. In connection with this, teacher training centres also naturally carry the task of continuously revising trainings. Paragraph 64 (6) of the Public Education Act defines the centres' priority tasks as the qualifying exam of teachers and the



whole qualification procedure, as their representative must be present during these. Teacher training centres must necessarily follow, and in their own institute initiate, education research connected to teacher training.

The functioning of teacher training centres resembles the program director model, which often comes up in higher education management literature. The model basically offers a solution to the difficulties originating from the contradictions between the traditional disciplinary university organisation (Becher, 1987) and the students' and employers' demands. The main point of thinking in a matrix organisation is that the two organisational units (departments and program management offices), which both function along different logics, cooperate as equal partners in the creation of programs (Drótos, 2009). The situation is no different in the case of teacher training centres.

6. SUPPORTING TEACHERS WITH PROFESSIONAL ADVICE: CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION MATERIALS, EDUCATION PROGRAMS, BEST PRACTICES, AND REFERENCE INSTITUTIONS

Education management supports pedagogical work based upon the new curricula in various ways, but mainly through the method of exemplification. The most important exemplifying channels are as follows:

1. Sharing of framework curriculum implementation materials and lesson plans, which primarily support the introduction of new content elements of the curricula.

The National Curriculum, revised in 2012, and the related framework curricula that was adopted require teachers to substantially renew the content and methodology of their teaching in a number of areas. In order to support implementation in schools, the HIERD is developing framework curriculum implementation support materials which are regularly uploaded on our website (HIERD, 2013-2). The main aim is to provide examples, to encourage the teachers' own innovations, and to present how the regulations of framework curricula can be implemented in their pedagogical routine. These materials do not hold any legal status and thus do not create any obligations for schools. The support materials include professional working materials, pedagogical methodology recommendations, suggested syllabi, activity plans, and task descriptions. Implementation support materials focus mostly on the areas whose implementations have posed the greatest chal-

lenge for schools. Thus, support materials have been developed for facilitating the introduction of new subjects that have emerged in the new curriculum regulation (for example, ethics), for subjects where new curricula require a significant change of approach (such as natural science subjects), and for subjects where important new content has been introduced (mathematics, history, Hungarian grammar and literature, and visual arts).

2. Supporting the dissemination and adaptation of best practices in pedagogy, supporting individual, horizontal exchanges of experience between teachers.

Recently, the idea of supporting cooperation between teachers has gained more attention. Cooperation is of pivotal importance, both in the area of teaching natural sciences (Balzano et al., 2014) and in that of special education (Friend et al., 2010).

One great advantage of cooperation is learning from one another. This need not only be done by working together, which is sometimes difficult to do in practice; it can also be promoted by sharing pedagogical best practices. In Hungary, the philosophy of exemplification (Education Scotland, n.d) is represented by disseminating best practices. The notion of “best practices” is used by most school leaders and a number of institutions use the term. This is due to the fact that many institutions have embraced the opportunity and as an optional or obligatory part of various European Union tenders, to document their good practices and made them publicly available. However, in Hungary, there is not yet a mature method of sharing best practices which would be independent from tenders and would become an ordinary part of the public education system. Currently, sharing materials prepared by teachers is not part of our pedagogical culture. There would be a need for adaptation skills and adaptation knowledge, since only those programs that meet the necessary adaptation conditions can function as best practices. By adaptation of best practices, we mean a documented, professional support system in which the owner of the good practice supports the adaptation of his or her practice. A highlight of this is mentoring and participating in each others’ classes, but also other sorts of support that meet local needs, for example, workshops, trainings, professional consultations, presentations about the use of teaching materials, school visits both from the school that shares the practice and from the school that adapts it. The education policy documents of the EU (Official Journal of the European Union, 2009) state as an important objective



ensuring possibilities for continuous professional development for teachers. Adapting best practices can be an important element of a teacher's attitude, but this must be followed by adequate professional support (HIERD, 2013-1). An important part of this professional support system is the development of an online platform where best practices can be presented.

The reformed public education system supports the pedagogical development of individual teachers and provides examples for institutions. The development of an innovative network of institutions which facilitates horizontal learning between institutions is also happening by integrating the results of former projects supported by the European Social Fund into the public education system. Recommendations concerning the service function of innovative public education institutions identified during previous projects will cover the following large topics:

- What is the best way of developing this knowledge-sharing network, taking into consideration both location and thematic aspects?
- What kind of experts are best suited for qualifying this specific group of institutions, and what knowledge is needed from those who would be supporting inter-institution sharing of knowledge?
- What changes are essential in the legal and financial environment so that this network of innovative institutions can be incorporated, in a sustainable way, into the institution system of professional services?
- What are the specific methods of sharing pedagogical knowledge which guarantee success of learning from each other?

The elaboration of recommendations is preceded in all subject areas by a multi-level and broad professional debate. Practical professional workshops support the development of the methodology of inter-institutional sharing of knowledge. By the end of this process (prospectively from 2015), in addition to innovative institutions that were identified during former projects, institutions where excellent professional work is being done will have the opportunity to join the service system in a regulated way (HIERD, 2013-1).

