

## THE STATE OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

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Received: May 5, 2001

### Abstract

Certain development works in the field of education as well as in the field of public health have started which go on with the backing of the Ministry within the scopes defined last year. The experts commissioned by the Ministry of Education have worked out a program called COMENIUS 2000 which favours the forming of quality systems on three different – sectoral, maintenance and institutional – level. Our study sums up this program and we illustrate a school, which operates successfully in the field of quality centered education.

*Keywords:* quality, education, management.

### 1. Introduction

The decade after the changeover has proved to be the age of changes in the history of Hungarian public education. The course of development, which started in the eighties, has gained new aspects in the democracy developed from 1990. The maintainers of kindergartens, schools, colleges are the free-elected city councils; the legal conditions of representation of interest have been formed, accredited further education system for teachers has developed.

The course and efficiency of the above-mentioned changes, processes are debatable; experience in many fields has already shaped the course of changes. Moreover, the last ten years have left many questions open like monitoring, assessment and controlling of practice in the educational institutions or guaranteeing and developing of quality.

The new outlook on quality management, which formed at the end of the eighties in the Hungarian economy, has appeared in the public sector one-and-a-half decade later in the middle of the nineties. In the second half of the nineties the elaborating of the institutional teaching programs started as the consequence of the introduction of the 'National Basic Curriculum' and the 'Pedagogical Basic Program of Kindergartens'. While doing the programs the institutions had to concentrate on the assessment of the demands of the local communities and on the definition of clientele of their services. Although not every teaching program was

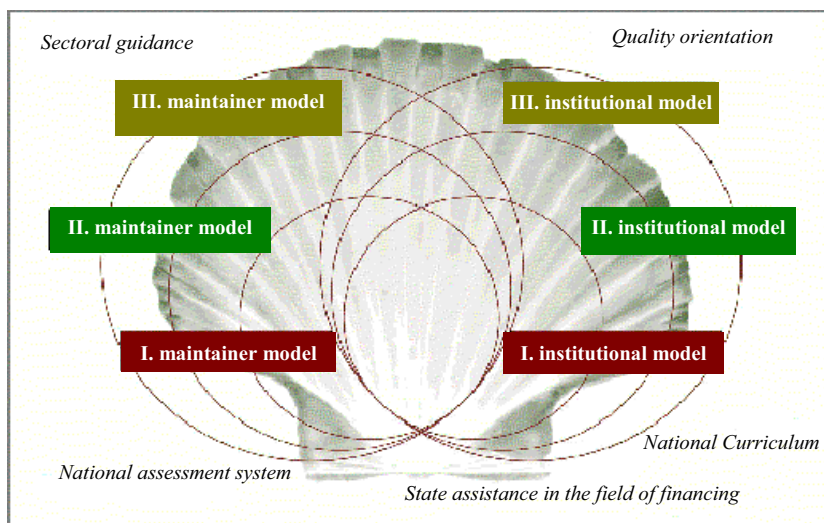


Fig. 1. Structure of program COMENIUS 2000

made on the basis of assessment of demands, most of elaborators felt that their program and curriculum-offer must be formed on the basis of the local circumstances.

A further result of teaching programs is that a professional community has been formed inside the institution, which concerned with the future and the improvement of the institution.

When can be said that the customers will be satisfied with the quality of the products or services that they got from the supplier. A product, service or the process of the production can be described in many ways if we want to define their quality but the supplier cannot be sure of the efficiency of his work unless the customer is satisfied. There are many ways to define the word: quality but the best says (ISHIKAWA, K. 1985):

**'quality means satisfaction'**

## 2. Characteristics of Services

Classical quality management methods are applied to the controlling of productive activities. To describe services or to help adapting methods it is useful to make clear the differences between productive and servicing processes (21).

To plan and realize a servicing process require increased carefulness, because the customer actively participates in the process (many times the customers are absent during the process, or they are target of the service).

*Table 1.* Comparison of productive and servicing processes

| CHARACTERISTICS                         | PRODUCTIVE PRO-<br>CESS                             | SERVICE  |
|---|---|--|
| Result of the process                   | Always evident                                      | Not always evident                               |
| Producing and delivering of the product | Run separated in time and space                     | Run integrated in time and space                 |
| Operations of processes                 | Mostly recurrent, run independent from the customer | Rarely recurrent, customers are often part of it |
| Actions aiming at improvement           | Preventive  | Respondent                                       |

### 3. Program COMENIUS 2000

Aim of the program: the establishment of a clear, improving public educational system with measurable efficiency in Hungary together with the step-by-step introduction of a qualitative financing. As a result of that an improvement in efficiency and quality in the operation of the institutions is to be expected. Of course, this applies to the local and national education as well as to the operation of maintainers.

