

Adaptive Education and Adapting Schools in Hungary DRAFT
Lessons learned from a successful 3 years Hungarian-Dutch co-operation

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Summary

Educational change in a society in transition like Hungary necessarily has features that differ from those observed under more stable conditions. The social transition itself may have both positive and negative effects on educational change on one hand, but requires adaptable educational concepts plus a flexible, sensitive implementation strategy on the other hand. The objective of the MAG project, an Hungarian-Dutch co-operation, was to answer the search for adaptive education in Hungarian schools. This necessity became manifest since the exclusion of children at risk of any educational qualification and the lack of knowledge of teachers and school management in primary education about strategies to cater for the psychological and pedagogical needs of these students grew to be a matter of national concern. A challenging dimension in the project was the involvement of local education officers (LEOs) as evaluators of educational programs.

This project has been executed by OKI, the National Institute for Public Education in Hungary and APS International, a subsidiary of APS, National Centre for School Improvement in The Netherlands. It was financially supported by the Social Transformation Programme Central and Eastern Europe (MATRA) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by OKI, by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and by local initiatives.

In three project years (2003-2006) the objectives were achieved: small teams of lower grade level teachers in 13 schools in 4 regions created more effective learning opportunities for all students, using adaptive education and alternative assessment as a model. 26 Head teachers and deputies proved to be 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. 12 LEOs in these regions gave evidence of understanding the changes in schools and made a start to perceive their role from 'controlling' to 'supporting.'

The project was designed to create conditions to meet the requirements of the expected educational outcomes. Hungarian staff was trained by Dutch staff to provide school-based INSET to the participating teachers, heads and deputies and Leo's for 20-30 hours yearly. In the Hungarian context, the project was characterised by an 'alien' implementation strategy, with great attention for process ("What's going on with participants; with trainer staff?") and instructional behaviour (first: 'how' to do adaptive teaching, then 'what': how to apply it in subjects?). The observed, achieved educational change in the classroom plus its implementation strategy attracted the attention of national policy makers.

A variety of evaluation methods has been used by the Hungarian-Dutch evaluation team. The basic method was a questionnaire for each target group, including trainer staff. Qualitative strategies were added every year e.g. coffee-break interviews during national conferences, teachers portfolio. At the end of the third year 6 schools were visited for classroom observation and interviews.

The MAG project has been a rich learning process, both for participants and staff in which critical social and professional values from the Dutch and Hungarian context have been tested and blue-print requirements were mixed with an inductive strategy.

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.

All these modernity's proved to be rather stable, surviving three democratic elections and changes of government during the 1990s and the first years of the third millennium.

Still however, 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 involved institutions 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 for 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 evolvement.
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 too facilitate changes in the educational sector. On the other hand the educational change may be or 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.

Decentralisation in Hungary in past, present and future

In a recent study (Kuijper 2005) curriculum policies and related school practices in nine European and one US state were compared. This study offered us insights in the Hungarian legislation regarding decentralisation in its education system, and also in the consequences of these policies for schools in that country.

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.

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.

As Garmston and Wellman (1999) argue, schools are non-linear dynamic systems that must find a way to survive in an ever faster changing environment. Centralised systems will not be able to assist schools in this process, but that does not mean that in de-centralised systems there is no role for central or local education authorities. For them the challenge is to find appropriate and effective ways to support schools in their efforts to adapt to these changes. At the other hand it requires from the professionals –teachers, head teachers- in the schools a pro-active and a more or less entrepreneurial perspective. It goes without saying that for our Hungarian colleagues it was not an easy task to feel at ease with these expectations.

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.

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.

1. 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.

The unemployment rate in *Northern-Hungary* is four times higher than the national standards due to a collapsed heavy industry, the drift of well-educated people to other parts in Hungary, and an influx of low educated ethnic minorities. The valleys of this mountainous region hide tiny villages with small schools and some larger cities. These cities used to be the industrial centres, where inhabitants of the region could earn a living. Four different regions were involved in the MAG project: Ónod, region Sajólad with a small school; Sajólad, region Sajólad with a middle-sized school); Miskolc, region Miskolc with middle-sized school too, as well as Ózd with four small rural schools: Bánréve, Borsodbóta, Farkaslyuk and Hangony.