3. The aforementioned four-level exemplification system (curriculum implementation materials, education programs, pedagogical best practices, and reference institutions) can only function effectively if there are actors in the public education system who advertise these supporting opportunities

for teachers and who support the implementation and adaptation of these good examples. Professional consultants can take on this supporting role. They help teachers to solve specific pedagogical problems, support their reflective self-growth, and help to improve the pedagogical documents of a given school.

In Hungary, the development of a network of professional consultants related to the reformed public education system is currently under development and testing.

The basis of this new type of professional consultancy is a person-centered consultant approach, the most important characteristics of which are continuity, personalised approach, and equality (partnership), as listed by the experts. The central idea of person-centered consultancy is that everyone is the best expert on their own lives. The characteristics needed to create a climate supporting development are:

- (1) The credibility and genuineness of the consultant, which establishes confidence, and the equality of the supportive relationship, so that teachers can afford to really be themselves.
- (2) The professional consultant must be able to provide unconditional acceptance, attention, and positive evaluation for teachers, who in turn can feel secure, and thus their willingness to cooperate becomes stronger. The professional consultant does not formulate conditions and requirements but rather gives support in a way that gives teachers access to their own experiences and resources.
- (3) A high level of communicating empathy, which indicates to teachers that the professional consultant understands them, pays attention to and listens to their individual needs, is really present and is sympathetic to what they are saying.

Regarding the issue of *continuity*, it is important that the professional consultant be able to support the continuous professional growth of a given teacher in a given school. Therefore, professional supporters affiliated with the schools are included in the system that is currently being developed. The professional supporter can be the school leader or the deputy or the head of teams of teachers organised according to their subject area. An important document in the professional development of teachers is their portfolio, which is also supporting mate-



rial for professional consultancy monitoring. Subject area managing professional consultants can have an important supporting role in helping to compile the portfolio and in preparing for its defence. The principle of continuity can also operate if the very same professional consultant visits the teacher from year to year, so that a strong professional connection can develop between the consultant and the teacher.

The principle of *personalisation* is mainly operating on the fact that the teacher and the professional consultant work together to initiate a process that best suits the needs and interests of the teacher. The individual character of the support is in the focus of the whole process of professional consultancy. There is only one permanent content element of professional consultant visits: professional tasks, subject area, and curriculum knowledge competence, which is an area in which examination is obligatory during the visit. The teacher is free to choose 1 or 2 other areas of competence which she would like to address during the professional consultant's visit. Thus, the basic principle of professional consultancy – namely, that the primary role of the consultant is to protect against obstacles that encumber teachers in clearly describing a problem and finding a solution to it – becomes attainable.

The principle of *partnership* operates on the fact that professional consultants are themselves teachers who have professional experiences similar to those of the peers they visit, since they teach the same subject, in the same type of school, in the same region. It is important that all participants of the visit look at it as a process of mutual learning and guide it or participate in it accordingly.

Supporting materials provided for professional consultants aim to guarantee the uniformity and quality of the consultancy procedure, however they also allow for the consideration of local conditions and the situation of the teacher being visited. The result of professional consultancy is, on the one hand, a final summary document to which the teacher, the school leader, and the HIERD have access. Thus the connection of the teacher's individual professional growth to the context of the given institution can be examined, while at the same time county and country level data are being generated about the status of specific subjects, and also about the demands and developmental needs concerning the professional support of teachers. On the other hand, at the end of every visit, as a result of the work of the teacher and the professional consultant, a professional development plan is

created for the teacher, which, in addition to long-term individual developmental objectives, includes short-term (that is, for a year or a couple of years) professional goals and related activities necessary for achieving these goals.

The development plan primarily aims to promote awareness of the teacher's individual professional development but it also indirectly it contributes to the development of the institution (Kézy et al., 2014).

7. THE NEW INSPECTORIAL SYSTEM

The education management tries to monitor work based on new curricula by various means. The newly created inspectorial and teacher qualifying systems give immediate feedback on the professional quality of individual and institutional work. The establishment of both systems is directed by the Educational Authority, with the use of EU sources. The inspectorial system is currently under testing and will probably be launched in the next school year. It enables experts to evaluate the work of teachers and school leaders and that of the school from general pedagogical points, while also identifying areas for improvement. The latter makes it indispensable for forming a close bond with the professional consultancy system, as presented earlier.

Both the monitoring and the advisory-supporting function are traditionally part of the Hungarian public education system. Seeds of inspection have already appeared in 1777, which counts as an early date from a European scale. This was the first attempt at organising education – which was so far delegated to denominations – into a central system. As part of this process, school inspectors began their work. In 1868, state inspection of schools became part of the law. Since then – until 1985, the inspectorial system existed. Then a new education law put an end to this system by assigning professional control to the school and its maintaining body. In the 1990s, education policy seemed to think that even if maintainers of schools do not have the necessary competences to control the legitimate functioning of schools and to evaluate work done in schools, by involving individual professionals and companies providing services (of which there increasing numbers were on the market), they would still be able to answer the task of evaluation. There was a lack of systematic monitoring of institutions based on standards and done from the outside (not from within the school). This was one reason why school self-evaluation never had reliable outside support with the exception of one single thing, the National Assessment for Basic Skills, which



have existed since 2001, even though this was a central element of the recommendations issued by the European Commission and the Council in 2001.

