

Adaptive Education and Adapting Schools in Hungary

Lessons learned from a successful 3 years Hungarian-Dutch co-operation

Maria Bogнар (OKI, National Institute of Public Education, Budapest, Hungary) Annemarie Oomen, Teja van der Meer and Boudewijn van Velzen (APS, National Centre for School Improvement, Utrecht, The Netherlands)

Education reform in a society in transition necessarily has features that differ from those observed under more stable and predictable conditions. Hungary and its schools offer many examples of the positive and negative effects of the transition towards European Union standards. It shows clearly the need for adaptable education concepts and a flexible, sensitive implementation strategy.

The Hungarian – Dutch MAG project (2003-2006) tried to find strategies that would enable Hungarian teachers, principals and local education officers to create adaptive education (teacher guided group work with structured learning tasks in a positive learning climate) in 13 schools. The search for adaptive education was inspired by the high numbers of children at risk that were excluded from any meaningful qualification, and by the lack of knowledge of teachers and principals about classroom methodologies that could cater for the psychological and pedagogical need of these students.

The project was a successful cooperation of OKI, National Institute of Public Education in Budapest, and APS, National Centre for School Improvement in Utrecht. It was funded by MATRA, the Social Transformation Program for Central and Eastern Europe of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by the Hungarian Ministry of Education, OKI and local Hungarian initiatives.

The objectives set at the start were achieved almost completely: small teams in lower grades in 13 schools in 4 regions created more effective learning opportunities, applying adaptive education and alternative assessment as inspiring models. Principals and assistant-principals demonstrated to be able to support teachers, and 12 local education officers showed a genuine interest in the schools they were responsible for.

A wide variety of monitoring and evaluation methods have been used by the Dutch-Hungarian team. As a consequence the MAG project proved to be a rich learning process, both for participating educators in Hungary as well as for the Dutch consultants and trainers.

Keywords: adaptive education, transition, teachers, principals, evaluation, Hungary

1. Setting the stage

Hungary in transition - characteristics of educational change

Hungary is a country in Eastern Europe with an area of 93030 km² and a population of 10 million inhabitants. It has been part of the former Soviet Bloc for 50 years until 1989 but differed in many respects from the other Soviet satellites. Free-market mechanisms and law reforms accordingly, civil initiatives like a parliamentary framework were created many years before the break down of the communist rule. At the same time large scale reforms in the educational sector were set up to create an exceptional decentralised system which modernised the legal side or the so-called structural conditions. Less attention was paid to the social actors in the educational which might explain why the learning-teaching processes and classroom practices weren't affected and didn't change at that time.

Hungary has been a centralized country for decades – and some may argue for centuries since its educational traditions go back to a mix of French and Prussian inspirations. Since the late 80's and especially during the 90's of the last century, a policy was implemented that obliged schools to prepare its own curriculum within the broader framework of a national curriculum in schools catering for students in the age of 6 to 16 years, the target group of the MAG project. Later, in 2000, an intermediate so called framework curriculum was introduced that defined attainment targets, These targets should cover a maximum of 70% of the compulsory teaching time. The framework curricula contained detailed content descriptions per subject per year, including the minimum time allocated per subject.

Since 2002 schools have to prepare their school curriculum based on an (once again) revised and now competence based national curriculum. The latter as a consequence of the alignment of Hungarian education with standards in the European Union, standards that are competence based (Kuyjper 2005).

These changes in national education policies may well be perceived by teachers and head teachers as the swing of the pendulum from centralised to decentralised and back. They also report a feeling of innovation tiredness since the support they received to implement all these changes was non existent.

The need for adaptive education in Hungary

Children from poor households in Hungary risk to be excluded from any meaningful educational qualification at elementary level, and therefore will reproduce the situation of the families that raise them. These families and consequently the children are excluded from mainstream developments in Hungarian society, and are hardly qualified to enter the labour force (Lannert 2004).

Schools in Hungary are not prepared to cater for the psychological and pedagogical needs of these students, mainly because they don't know how to adapt their education to these needs. As a result, elementary schools are not effective places for learning for these students which leads to high rates of form repetition and eventually drop out among the afore mentioned at risk students.

