

## **TRAINING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT STAFF AT THE BUDAPEST UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMICS (BUTE)**

Gyula MEZEI

Department of Technical Education  
Budapest University of Technology and Economics  
H-1111 Budapest, Egry J. Street 1, Hungary  
Phone: +36-1-463-1698 Fax: +36-1-463-1697  
E-mail: mezei@eik.bme.hu

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### **Abstract**

We have the need to introduce the main thoughts about the staff development for management of schools and public education. We will also show the modules of management of schools and public education. This paper analyzes in detail the activity of the BUTE concerning staff development.

*Keywords:* staff development, post-gradual training, distance learning, modules, organization.

### **1. Historical Background**

The first school in Hungary was established more than one thousand years ago. However, the present educational system did not come into being before the 19th century. The end of that century saw the formation of compulsory elementary as well as subsequent secondary education, of grammar schools (first of various, later of a unified kind) providing full training, of so-called higher elementary schools, and of higher vocational education, while the training of trade apprentices became widespread. Around the middle of the 20th century, this system expanded on one hand, and grew more homogeneous on the other. The eight years of elementary education became compulsory. On it a system of grammar schools, secondary technical schools, providing not only a school-leaving certificate but also a qualification, vocational secondary schools, and trade schools merely providing training for skilled workers was based.

In Hungary, the management of educational institutions, including the kindergarten, which also became compulsory in the mid-20th century, was centrally controlled. Strong centralisation was characteristic of the entire country. The contents of public education were centrally defined, reflected by the very title of the publication 'Curriculum and Directions'. The implementation of the curriculum was mandatory. Not only the contents and methods of teaching were prescribed, but so was, first and foremost, the ideology of it. Central directions were general in managing the school system and the individual institutions alike. This was necessitated

by the structure of the society, the influence of ideology, and the fact that schools should serve them.

During the second half of the 20th century schooling expanded greatly in Hungary. Kindergarten was compulsory from age 3 to 6, elementary school from age 6 to 14, but the school-leaving age was 16, which obliged every student to begin their studies in a secondary school. More than half of the student population started a course in a trade school.

For school management central control primarily comprised the tasks of securing the supremacy of the central ideology, the implementation of the prescribed syllabus, the application of recommended methods, and of ensuring the organisational operation of the institution under centrally defined, and in many cases centrally implemented, economic circumstances.

This situation carried some positive aspects, too. For example, Hungarian students performed well even by international standards, mainly in such science subjects as mathematics or chemistry, at different competitions. Schooling extended to almost the entire country. This system allowed compulsory school attendance to become widespread, irrespective of the type of the settlement. It meant a certain amount of security for everybody working within the school: it ensured a modest but safe living for the staff as well as the material provision of the school.

The operation of educational institutions was made easier by safe central control, by handing over documents, and by the system of supervision which checked the fulfilment of the prescribed requirements. At the same time, however, it transpired that the school was no other than the projection of the centralist state system, determined by party politics and ideology, the strict supervision of which was carried out either centrally or at a local level. Its attention being basically tied by the necessity of compliance with central directives, education could not properly adjust to local needs or prepare for local reactions. Instead of individual initiatives, proper implementation was required. This caused special conflicts, mainly in vocational training, which did not help or aptly conform to the rapid changes in the economy.

Management training during this period was primarily characterised by the explanation of things to do and the acquisition of the central ideology. Due to the lack of school independence, general questions of management theory were neglected. The necessity of a managerial attitude did not arise, instead, emphasis fell on the organisation of the proper implementation of tasks.

## **2. Rise of Demands**

The 1970s and 80s saw the beginning of certain changes, particularly in secondary education. As the possibility of choice appeared with specialisation in various subjects, competition among schools arose. From that time on the aim of the schools became more and more to develop a profile of their own. This inspired higher achievement. The forerunners in this process were grammar schools, followed by secondary technical schools wishing to get adjusted to competition in the economy,

and finally by some of the elementary schools, too.

From the 1970s on, the school head's free choice of teachers and his rights as employer produced a significant change in management. Central control was gravely broken by the Act III/1985, equipping the staff with the rights of decision making and the expression of opinion in several areas of the organisational operation of the school as well as in the judgement of applications for the position of school head. This urgently demanded a change in managerial attitude and the formation of new ways of management at the institutions. School heads' interest in management training rose at this stage and they enrolled in different courses, mostly organised by the newly formed county institutions of pedagogy.