As mentioned earlier, in 2010, a new government came into power in Hungary which aimed to delegate more power to the state and central public services than before. The education management had this in mind when deciding on the introduction of a standardized external evaluation system. However, this does not mean an automatic return to the pre-1985 situation, because the newly formed system differs in multiple points from the old one. The most prominent of these is that the basis of the new system is general pedagogical criteria, as opposed to the previous one which was divided into subjects.

The National Public Education Act (Magyar Közlöny, 2011-1) provides for the management of the inspectorial system (pedagogical-professional monitoring), while also recording the framework for monitoring in the 86th and 87th paragraphs: *“The goal of the national pedagogical-professional monitoring is to monitor and evaluate the work of teachers based on external, uniform criteria, with the aim of improving its quality.”*

According to legal frameworks, the inspections evaluate the work of teachers based on general pedagogical criteria. In addition, they evaluate the work of school leaders based on leadership theory criteria. They do so considering the realisation of the institution’s own objectives, thus supporting the professional development of the institutions.

Pedagogical-professional monitoring is a tool which, together with other elements of the evaluation system, defines the direction of the next period’s developments by building on planning and realisation. In addition to supporting development, another important goal of the inspections is to give positive feedback, that is, the identifying of outstanding areas in the work of the teacher, of the school leader, and of the school.

When developing the system, an important goal was to put the least possible burden on teachers and experts participating in the process of monitoring. Taking this into consideration, and also driven by the aim to reach a professional consensus, the elaboration has been made with the inclusion of all the actors involved. Before launching the system, a pilot phase and professional conferences are

taking place. The inspection is carried out everywhere along the same criteria with a uniform and public method. The benchmark includes conformity to the general aspects of pedagogical sciences, the general aspects of the National Core Curriculum, and the school's own pedagogical program.

Monitoring tools used by the pedagogical-professional inspection (list of aspects, questionnaires, evaluation forms) are uniform and public, based on a ministerial directive. The backbone of the pedagogical-professional inspection is the evaluation of the teacher. Therefore, the most common form of inspection is observations made during a class or session visit. These are complemented by document analysis, interviews, and self-evaluation in the case of teachers. In the case of school leaders, the results of the questionnaires completed by teachers working under the school leader and by parents of students of the given school also contribute to the evaluation.

Inspectorial work is made up of three phases: previous preparation, on-the-spot monitoring, and summing up. The monitoring wraps up with an evaluation. This highlights outstanding areas and areas for improvement, so it gives a factual report and does not give recommendations for improvement in the monitoring phase; it is the schools' competency to decide upon these. Neither does the inspection give recommendations about actions related to employers' legal competency. This is also the task of schools; however, while carrying out these actions, they must take into consideration the results of the inspection. Inspections are carried out by experts, who are teachers who have specifically prepared for this task and whose name is publicly available on an experts' list.

In 2013, a government directive (Government Decree, 2013) was issued about the teacher promotion system. The thought behind this action was that the lifespan career model, which has proven to be a success in other countries, and in the case of other professions, can be a motivation among teachers in Hungary also, and thus result in improving the quality of public education. A central element of the lifespan career model is the teacher qualification system, which puts emphasis on the continuous professional development of teachers. In the course of the qualification exam and the qualification procedure, a committee assesses the level of competences of the teacher, based on the evaluation of certain documents and their personal impressions from the class visits.



The improvement of the system of learning outcomes provides an evaluation about the schools' work through the authentic, reliable evaluation of the students' results. One of the most important fields of this is the developmental work which is now ongoing in the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, the objective of which is to improve the requirement standards of the content of education and to support their implementation. Part of the work is to develop standards that are in line with the new curricula for given grades and areas, but also to elaborate learning outcome requirements based on new curriculum regulation and in line with requirement standards, as well as sample tasks that support evaluation and instruction guides for evaluation, utilising both the results of international developments and evaluations and the results of Hungarian research.

8. CONCLUSION

In the last four years, the Hungarian education system underwent some radical changes. The main characteristic of these changes is the increased role of the central government involved in all areas of education, that is, not only the areas discussed above, which were basically introduced to assure the quality of pedagogical work in schools but also in the area of maintaining and operating schools.

There were a number of reasons for these changes. First, significant differences had evolved among schools in Hungary, in terms of physical environment, available human resources, and the achievements of students. Second, the impact of previous, centrally initiated changes (that is, changes preceding the newest, current ones) was below expectations. And third, expenditures on education continued to grow despite a decreasing number of school-aged children and learning outcomes did not improve, or only did so slightly. The education management responded to these challenges by taking steps to greatly increase involvement from the government, transformation, and reform.

In the years to come, we will be shown whether the Hungarian education management will be able to build and operate such a system, which, due to the increased role of the state (coordinating the above discussed very complex set of tools), would be capable of managing changing local needs and at the same time narrowing the differences between schools – by differentiated use of resources – which is, according to most authoritative analyses (such as Herczeg, 2014), the most compelling problem of Hungarian education.

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