OKI, National Institute of Public Education in Budapest, and APS, National Centre for School Improvement in Utrecht analysed the needs of Hungarian schools as a search for adaptive teaching: teacher guided group work with structured learning tasks in a positive learning climate.

Since schools in Hungary are responsible for their own school programs, and since these programs are evaluated by local educational officers within the national framework laws which defines the expected outcomes of the system as a whole, there is a need for intervention schemes at local (district) level that encourages and prepares teachers to adapt their teaching to

the basic pedagogical and psychological needs of students with the support of head teachers (principals) and local education officials.

2. The MAG project as an answer to the needs of Hungarian schools catering for students at risk

The MAG project: beneficiaries and involved parties

The MAG project, an Hungarian & Dutch co-operation, was to answer the search for adaptive education in Hungarian schools. MAG, meaning 'seed', is an abbreviation of Megelőzés - Alkalmazkodás – Gondoskodás, which can be translated as Preventing - Adapting - Caring.

For involvement in the MAG project two disadvantaged EU regions have been identified by the Hungarian project manager: Northern-Hungary and South-Transdanubia with mostly rural and city schools and with a community of lower socio-economic status.

Some features of the students at risk in the MAG project are: little support for (further) education as the parents have little education; one or both parents are unemployed and do not value the benefits of education; the child has a large number of siblings. Roma children are a large part of the socially excluded and at risk students.

The teachers involved have an average of 20 to 24/26 pupils in their classroom. Some teachers share their classes (2 teachers per class) and stay with a class of pupils 1 (most of them) 4 years. Most of the teachers have a full time job which consists of 22 lessons of 45 minutes. Some teachers may work in a school with extended schooldays and have a flexible curriculum: school lessons and extra curricular activities. The direct beneficiaries in the MAG project are the teachers of form 1-4 of the involved elementary schools. Teachers were recruited for the MAG project on voluntary basis.

The head teachers and deputies of the elementary schools participating in the project cater for 80 to 800 pupils. They are responsible for realisation of the educational objectives of the school and for staff development. They have experienced little or no management training.

The MAG involved LEOs (Local Education Officers). These are officials of the Local Educational Authority that have to support and assess schools in meeting educational objectives. In small municipalities a LEO may be 'shared' with other municipalities, or an official may have several portfolios next to education, where as in large cities there may be several officials for education only. Most of the LEOs in the MAG project do have a civil servant training and no educational training or knowledge at all.

The objectives of the MAG project

The overall objective of the MAG project is to develop elementary schools as effective places to learn for all children, especially for socially excluded, at-risk students in such a way that teachers, head teachers and local education officers will participate each according their professional and formal obligations.

The project goals are threefold:

1. 85 Teachers in form 1-4 of 13 elementary schools are capable of adjusting their teaching and classroom management in order to create more effective learning opportunities for all 1560 students, using adaptive education as a model.

2. The 26 head teachers and the deputies responsible for teaching in form 1-4 are capable of fostering and sustaining adaptive education by assisting the teachers, integrating adaptive education in the school programs, and disseminating good practice experiences to the upper level forms.
3. 12 Local education officers responsible for elementary schools (form 1-4) are capable of using indicators on effective and adaptive education to assess the pedagogical program of the school, using the outcomes of this assessment in a consultative and constructive way in dialogue with teachers and head teachers.

To meet the project goals, training and consultation programs are developed and executed for each targetgroup: teachers, head teachers and local education officers yearly. A potentially nation wide MAG-network for adaptive education will be supported in growing during the project in order to continue to disseminate the experiences, good practices and materials of adaptive education after the project.

Project design to create conditions to meet the requirements of the outcomes

In order to achieve the development and execution of a training and consultation program for teachers, management and LEOs, yearly and for each target group a Dutch trainer executes a *train-the-trainers program* in a so-called 'cascade' model. This program consist of a 5-days training and, four months later, a 4-day consultation session with the one or two English speaking Hungarian trainers in Hungary. In the case of the teachers, an extra 'cascade layer' is necessary: the Hungarian trainers train 7 Hungarian speaking teacher trainers from the 4 regions for delivering on site.