South-Transdanubia is also a rural EU-region with little industry. The region has a tradition of agricultural co-operatives which collapsed with the change of the political system. The people in the area are relatively poor educated as neither the agriculture, nor the blue-collar work in the light industry (food processing, textile industry) required educated employees. These characteristics are especially present in the city of Nagyatád, with a high level of poverty: one third of the students are eligible to social support by national standards. Two schools of the city were involved in the MAG project, plus one neighbouring rural school, Háromfa. The other involved three schools stem from Szekszárd, the smallest county city of Hungary, which population has been declining since 1990 due to the lack of employment.

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 involved teachers 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 involved elementary schools cater for 80 to 800 pupils. They have responsibility for realising the educational objectives of the school and staff development. They have little or no management training.

The MAG involved LEOs 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 others or an official may have several portfolios next to education, where as in large cities there may be several officials for education only. So LEO in the MAG project hold different positions (notary, mayor, official) in the local communities. The type of governance in which they are functional as an educational LEO differs and so do their work conditions. Accordingly they have a mixed background in previous training. Most of the LEO in the MAG project do have a civil servant training and no educational training or knowledge.

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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 teacher 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.

The expected project results of the MAG project

The expected project results of the MAG project are:

1. A teacher training and consultation program on application of adaptive education that will produce more effective schools will be developed and executed.
2. A management training and consultation program focused on immediate and long term support for teachers implementing adaptive education in order to produce more effective schools will be developed and executed.
3. A training and consultation program for local education officers (LEOs) focused on preparation for a supportive role towards schools, and an information role towards the local education decision makers will be developed and conducted.
4. A potentially nation wide network for adaptive education will continue to disseminate the experiences, good practices and materials of adaptive education. Participants are teachers, heads and deputies, local education officers and facilitators from universities, (independent) pedagogical institutions, and the like.

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 onsite. The Hungarian trainers elaborate the available training material to train their target group and reported to the project manager. In between the missions of the visiting Dutch trainers the Hungarian trainers are invited to consult one another or their Dutch colleagues by e-mail and telephone.

The *national, regional and on site training* of each target group take place yearly. 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 the train-the-trainers programs and training programs may be of Dutch origin. These materials can serve as a source to be experimented with and are enriched by Hungarian practice. From this experience stem the small Hungarian *resource books* which are drafted by the trainers and which are used to inform a wider audience with the background and experiences in Hungary.

For teachers this resource book is drafted yearly. 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 the resource book on educational planning is published at the end of Year 2. For Leos the subject is cooperation between schools and LEO 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.

Three months after the start of the program, all participants and staff meet for a collective start of the project. The overall objective of the MAG project, the concept of adaptive teaching, the strategy and activities with the different target groups is clarified. The agenda for the first year is set in communication with all participants.

The *national conference* at the end of the first and second year will be to celebrate and disseminate success and to set the agenda for the next year.

The conference at the end of the third year will be 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 inceptive phase, were used to further explore the initial situation and context among others by project managers paying visits to all sites and establishing first contacts with all participating LEOs, head teachers and deputies, Hungarian trainers of teacher trainers, trainers of teachers, trainers of head teachers and deputies and trainer of LEOs.

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

In this stage we found we had to change the original Hungarian LEO trainer, due to change of job assignment and possible commitment. We met with a change in a schools' management in Szekszárd that kept his distance to the MAG-project at first. During the site visits, 3 initial schools (Kazinbarcika and Musconyin) appeared to close down or merge during the current period and unable – according to the project management- to engage in the MAG project. Finding new schools on such short notice showed to be hard. The teacher trainers involved approached possible new schools (indicators: innovative, open minded and appropriated student population.) and found 2 schools in the region of Sajólád: Ónod and Sajólád; and a school in the nearby region Miskolc. For each school 1 LEO will participate, in contrast to the other regions, where 1 or 2 persons will participate on behalf of the participating schools in a

region. Plus: the participating LEOs from Ónod and Sajólád are different functionalities: they are notary.

The project management invited the Dutch and Hungarian evaluator 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 co-created.

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 LEO 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 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. This support should have been delivered on site during on site sessions. However: this new behaviour needed more time to develop in the next two years.

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. Trainers experienced that LEOs had to get used to ‘new’ indicators for ‘measuring school success’ and to convince the local school committees on this. Some LEOs were not in the position to do so. To enhance effectiveness the project management decided to change the formula of 4 one day training session for management and LEOs in 2 two-day sessions in the next two years.