Principles of program COMENIUS 2000:

Characteristics of the long-term program:

- dialogue,
- searching of wide-ranging consensus, openness,
- solid professional knowledge in the field of quality management, pedagogical and program management,
- firm professional background with international backing,
- working out an education-oriented approach, and not only adapt directly the industrial practice,
- EU-conformity,
- gradual introduction considering the different level, freedom and culture of the institutions but aiming to reduce the differences,
- a rational, economical and clear resource allocation (financial, human resources and infrastructure) follow-up and optimizing continuously the efficiency of the resource allocation
- principle of volunteering in the beginning,
- partnership with strong aiding-service backing,
- adaptable attitude, no bureaucracy,
- nonpolitical aspects.

Starting program COMENIUS 2000 the visions of the institutional, maintainer and sectorial levels have been indicated. It is to be determined what we would like to reach in these areas in 10–15 years.

Program COMENIUS 2000 is superposed on three levels in each of two fields (institutional and maintainer). The whole system is under sectorial guidance:

curriculum described in the educational law, national assessment system, increasing state assistance in the field of financing, and quality orientation (MoE – Program COMENIUS 2000, 1999).

The ‘Shell-illustration’ shows that both institutional and maintainer levels are operating in superposing and concerted systems. The flexibility of the multiple-stage system provides opportunity for institutions, which are already using quality management methods, to enter the system on that stage which suits.

*Table 2. Characteristics of different levels of model COMENIUS 2000*

| Level      | Institutional level   | Maintainer level  |
|------------|---|---|
| Level I.   | Getting acquainted with quality management:<br><br>Evaluation, monitoring report<br>Identification of the interested parties<br>Assessment of demands<br>Designation of objective (priority system)<br>Action plan (free execution) | Planning of educational needs based on local demands (dialogue with the parties)  |
| Level II.  | Application of quality management model in the institutions   | Operation of maintainer quality management model. Adapting the norms of educational regulations according to the demands. |
| Level III. | Multiplicator level (the institution which possesses a quality management system is able to hand on its knowledge and work as a ‘basis’)  | Quality-based financing. Building of organizational culture.  |

Schedule of the program June 1999. – January 2000.:

- Amendment of the Public Education Law (done)
- Preparation of program COMENIUS 2000 (in progress)
- Planning and reconciling of COMENIUS 2000
- Establishing of the Program Center (done)
- Completing the prequalifying tender of the service-providers (done)
- Finishing the subsidiary methodological material of COMENIUS 2000
- Distribution of quality management handbook among the schools and kindergartens

Completing the pilot version of institutional levels I. and II. of COMENIUS 2000

Planing and reconciling the maintainer part of COMENIUS 2000

Commission and teaching the consultants

Calling for institutional tenders, assessment of the institutional level I. and II. of COMENIUS 2000

Continuous guidance is available through the Program Center.

#### **4. Partner-orientation in the Practice**

The school we chose, – operation of which demonstrates well the quality-focused education – is classified as a special primary school, specialized in teaching children with weak abilities.

The institution began with the quality improvement before the start of program COMENIUS, that's why the target was the realization of the II. level of the Model. Becoming acquainted with the program COMENIUS the leadership and the employees of the school confirmed that they were on the right way, since they were working in accordance with the I. level of the Model.

In 1997 the leadership of the school decided, that they execute an as-is analysis to promote the elaboration of the pedagogical program. It was a planned work in the form of a project. The as-is analysis was performed in more dimensions:

##### *4.1. Conditions, Regulations, Environmental Dimension*

They surveyed the legal aspects of the institutional operation, the correspondence for it, the financial range, the relation between the budget and the mission, the questions of financing the mission based services, the additional financial recourses, the relation between the real activities and the financial recourses, the organisational management. To summarize this they prepared an action-plan, which contains, first of all, the tasks of the country government, which are necessary for the school to be able to carry out the prescribed duties.

##### *4.2. Dimension of Needs (Demands)*

For completing the assessment, it was needed to identify the partners of the school, i.e. the circle of whose opinions, expectations are essential to know to define goals and tasks. They distinguished the next partners:

1. Children (both of kindergarten age and schoolchildren)
2. Parents
3. Teachers
4. Assistants
5. Maintainer

6. Civil organisations (Association of Young People)
7. Professional organisations (Country Society of Teachers of the Handicapped, Country School Federation, Dramapedagogical Association, etc.)
8. Other educational organisations (College for the Teachers of the Handicapped, JAPATE, etc.)
8. Church and religious organisations
9. Twin schools from abroad

For the first five partners listed above, the demands were surveyed and by means of the well constructed questionnaires also satisfaction. For the maintainer was not necessary to make this assessment because the expectations against the school are clearly defined in the Country Development Plan.