The *national, regional and on site training* of each target group takes place annually. The teachers are trained once a year for 8 hours on regional level and three times a year for 4 hours on site level. Management and LEOs are trained in 4 session of 8 hours each initially, and in 2 sessions of 16 hours as of period 3.

Hard copy and video materials

For teachers resource books are drafted annually. The first year the focus is on 'how to teach' adaptive teaching in the classroom. The second year the focus is on 'what to teach'. The third year the subject is "alternative assessment".

For school managers a resource book on education planning is published at the end of Year 2.

For LEOs the subject is cooperation of schools and LEOs, and is published at the end of Year 3.

Newsletters, which appear 4 times a year, will inform all participants and staff in the MAG project on progress and common activities. A *web page* addresses any one interested in the MAG project and contain e.g. the published Newsletters.

The *national conference* at the end of the first two years are planned to celebrate and disseminate success and to set the agenda for the next year.

The conference at the end of the third year is in the Netherlands at the end of the *study tour*, in order to add an exchange of Dutch and Hungarian experiences. At this conference the *MAG-network* will be established and a date for the annual conference in 2007 will be set.

The *project management* for the MAG project is shared by one person from OKI and one from APS. Their main task is to set up, execute, supervise and monitor all agreed activities and revise biannually the operational plan.

The *committee of overseers (ComO)* is chaired by OKI. A main function of the ComO is to provide the project management with feedback and advice in terms of objectives and the strategies and

procedures used to meet these. The second function: the ComO is important for the dissemination of the results of the project and provide support if needed on strategic level, both regionally and nationally.

How did we fare?

Period 1: September 2003 – February 2004

The approval by MATRA of the proposed MAG project and its budget was formally completed in December 2003 and delayed the planning, organisation and logistics in Hungary with 2 till 3 months. The Project Management speeded up, but didn't succeed in all the planned activities: especially the Newsletter and Website.

The first 2 months of the project, the inception phase, were used to further explore the initial situation and context by project managers paying visits to all sites and establishing first contacts with all participants in the regions and the trainers.

The project management and ComO were set up, and the initial project planning was reviewed.

The project management invited the Dutch and Hungarian evaluators to draft and secure a solid long and short term monitoring and evaluation system from the very start. Evaluation in this first phase was focused on attendance rate, appreciation and acceptance of the concept and project design. Data on needs of participating trainees were taken in account in preparing and executing the next periods.

Trainers and trainers-of-trainers were prepared, and cooperated in such a way that the 1st Training of Trainers (ToT) took place and training materials for the first sessions in the first year were produced cooperatively.

The inception phase ended with the start of a Kick-Off Conference with all participants and staff in order to share the concepts of adaptive teaching and the project strategy, and also to set the agenda for the next phase.

Period 2: March 2004 – August 2004

The awareness stage started off with the first training sessions of teachers, heads and LEOs.

In the awareness phase, which took 8 months, teachers, school management and LEOs were made aware of the need, function and premises of adaptive teaching, educational planning, and local cooperation. According to the Concern Based Adoption Model : CBAM (Hall and Loucks 1979), participants in this phase will most be mostly concerned with their own role. New behaviour was promoted. The 4 training sessions for the teachers focused on 'how to teach' adaptive teaching in the classroom, which they could apply immediately. The 3 training sessions for the head teachers and deputies focused on their roles as educational leaders in their schools. They practiced and learned to apply supportive behaviour in order to assist teachers. The 3 training sessions with the LEOs focused on their new roles: less control, more support, using data they had collected themselves in dialogue with the pilot schools.

A resource book for teachers on adaptive teaching, which include local, Hungarian experiences was published in July.

New practice of participants was demonstrated in small exhibitions and a LEO/head sessions during the annual conference in June. This conference celebrated the success in each school and region and participants could share their experiences. Participants teachers and heads, deputies were encouraged to visit and contact each other.

This period ended with the training of teachers trainers for the second project year.