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

Since the deficit of the Hungarian central budget was higher as expected in period 1, there was a tremendous National budget pressure in the Ministry of Education during period 2 and 3. On local level this led to school mergers both in Szekszárd and Miskolc in which the heads had to be re-elected. The national budget pressure also was transferred to OKI. Therefore OKI was obliged to reconstruct its organization and staff profoundly. The Hungarian project manager, in her role as representative of OKIs staff, had extensive obligations in OKI during period 2 and 3. And she also had to safeguard the financial support from the Ministry of Education for the MAG project.

Added to that project management had to deal with some (un)anticipated circumstances with staff: a change of teacher trainer, severe illness of the management trainer, death of a family member, work overload.

By period 3 we planned to enter ‘the experimental phase’ in which all participants will move to ‘task’ and ‘others’ concerns, according to CBAM, and take up many experiments. 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 proved 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. A last project management concern was that local training staff appeared to be trained for delivering courses, not for delivering training for which we provided them with an extra training in November 2004.

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. The project management discussed intensively the current situation and adjusted its perspective on the near future of the MAG project during this period. Trainers communicated more often and openly. Trainers reported improvement of their personal performance and 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

“Consecutively on the indicators of the second year of the MAG project 2004-2005:
Indicator 1.2: 85 teachers of form 1-4 in 13 schools use subject matter instruction materials with the concept of adaptive teaching. This indicator is enriched with the ambition of a variety of instruction forms.

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 picture 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).

Indicator 2.2: 26 heads and deputies conduct consultative and supportive sessions with MAG teachers (form 1-4)

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.

Indicator 3.2. 12 LEOs demonstrate to conduct professional and supportive dialogues with their schools regarding their effort to integrate adaptive education in school year plan form 1-4.

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.

As of this period the training of teacher trainers was executed cooperatively by the Dutch and Hungarian teacher trainers and a translator, to avoid a disturbing second language layer.

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 NDP HRD OP 2004-2006 (National Development Plan, Human Resource Development, Operational Planning) money was provided for a 4th MAG project year. Under the same strategy SuliNova as main delivery body of educational developments under NDP HRD OP 2004-2006 issued experimental classroom materials. Staff in school consortia could pilot these materials under favourable financial circumstances: among them were 2 MAG schools. The Hungarian project manager kept on the track to opt for synergy of MAG (the ‘how’ approach) and SuliNova’s (the ‘what’ approach) and to promote the MAG process-innovation approach during the 4th project year and under the NDP HRD OP 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 is made to the MAG project.

Under the EU, in order to meet the criteria for euro adoption in 2010, the Hungarian government had to cut its deficit to 3 % of GDP by 2008, which end up in cut backs in every sector. This also referred to the budget in the educational sector and again required another set of reorganisational measures in OKI. The Ministry of Education assured at the same time that the MAG project is of utmost importance and had absolute priority also financially.

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 prepared and handed in. Hungarian staff was involved in the preparation of a 4th year for the MAG schools – without Dutch partners.

Almost all participants, local training 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 (LEOs, alderman or local commissioners, Chair of Municipal School board, Multi-School Management) 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. The Newsletters 9 and 10 prepared the participants for the study trip, where as Newsletters 11 and 12 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. In the statement of intent, prepared during the ComO meeting, this Association was projected as a civil association in which individuals and institution can take part and will disseminate adaptive education, its values and methods. More than half of the participants in the study trip expressed their intent to join the future association.

A qualitative evaluation has been conducted by the Hungarian and Dutch evaluator by site visits in April 2006. The report has been shared and discussed during the ComO meeting in June 2006 and its Hungarian summary will be spread in autumn 2006.

And after that.....

The 4th MAG year 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 NDP HRD OP were really combined, which enriched the new developed programs with the special focus of adaptive education.