Radical change in the life of educational institutions was brought about by the political transformation in 1990. The collapse of the central ideology and the schools' ensuing ideological freedom led to a completely new situation. Central school control was made impossible by the creation of local authorities and their commission to exercise operators' rights over state schools. The monopoly of the state ceased to exist. A church statute also in 1990 stated that it was within the rights and possibilities of the churches to run schools. At the same time the law allowed individuals, enterprises and foundations to establish and run educational institutions. As a result, school life experienced a drastic change and managerial independence was expanded, granting heads and the staff a significant role in the management of their institution.

### **3. The Present**

The Education Act LXXIX of 1993, amended several times since then with the main principles left unchanged, provided the legal foundation for the autonomy of schools and the activity of the school head as an independent manager. The fact of institutional autonomy raised school heads' needs and supplied operators' with means to be able to deal with the theory of management as well as management training in more detail. The need first appeared within the management and staff of vocational schools and was later reinforced by grammar and elementary schools, too.

Mainly in small settlements, local authorities made significant changes with respect to centralism, and required independent management of school heads. The demand for managerial attitude strengthened, as a fight for the very existence of the school had to be put up both against the inhabitants and the operating local authority. The 1990s saw a decrease in student population, thus successful management became essential in 'selling' the school on the market to parents and the new maintainers alike.

#### 4. Activity of the BUTE Concerning Staff Development

The BUTE included in its curriculum for technical and vocational teacher training subjects such as school management and studies of school structure as early as the end of the 1970s. Even lecture notes were distributed. In the late 1980s and early 90s our Department of Technical Education (DTE) did various research into school management. Some resulting studies were also published. We got acquainted with the school management modules, school organisation and main theoretical as well as practical issues of school management in England, France and Germany through personal experience and literature. In 1992 we received a Eurokontakt study by the Open University, bearing the title 'The School Manager'. The Education Ministry invited the DTE at the BUTE to examine and give an assessment of the study with involvement of experts. Having completed the task, we recommended that an autonomous curriculum, adapted to the realities of education in Hungary, be elaborated and used in school management training.

In 1993 the Education Ministry submitted a tender for institutions of higher education to launch a course in school management. We took part in the tender and won financial support, which we allocated for the special course in public education management as well as the preparation of accompanying teaching material.

'The Training of Public Education Management Staff', as a 4-term special course, was launched at the DTE in the autumn of 1993, and was later accredited as a specialised in-service course according to the Act of Higher Education.

#### 5. The Concept

Training is organised in the form of a correspondence course. The syllabus had to be based on this fact. The existing needs offered the starting point. The analysis of the needs was carried out in the first place by the examination of maintainers' opinions and future participants' expectations. Both international, and former national technical literature were taken into consideration. A significant number of these publications, based on local experience, were produced at the DTE. The course content was consequently divided into three main groups. The first group involved *general skills*, including management theory, management psychology and the study of the public educational system, which together comprised 9.3% of the entire course. The second group embodied *basic skills*, covering educational administration and educational law, school administration and labour skills, school economy, the development of school curricula, practice in educational administration, and professional practice, altogether comprising 63.5% of the curriculum. The third group contained *special skills*, including assessment, quality assurance, preparation for final exams, and written tests, comprising 27.2% of the curriculum. In organising the course contents we aimed at providing a desirable proportion of practical skills. Therefore training became composed of 49.5% theory and 50.5% practice.

Within the system of the correspondence course, the form of training has been defined. Accordingly, groups of 22 have been created and placed under the guidance of a tutor. There are 5 tutorials per term. The aim of these is the intensive study of a given and already familiar topic in order to enable students to put theory into practice. Tutorials are supplemented by practicals in school and educational administration and professional skills, taking 2 days a term. There are further 3-day residential courses held each academic year.

At school practicals, students, assisted by expert tutor-heads, learn about the fundamental issues and study the documents of school management. They also see how an experienced school head performs his duties. At training sessions, topics are treated by specialist trainers with the co-operation of students in group activities and role-play. There are sessions for 12 topics for each student.