Some questions from the questionnaire prepared for the children:

- Are the morning lessons interesting?
- Would you prefer if only 3 teachers would teach a class? Are the teachers enough patient, tolerant?
- Should the teachers arrange games in the breaks? Would you like to learn the language of the Gypsies?
- Are you satisfied with breakfast and tea? Do you like to eat in the dining hall?
- Can you learn calmly in the afternoon?
- What kind of programs would you like to have? etc.

In the survey of the teachers demands the colleagues were confronted with the present practice. The assessment was executed in the course of a training supplemented with a questionnaire. The questionnaires contained questions concerning 8 fields: teaching – learning; decision making; marketing; relationships; planning; control – evaluation; atmosphere; social status; principles.

The colleagues classified the knowledge of the different fields, according to the next aspects:

What would you

- give?
- keep?
- reconsider?
- begin?

At the mentioned training the teachers tried to make a common agreement, what an optimal school, an inconvenient school are like, and how their own school is. All these they had to describe with five sentences.

### 4.3. Organisational Dimension

In this stage the relations between the organisation units and the main processes were represented in a graphic model, the hierarchic order in the school, as well as the expected and the real co-operative connections within the organisation. On this basis the school carried out an analysis and evaluation, and specified tasks for

improvement. The information system and the evaluation order of the school shall survive also in this dimension.

#### *4.4. Teaching – Learning Dimension*

In this stage the structure of teaching, the content of teaching, the different organisation forms of learning, the procedures of organising the education, the further education, the external and internal evaluation system of the school were surveyed.

#### *4.5. Dimension of Relations*

Three areas of relationships were studied: personal connections (student – parent – teacher), institutional contacts (Student Government, School Board, as parents meeting, etc.), external connections (local governments, partner institutes, civil organisations, etc.).

Action-plans were drawn up for all dimensions. The responsible persons continuously report on the realisation of prescribed tasks and the adequate forum value the results. Based on the results of the surveys made during the project, the school defined his mission, and adjusted his pedagogic program and the tasks based on it.

The mission of the school:

#### **‘Bringing up successful and happy people’**

Characteristics of successful and happy people: they communicate well, and are able to solve problems independently in an adequately socialized environment. Accordingly this, the main areas of the educational work:

- improvement of the problem solving thinking,
- improvement of the communication skills,
- improvement of the socialization and,
- continuous examination of these.

All of the subjects and activities in the school are subordinated to these three fields; also the pedagogic program and the teaching plan are based on these.

Some examples show that the partner oriented thinking infiltrated really into the everyday life of the school:

The measuring of the student’s satisfaction is continuous; the questionnaires are permanently improved. There is a class-based economic system, the classes can decide free about the use of the available financial means. The classes obtain money through an internal application system. The Student’s Government (SG) works actively, the members form themselves the rules of the house, they take part and express their opinion in meetings, where teachers discuss matters concerning them.

Aa meeting is organised in the school every month, where all of the interested parties are represented (trade union, SG, Council of Public Employees, Council

of Parents, Children's Defence, etc.), and they make efforts to solve the actual problems together based on a consensus.

The form-masters make free discussions about actual questions – which affect everybody – within organised framework.

The colleagues can apply internally for external training, and after it the participants relate the heard matter.

The Council of Parents organises every year an open day in the school, where also the parents can have a glance into the work of the children. Once in a month there is a 'common lesson' of the classes where all of the students, teachers, – and in the last times also more and more parents – participate. For farther living people the school organises outside parent's meetings in the surrounding villages. The operation of the school is completely open (there is also an own web page), but the Country Government does not show great interest for it.

## 5. Summary

The sector-specific quality systems give big opportunities both for the users and for the consultants. The developer team of these models has got the responsibility to take into account all of the important aspects of the given vocation. The user can be sure – when he applies for such a sector-specific model – that it contains all important processes related the customer satisfaction.

Certainly the application of sector-neutral models can also be very effective, but their implementation requires the help of well-experienced consultants.

In our study we demonstrated the model COMENIUS 2000, and the aims of a school to operate in a partner- and quality-oriented way. We illustrated that it is possible to implement a quality model also in the service area. A lot of service-providers think the opposite of it, they say:

'Servicing is always individual, customers are vagarious, results are immeasurable, and it is impossible to regulate the processes.'

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