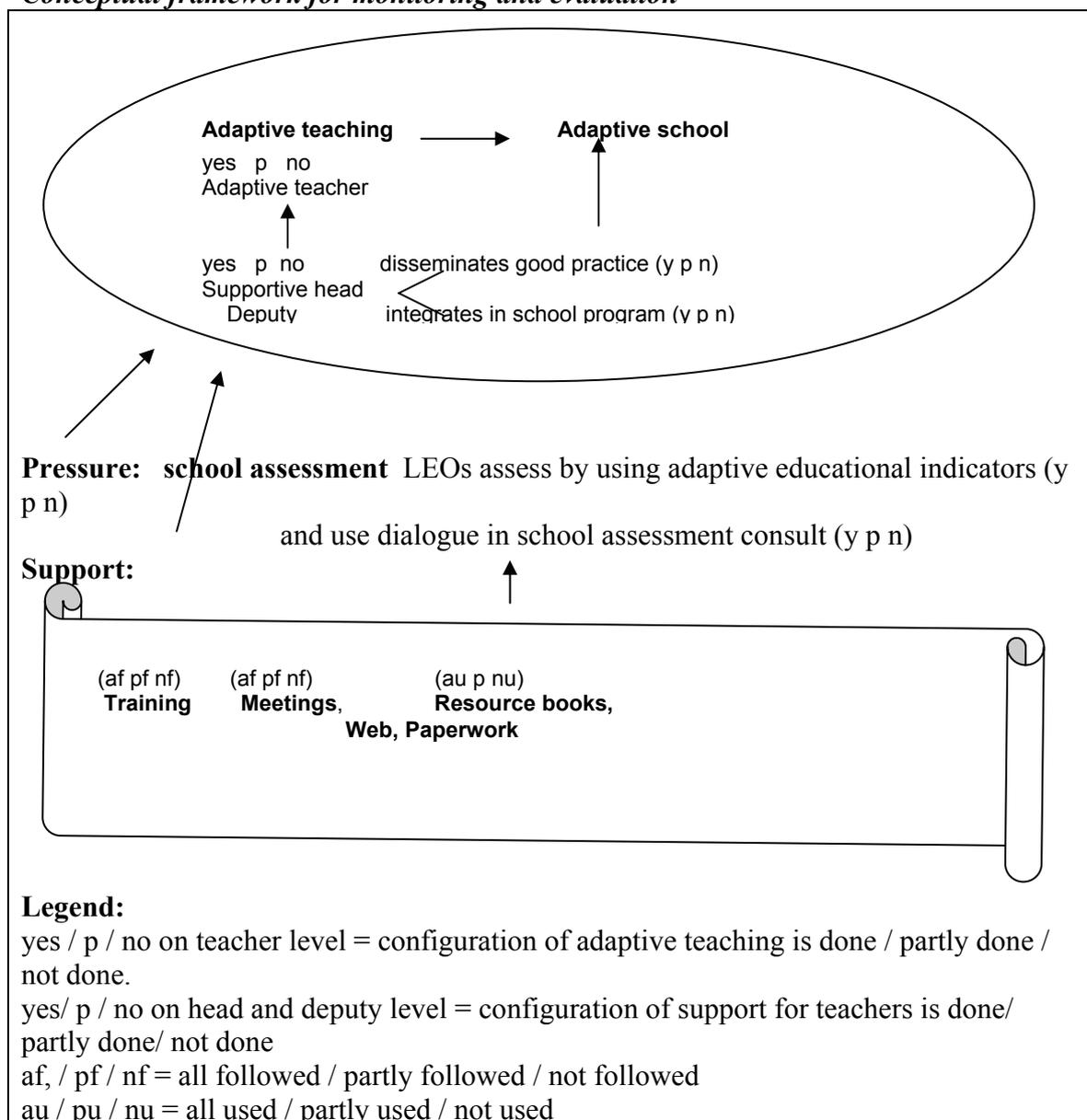
The handed in accreditation of the training for teachers, management and LEOs has been approved and will be delivered by OKI and other partners. This approval is a significant fact in the Hungarian INSET system as the training for teachers and school management does interconnect and also pioneers in how to improve a school as a whole.

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

The National and regional instability continues, partly due to the leaked out speech by the prime minister and the results of regional elections. OKI is announced a merger with some institutes, which will also end up in other objectives for the organisation as a whole. On regional level several LEOs didn't return to their previous position due to election results.

2. 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 on an adaptive way 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 special 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.

Sources 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

Teacher level

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 consultative guiding was not a 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 practice to upper grades 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 just a document formally required. The plans consisted 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 system, but of 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 and 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.