Period 3: September 2004 – February 2005

By period 3 we planned to enter 'the experimental phase' in which all participants will be challenged to experiment with new tasks, and to cooperate with others. The focus moved in this Year 2 towards content: subject matter instruction materials for the teachers; SMART action planning for the head teachers and deputies; educational planning and dissemination for the LEOs.

At the end of period 2, teachers demonstrated to be able to apply adaptive education practices in their classroom, underpinned by the publication of the first MAG resource book for teachers with Hungarian examples of good practices. We observed that LEOs and heads in the MAG project needed more time and support to take up their new role and behaviour. Sudden changes in the Hungarian Educational Act (June 2003) thwarted possible progress-decisions at the end of period 2. These changes held obligations for LEOs and schools to draft pedagogical plans, mid and long term planning. It forced schools and LEOs to ad-hoc decisions, top-down and little communication in schools and between LEOs and schools. This planning urged the Dutch project manager to hold on to the original subjects for LEOs and management in the training program for Year 2: support by SMART-planning, communication. And so ignoring the actual stages of concern of the trainees: not yet familiar with their new role and tasks. Another project management concern was to raise the attendance of LEOs in the provided training for which a strategy has been developed at the end of Year 1 and gradually applied in Year 2.

In period 3 both Dutch missions of the training of teacher trainers, management and LEOs trainers took place, followed largely by the actual local training. This created the question what to do with 'the gap' between the sessions and the next moment: the National Conference in July 2004. Signals continued that management trainees were disconnected to their pedagogical responsibility concerning changes on classroom level, E.g. SMART planning was conceived as an objective in stead as a tool. Although the attendance of LEOs raised, the variation in unknown needs due to position (administrative or political), scale (small settlement or large town) and administrative structures urged to start a small survey among them in period 4, in order to serve these trainees the best we could in Year 3.

A negative and troublesome impression from the outside of period 3 did not meet the actual observations of Dutch and Hungarian staff. There was progress on all levels. Trainers reported the ownership of adaptive teaching with trainees. This development was underlined by the voluntary six-monthly meeting of Hungarian staff to share common experience and insights from this period onward and which would make them stakeholders and owners of the Hungarian adaptive teaching concept.

Period 4: March 2005 – August 2005

During this period evaluation showed that all teachers are using adaptive teaching in at least two subject areas, 75% of the teachers in 3 or more areas. Core subjects of the curriculum are favourite: Hungarian language (85%), science (57%) and mathematics (53%). About 45% of the teachers uses also techniques and arts, 10-20% also other subject areas like techniques, physical education and music. 9 subject areas of the curriculum are mentioned totally. All teachers are using a variety of instruction forms. Different forms of group work (81%) and forms of pair work (81%) are mostly used. E.g. student groups with same task, with cooperative tasks, expert group, check in duos, duo tasks with helping each other. Also independent learning in activity corners is developing (48% of the teachers). Interactive instruction with the whole group has also more variety like: think- pair- share, wait& reflect, subject talking (47% of the teachers). Content analyses of 11 out of 19 teacher portfolios confirm these results strongly and gave a beautiful pictures of what is happening in the classroom by a lot of photographs and explanations of the teachers. Some teachers and heads mention spontaneously better pupil achievements and

reduce of retention; a lot of teachers mention attitude changes of the children (dimensions of self awareness and social behaviour).

Half of the teachers received quality support by deputies, sometimes by heads. These quality interventions were lesson observation and feedback, stimulating exchange of experiences and involving upper class teachers. The other half of the teachers received information, material facilitation or solutions for practical problems. They were also happy with this kind of support, of course. Supportive colleagues are the most important source of teacher development according to 95% of the teachers, and also MAG trainers are mentioned as an important source of support.

3 LEOs visited classrooms and observed adaptive lessons. Afterwards they organised a feedback session. 5 LEOs expressed moral support and/or gave material support, 2 LEOs had only little contact (school plan accepted) and 2 LEOs had no contact with the schools.”

Period 5: September 2005 – February 2006

In period 5 we acted upon the findings in period 4.