56% of the teaching staff work in higher education, the rest of them in public education, and 37% of the tutors hold a degree. All the tutors have been prepared for the possible need to apply correspondence methods. Some of the tutors have completed the Open University course on 'The Efficient Manager' within Eurokontakt framework, and have taken a qualified exam. The rest of the teaching staff have either been students on our course where they got familiar with correspondence education, or they are being prepared for using this method by the university.

## **6. Research**

In order to make the training more productive, all the tutors take part in research into the development of teaching materials and the efficiency improvement of the various methods. This research has been supported by the Foundation for the Development of Training and Education, 'For the Training of Public Education Management Staff'. Due to the research as well as the continuous feedback from students (their opinions are asked for in questionnaires every academic year), we carry out regular curricular updates.

Students are supplied with course books in each subject, where the most important information is based on both technical literature and our own research experience. A series of questions and quizzes for home assignment contribute to the treatment of topics besides a full bibliography. Furthermore, each student is supplied with study instructions by way of assistance in their individual learning. These topic-related instructions indicate what auxiliary materials are to be used, and how to prepare for a tutorial or a training session. Students are also supplied with video cassettes on 20 topics, primarily on those having been treated at role-play sessions, and separate instruction sheets along with them.

Tutors receive instructions relating to each tutorial and their duties at practicals and training sessions. Another volume offers help in the elaboration of drafts to be used at the tutorials in the form of 70 slides structured by topics.

## 7. Experience

During the 7 years of training, together with the development of correspondence education and following from our research, the curriculum has been modified several times. The teaching material of individual subjects has been updated every two years and printed in as many copies as there are students, so that modification does not cause any technical difficulties.

In our research we endeavoured to find the material essential to a public education manager. Therefore we took meticulous care in elaborating the curriculum in the first place. We were encouraged to regularly revise and rewrite as well as enrich and update our teaching materials.

Secondly, our research embraced the elaboration of methods used at correspondence courses, and, thirdly, it provided a definition of the educational system so that, taking into account the requirements of correspondence education but not forgetting about the specialities of a teacher's work, we could develop the forms to be used in teaching. For example, with the completion of the National Core Curriculum, during the period when school pedagogical programmes were being compiled, we published a whole book dealing with curriculum development and the composition of pedagogical programmes. Later, with quality assurance coming to the foreground, we also integrated the organisation of examinations with quality assurance, and discussed them in the same book. The part treating the subject of the advisory system as well as the work of experts has been added to this topic, too. So the eight course modules we originally had have been reduced to seven.

## 8. Modules

*Module 1.: 'The System of Public Education'*

*Module 2.: 'Applied Management Theory'*

*Module 3.: 'School Administration'*

*Module 4.: 'Management Psychology'*

*Module 5.: 'Educational Law and Administrative Skills'*

*Module 6.: 'Economy in Educational Institutions'*

*Module 7.: 'Professional Development, Counselling, and Competence'*

## 9. Statistical Data

The number of participants at the course has been increasing since 1993. The primary reason for it lies in the novelty of the training and in the great demand for it on the part of school heads and maintainers. The table below illustrates the increase in the number of students:

| YEAR      | NUMBER OF STUDENTS<br>ACCEPTED |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 1993/1994 | 334                            |
| 1999/2000 | 2368                           |

The increase is also due to the fact that the Education Ministry has acknowledged the training as a specialist examination, and has gradually prescribed for school heads the acquisition of this specialist exam. In the future, we expect the present outstandingly great numbers to drop. One of the reasons for this is the fact, that today the training of public education management staff takes place at around ten locations already, whereas in 1993 it actually went on at three (Budapest Technical University, Gyula Juhasz Teacher Training College in Szeged, and the Teacher Training College in Budapest). The number of training locations has increased, and they also have affiliated departments at county seats. Another reason for the future decrease in numbers is that the majority of the people who are obliged to take the course have completed it. At the moment we are expecting those who are preparing for a managerial post, and would like to acquire management skills.

The possible decrease in the number of students inspires us to improve the quality of the training, to make it more interesting, to develop our methods, and be able to provide all the students with auxiliary materials to promote their learning. It is important to achieve that everybody take an active part in the training sessions, and the leading role of the tutors be given increasing prominence in the groups.

As we have several graduate students already, we are thinking of ways of keeping up and updating their knowledge, enabling them to follow and make use in their work of the changes in public education. We are planning to launch a short-term course for specialist graduates, and we endeavour to establish such a relationship between the university and students that can provide ex-students with continuous assistance in their development.

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