4. Lessons learned

School level

A summary of the lessons learned at school level would look as follows:

1. The reward for teachers is the fun pupils have in learning and the so called "MAG lessons".
2. The price the teachers pay is many hours of preparation because all learning tasks have to be developed by themselves. Only on long term this investment will be rewarding when they start in form 1 again after 4 years (teachers stay with their class).
3. 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 (not what to do as that is given by structures in the tasks. Pupils enjoy that they are allowed to discuss and consult each other during group work. They enjoy giving feedback in a positive learning climate.
4. Heads and deputies acknowledge that teachers are the (content) experts. Heads and deputies keep informed what's going on in the classroom but don't consult teachers content like as they don't feel confident in the concept of adaptive teaching.
5. Important is that MAG teachers are trained and experiment MAG lessons as a group (between 4 – 12 members of staff), not individually.
6. To disseminate the concept experiences are crucial: being able to tell about the concept and showing what's going on in the classroom serves as eye-opening for non-MAG teachers. Heads who perform MAG lessons in an upper grade serve as a model in their school.
7. Teachers' and, later on, pupils' portfolio facilitate the communication on MAG lessons with non-MAG teachers. The pupils' portfolio is helpful in the conversation with parent(s). Moreover and unique for Hungary, pupils can show at home what they do in school. Also pictures in the school and in the portfolio contribute significantly in 'telling the story'.
8. Heads and deputies should be praised as they are experienced as supporting and facilitating by teachers. Also the fact that all heads and deputies observed the classroom for interest, not control reason, perceived the teachers as 'professional acknowledgement' of their experimental MAG status.
9. Pupils, teachers, heads and deputies are proud of MAG as is the whole school, as shown by the MAG posters and texts in the school buildings. They are displayed next to the traditional pictures of staff and graduating students, which will go back to the founding of the school.

LEO level

The participation of the LEOs in the MAG project was not according to expectations since the start. As LEOs participation was considered important in the project, project management dealt with it continuously; a differentiated strategy; a survey that led to a modified programme.

Laws for LEO's are in place since 1993. LEOs are under auspices of the Ministry of Interior although their work can also be affected by decision from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Education and/or Employment. In the past years, by modification of the Educational Act, the expectations of LEOs work have raised which demand more expertise (move from 'control' task to 'intervene' task: interfere with quality plan and quality of education). This means for smaller settlements (500 -1500 inhabitants) that they have to 'hire' the expertise e.g. by taking part in a multi-settlement cooperation. Taking part however means that they have to give up their autonomy, what is hard in some cases and regions. Some important conclusions:

1. LEOs are important in this project, but as they are under the Ministry of Interior, elusive for Education.
2. Laws are confusing and in contradiction. E.g. the educational 'intervene' task versus the requirement to be 'objective', not allowed to judge.
3. Trainers and project management realised in period 5 that the current context of LEOs is quite different from the one we projected in the LEO training. The current context requires a completely different approach, content like.
4. MAG LEOs attended the training for personal more that professional reasons and purposes. Also because (further) training and accredited courses aren't a prerequisite for their position as it is for school management and teachers.
5. The features, which are pioneered in the MAG project, attracted the attention of educational policymakers who emphasize that the future LEO should go in projected direction professionally.
6. As LEOs are fulfilling their role in a confusing, complex context, the importance of seniority and senior prestige of the LEO trainer has been an underestimated import feature in the trainers profile.

Project delivery level

The main lessons learned on project delivery level are summarised below

1. To a certain extent the experiences in the MAG project emphasise the specific features of educational reform in societies in transition as argued by Halász.
 1. Educational changes are strongly related tot processes external to the education sector.
 2. As a result the change process is not linear.
 3. The capacity to manage uncertainty is a critical factor.
 4. Greater willingness to take risk is endemic to societies in transition.

5. Communication and ongoing learning become particularly important
6. Efficiency in use of resources increases with experience.
7. A pragmatic approach focusing on the instruments of implementation prevails over abstract, theoretical conceptions of change.

If a project is perceived both ‘a structure and activities’ as well as ‘people’ 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 context.