For heads and deputies a two day consultation session by the Dutch management trainer on educational change at school level was inserted this period as ‘ an in-depth intervention’ to pull trainees to their actual responsibility in the MAG changes at school level, followed by a day session on educational change with ‘ a change game’ conducted by the Hungarian project manager.

LEOs had been trained partly together with heads in Year 2, but continued now separately with their adjusted agenda, based on the adequate, current insights how to accommodate them. Trainers and project management realised that the current context of LEO’s was quite different to the one we projected in the LEO training. The features, which were pioneered in the MAG project, attracted the attention of educational policymakers who emphasized that the future LEO should go in that direction professionally.

Under the Hungarian National Development Plan 2004 -2006 money was provided for a 4th MAG project year. Under the same strategy, a new body SuliNova issued experimental classroom materials. The Hungarian project manager kept on the track to opt for synergy of MAG (the ‘how to’ approach) and SuliNova’s (the ‘what’ approach) and to promote the MAG process-innovation approach during the 4th project year and under the National Development Plan for 2007-2013.

Since the start of the project presentations and workshops on the MAG project have been offered nationally and lately in all pending educational research in Hungary reference was made to the MAG project.

Period 6: March 2006 – August 2006

All activities in period 6 took place as planned for and with the expected outcome.

With the final training and consultation session for teachers, school management and LEOs, delivered during this period, the implementation phase of the MAG project came to an end. All other activities in this 6th period aimed at evaluation and further implementation of adaptive teaching at site and national level in order to sustain the results achieved by the MAG project so far.

Two resource books with ‘good Hungarian practices in the MAG project’ were drafted during this period: one book for teachers on formative assessment and one resource book for LEOs on the cooperation of school(staff and management) and LEOs in educational planning. The application of accreditations of teacher, LEO and school management trainings were handed in and accepted.

Almost all participants, raining staff and ComO members in the MAG project (116 out of 148 persons) took part in the study trip to the Netherlands in June 2006. They met with Dutch colleagues in schools (teachers, head and deputy) and local government. To observe practice, share insights and learn from Dutch experiences over the years in order to deepen their understanding of adaptive teaching and stimulate for advanced practices in the future. Two Newsletters prepared the participants for the study trip, where as tow Newsletters afterwards are devoted to the outcomes of the study trip.

During their stay in the Netherlands the yearly national conference took place in Utrecht with workshops and consultations on remaining issues and questions. At the end of the conference the ComO announced the establishment of an Hungarian Association for Adaptive teaching in early autumn 2006.

A qualitative evaluation has been conducted by the Hungarian and Dutch evaluators during site visits in April 2006. We get back to these outcomes in chapter 3.

And after that.....

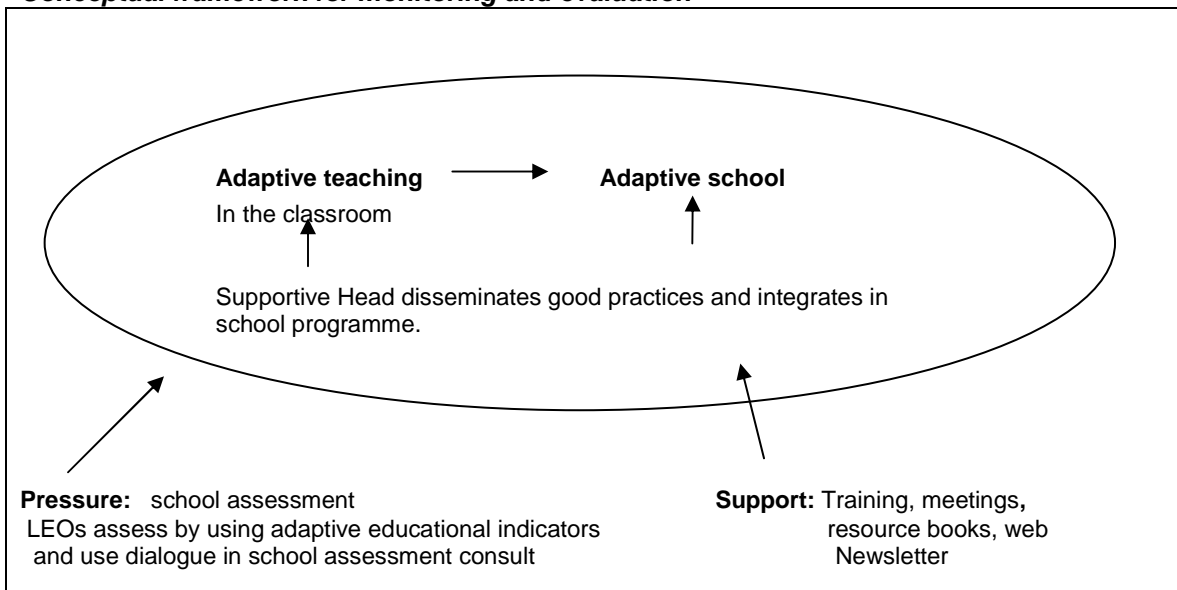
The 4th MAG year (2006-2007) started off with training for teachers, heads and deputies. Most schools started to extend adaptive education to upper grades by pairing teacher-peers of experienced and starters. Most school management and teachers followed up on the study trip by changing the school environment and processes. The ‘how’ from MAG and the ‘what’ from other improvements of the National Development Plan were really combined, which enriched the new developed programs with the special focus of adaptive education.

The accredited training for teachers, management and LEOs is delivered by OKI and other partners.

The Hungarian Association for Adaptive teaching is founded on December 2 2006 .

3. What did we observe?

Conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluation



The main research questions belonging to the framework are based on the MAG project goals including the indicators given by the project management for each of the target groups:

1. Are Hungarian teachers able to teach in an adaptive mode and to adjust their classroom management in order to create more effective learning opportunities for all students of grade 1-4 after three years of MAG support?
2. Are heads and deputies able to have consultative sessions with their teachers, to integrate adaptive education in the school program, and to disseminate good practice experiences in the upper level grades after three years of MAG support?
3. Are local educational officers able to support schools by a consultative dialogue about the indicators of adaptive teaching to assess the pedagogical program of the school and to link adaptive education with district education policies after three years of MAG support?

Methods and Sources

A variety of methods has been used by the evaluation team of OKI and APS. The basic method during the three years was a questionnaire, adapted to the target groups (teachers/heads/LEO/MAG-trainers) and adapted to the developments in the MAG projects. Every year the evaluation team added specific qualitative methods. In the first year we used direct feedback methods like post-it walls, comment-boxes and coffee-break interviews. At the middle of the first year schools received a camera to make pictures of adaptive teaching in their classrooms. They presented 'a school poster' of their results at the first national conference. In the second year we used teacher portfolio's as data for qualitative research. Again the portfolio was about what happened in the classroom in the second year. At the end of the third year we visited half of the schools using classroom observation, interviews and free observations as qualitative methods.

Respondents were teachers-in the classroom, teachers as a MAG group, heads and deputies, LEOs and a few times also non-MAG teachers and parents.

Outcomes

In chapter 2 outcomes during the project periods are mentioned as input to proceed the project progress. Here we present the outcomes of the qualitative evaluation and result after 3 years.

Teachers' level

Almost all MAG teachers were practicing adaptive teaching: teacher guided group work with structured learning tasks in a positive learning climate were most seen in the classrooms (84%). Teachers and children liked MAG because of the high variety of tasks and because of the positive relationship between teacher and pupils. The subject matters used by teachers fits with the concept of adaptive teaching by variety in task and didactics and by interactive explanation of contents and all subjects of the curriculum were covered. But MAG lessons were not given all day long: once a day was the at most for teachers because they needed about two hours preparation of a MAG lesson, once a week was the minimum. No average could be mentioned because it differs a lot per school term. Teachers shared the MAG concept per school, but prepared their lessons individually. Teachers just started with alternative assessments like student portfolio, positive feedback during learning processes, small rewards for progress, and evaluation by children themselves.