2. Professionals may argue and approve among each other that, due to messages received from the environment e.g. by monitoring , ‘a project structure need to be modified’, ‘strategy changed to meet the actual needs’ or ‘activities temporised or intensified’, but not those organisations that substantially finance the project. In these governmental and political oriented, organisations the arguments are heard and answered by the returning question when the expected activities and outcomes will be delivered, implicitly messaging that these professional arguments are perceived as ‘unprofessional’ and ‘inexperienced’.
3. In order to be able to mix the ‘blueprint’ requirements by sponsors with an inductive approach, the original project design has to be abstract in process outcomes so that the content of activities can be modified according to professional standards.
4. The train-the-trainer or ‘cascade’ model is appreciated but questionable in several respects. The model assumes counterpart staff with a good command of English, the agreed upon and used working language. Another question: is it cost-effective? 361 hours of train-the- teacher-trainers results in 20 hours training per school. Initially it’s model didn’t even fit in the national accreditation policy, which is important for sustainability reasons. And finally: is this model the best way to learn for all beneficiaries? The project management decided to add ‘coaching trainers on the job’, ‘modelling’ and ‘in-depth’ interventions by different trainers.
5. Staff may have different reasons(prestige id content) to join an international project. Fortunately Hungary has found solutions to involve governmental officials to be member of staff in international projects. But nevertheless: staff in an international project has a 1st, 2nd and even 3rd job or many tasks in their 1st job besides this international project and therefore varies in their involvement, commitment and distance. For project management it’s a continuous consideration if, as off when and how to involve staff in discussion and decision-making. Having a directive management style at the start, project management evolves to letting go and putting trust in their staff. However, if a member of staff drops out, a project manager must be update in detail to instruct the ‘new’ member of staff.

International cooperation level

The learning on international cooperation level has been extraordinary rewarding for every member of both Dutch and Hungarian staff. We like to share our mutual main findings here.

1. ‘The pragmatic approach focusing on instruments’, as argued by Halász, meant a predominantly ‘product oriented’ implementation strategy in Hungary. That this pragmatic approach also can have a ‘process oriented’ line of descent, was an as ‘alien’ perceived

phenomena in Hungary. Here the cooperation between the Hungarian and Dutch partner was absolutely necessary.

As MAG was too (a) a tri-level approach project with (b) a different work model, 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 new national educational development policy which will be used during the next phase of the National Development Plan called ‘New Hungary’.

And the work model of MAG (consecutive trainings at sites instead of one-block preparation, constructive conversations among different levels) 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.

2. ‘Meeting with blind spots’ is a virtue of international co-operation. We met with many: like a concept on adult learning and training; the significance of scientific literature and research; the meaning of professionalism and prestige.

Basic to the various social/cultural and professional staff discussions in the MAG project are assumptions or key values on the educational system as shown below as type 1 and 2.

Key values in educational systems	
Type 1	Type 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prefers all schools to be very similar between communities ▪ Students assigned to schools by geography/tests, etc., ▪ Central government is viewed as initiator and monitor of school improvement ▪ Stability in educational system is viewed as a sign of health of the system ▪ Teachers are viewed as public employees (professional bureaucrats) with specialized scientific knowledge ▪ Teachers are viewed as autonomous, responsible only for their own classroom ▪ School leader are viewed as interpreters of government regulations – they are managers ▪ School performance is assessed by outside agencies e.g., the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage diversity ▪ Parents have some choice about which school children attend ▪ School improvement is expected to be developed by staff in the schools ▪ Change is viewed as ongoing and a sign of quality education ▪ Teachers are viewed as ‘artists’ whose work enquires a great deal of on-the-spot-choice ▪ Teachers are viewed as members of a collectivity – the school ▪ Ideally, school leaders are ‘first among equals’: they are instructional leaders ▪ Self-assessment is the norm, often involving community and professional bodies

(Seashore Louis 1989)

The staff in the MAG project were able to derive, recognise their observations and interpretations to this scheme as type 1 from a centralised context and type 2 from a decentralised setting. What had to be accomplished by staff was a mix of these two perspectives on a scale in between the two types and develop the appropriate training and instruments for that identified stage.

3. Due to the mutual blind spots plus the ‘in transition’ context, project management in an international cooperation has some extra features.
 - Ongoing communication is basic.
 - Monitoring and evaluation need to be in place soon after the start. It’s data are essential to project management to understand and modify the project.
 - An intake on specific parts in the project needs to be redone several times due to the findings mentioned above
 - Celebrate professional conflicts: they are a healthy sign for local staff becoming stakeholders and owners of the concepts and instruments.

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