Level of head teachers and deputies

Heads and deputies met MAG teachers on daily basis and were supportive to their mostly urgent needs for teaching material. Teachers were perceived as experts of adaptive teaching by heads/deputies, so their consultations with teachers was not state of the art. Heads and deputies facilitated, supplied and promoted adaptive teaching as much as possible and teachers expected not more than that. Disseminating good practices to upper grade was just started in the third year. Organising special school meetings about the MAG concept and classroom observation by non-MAG teachers were the most important interventions of the heads. The school plans seemed to

be regarded as only a document formally required. The plans consisted of educational paragraphs with some SMART goals, half of the heads consulted teachers about this paragraph, but no one could tell by heart what was in it. LEOs were informed but seldom a discussion partner for conducting the school plan. Explanation can be found in the position of the LEOs by not being a part of the political and ministerial educational structures under the Ministry of Education, but of the structures under the Ministry of Interior.

Level of LEOs

LEOs perceived the heads and deputies as professional managers operating in the autonomy of the school. They based their opinion on their school visits at least once a year. Dialogues were characterised as open conversations about the MAG project and MAG lessons. Almost all Leo's also visited MAG classrooms. A few Leo's were able to promote adaptive education in their districts by educational meetings or by putting it on local political agenda.

Conclusions

A summary of conclusions at school level would look as follows:

1. The reward for teachers is the fun pupils have in learning in "MAG lessons".
The price the teachers paid were many hours of preparation because all learning tasks have to be developed by themselves. Only on long term this investment will be rewarding when teachers start in form 1 again after 4 years, and will repeat the cycle with a fresh group of students.
2. Pupils have fun in MAG lessons because of the variety of tasks and the way of teaching. Not only a book, but also being allowed to do things themselves and decide themselves on how to fulfil the task. Pupils enjoy that they are allowed to discuss and consult each other during group work. They enjoy giving feedback in a positive learning climate.
3. Heads and deputies acknowledged that teachers are the content experts. Heads and deputies were kept informed what's going on in the classroom but did not consult teachers. They didn't feel confident enough with the concept of adaptive teaching.
4. MAG teachers are trained as a group and experiment lessons with 4 – 12 colleagues, not individually. Consultations and discussions together were part of their learning process.
5. To disseminate the concept and the good practices the classroom experiments were crucial: being able to tell about the concept and showing what's going on in the classroom served as eye-openers for non-MAG teachers. Heads who perform MAG lessons in an upper grade serve as a model in their school.
6. Teachers' and, later on, pupils' portfolios facilitated the communication about MAG lessons with non-MAG teachers. The pupils' portfolio was helpful in the conversation with parents. Moreover and unique for Hungary, pupils can show at home what they do in school. Also pictures in the school and in the portfolio contributed significantly in 'telling the story'.
7. Heads and deputies were experienced by teachers as supporting and facilitating. Also the fact that all heads and deputies observed the classroom for interest and not for control reason was perceived by the teachers as 'professional acknowledgement'.

4. Lesson learned.

Project delivery level

To a certain extent the experiences in the MAG project emphasise the specific features of educational reform in societies in transition.

Hungary can be perceived as a society 'in transition' as defined by Bîrzea (1994) and Radó (1999): (a) in a process of moving from one system (non-democratic) to an entirely different one (democratic), (b) accompanied by crises and radical structural readjustments, (c) accompanied by uncertainty and destabilization and (d) fundamentally mitigated by the more or less well-defined goals and directions (market economy, modernization etc.).

Halász (2003) argues that in a society in transition it's difficult to recognize and apply the linear way of educational change as Fullan (2001) project it under more stable conditions. Halász summarizes the specific features of educational reform in transition societies as follows:

1. *Educational changes are strongly related to processes external to the education sector.*
Added to the macro political changes there is the significant impact of the economic restructuring and the subsequent crisis in the vocational-training sector, public administration and public-financing reform, demographic changes and consequent changes in the enrolment structure.
2. *The change process isn't linear*, as the direction and the goals of the reforms will be reinterpreted and change, as do the available instruments during the periods of transition.
3. *The capacity to manage uncertainty is a critical factor.* In circumstances as described above, change agents and institutions involved must maintain flexibility, be perceptive to messages coming from the environment and be prepared to modify the strategy according to changes in the environment.
4. *Greater willingness to take risk is endemic to societies in transition.* This high-risk taking willingness is needed on all levels: from policymakers to classroom-teachers, to break down the 'one view' culture and the relative politicization of administration in Hungary.
5. *Communication and ongoing learning become particularly important* in a rapid evolving context with many unexpected factors and developments, where all participants should in a 'stance' of permanent reflection, learning and involvement.
6. *Efficiency in use of resources increases with experience.* Interruptions and modifications in the direction and goals of educational reforms causes waste of resources. On the other hand: all experiences in continuously adapting documents, in-service training, programs, text books are valuable in future revisions.
7. *A pragmatic approach focusing on the instruments of implementation prevails over abstract, theoretical conceptions of change.*

Halász concludes that broader, social transitions may have both positive and negative effects on educational change. The transition may facilitate changes in the educational sector. On the other hand the educational change may become fragile over time and so special, explicit attention must be given to implementation and institutionalisation at higher level.

Secondly, he concludes that in societies in transition, non-linear conceptual frameworks are required, in which change is (a) understood not as a goal but as an outcome of an open process, and (b) the focus of the learning of all involved must shift from the original goals of change to the environment, which not only determines whether or not those goals will be achieved but also serves continuously to modify these goals.

If a project is perceived as both "a structure and activities" as well as "people's business" these features also applies to educational change projects in more stable societies. But yes: all these features are recognized as harsh and more obvious in the Hungarian context compared to e.g. the Dutch and far more stable context.

International cooperation level

'The pragmatic approach focusing on instruments', as argued by Halász, meant a pre-dominantly 'product oriented' implementation strategy in Hungary. That this pragmatic approach also can have a 'process oriented' line of descent, was perceived as an alien phenomenon in Hungary.

As MAG was (a) a tri-level approach project with (b) a different training format, resulting in real, observed changes at classroom level – which was not the case in previous national initiatives– the Hungarian project manager was invited to elaborate a policy on national educational development which will be used during the next phase of the National Development Plan. The MAG training format ((consecutive trainings at sites instead of one-block preparation, constructive conversations among different levels) is a significant fact in the Hungarian INSET system as the training for teachers and school management does interconnect and also pioneers in how to improve a school as a whole. It lead to a new school improvement model in Hungary and too, it will be become part of the accredited INSET system.

Finally MAG led to more consciousness on national level on how to start national educational initiatives, the balance of support and pressure and more effective concentration on staff development.

For more information contact

Mária Bognár bognarm@oki.hu

Annemarie Oomen a.oomen@aps.nl

References

- Bîrzea, C. (1994) *Education Policies of the Countries in Transition*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press.
- Fullan, M. G. (2001) *The New Meaning of Change*. (3rd edn). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Halász, G (2003) Educational Change and Social Transition in Hungary. In: E. Polyzoi, M. Fullan & J.P. Anchan (eds.) *Change Forces in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: education in transition*. London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Hall, G and Loucks, S (1979) *Implementing Innovations in Schools: a Concerns Based Adoption Approach*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the AERA American Educational Research Association. San Francisco, CA, April 8-12, 1979.
- Kuiper, W., Akker van den, J., Hooghoff, H. & Letschert, J. (2005), Curriculum policy and school practice in a European comparative perspective. In: Letschert, J. (ed.) *Curriculum development re-invented*. Enschede: SLO. p. 66 - 67. Available from: http://www.slo.nl/themas/00153/Currdevelopment_re-invented_on_line_versie.pdf/ (Accessed 21 December 2006)
- Lannert, J. and Halász G (eds.) (2004) *Education in Hungary 2003*. Budapest: National Institute of Public Education (OKI). Available from: www.oki.hu/eduhun/ (Accessed 21 December 2006)
- Radó, P. (1999) *Transition in Education. The Key Education Policy Areas in the Central-European and Baltic Countries*. Budapest: Institute for Education Policy, Open Society Institute.