54

VODENJE
v vzgoji in izobraževanju 1/2023

Thematic issue:

ENIRDELM 2022 CONFERENCE

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Desirable Support for Leadership in Education

This issue of the journal is built on texts that came out of the submissions presented at the 30th ENIRDELM conference, which took place in Prague between 15th and 18th September 2022. ENIRDELM, the European Network for Improving Research and Development in Educational Leadership and Management, was created in 1991 as a self-funded network promoting critical and friendly professionalism to deepen and share understanding of the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in education, and ultimately to make an impact on learning at all levels of education systems.

The topic of the conference was: Support for Leadership in Education as a Way to School Improvement. By support, various expert services provided both inside and outside schools are meant. As to those inside, it is mainly peer and collegial support in schools, mentoring support, supervision, and in some cases coaching. However, similar support can also come from the outside, both through professional networks (such as those of teachers of the same subject or another instance of common interest) and through the provision of expertise from other entities. We consider it important to support the school leadership in their work – school leaders in their respective schools should not be forgotten in these complex and heavily turbulent times.

The eight texts presented in this issue concentrate on this topic from various perspectives. Firstly, Kjersti Lien Holte debates the question of what kind of support school leaders need when using a no-homework policy after a top-down decision. This topic is engagingly presented through the participative action research design on a case study from Norway, using it to point out some of the paradoxes in the work of school leaders.

Ágnez Fazekas, Katalin Tóth Pjeczka and Tamás Kersánszi showcase research results on network-based school management in Hungary. In their submission, they refer to the meaning of how to perceive schools as a part of the socio-ecological system, that are able to recognise the resources of the environment and access them in the longer term.

Izabela Cytlak and Joanna Jarmużek debate the work of Polish schools with Ukrainian pupils that have left their country as a result of the Russian invasion. They emphasise the challenges in this sudden situation and the needs of these

schools and their school leaders to successfully manage this extraordinary situation.

Bohumíra Lazarová and her team then inform on their project carried out in six European countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Latvia, and Romania), focusing on coaching and other forms of collegial support in schools. Their data shows the differing and often lacking support of these forms of professional development in the school systems.

Tatjana Ažman and Mihaela Zavašnik confidently point out the potential of head-teachers' networks for leadership development, based on Slovenian experience. Networking is one of the essential strategies of leadership support and this text clearly proves it to be the case.

A philosophical perspective is presented in another text, written by Knut Ove Æsøy. It is a review of different perspectives on the world-views of professional practitioners, and a description of how a philosophical facilitator might help practitioners to adopt a coherent world-view. It is essential to harmonise their way of being by bringing their actions and thoughts in line with their character in order to reach this objective, as the author emphasises.

Another text from the team led by Ágnes Fazekas then gives an insight into the results of large-scale research aimed at investigating educational change in Hungary. They point to the links between the pre-pandemic school characteristics and Covid-19 crisis-responses and illustrate them by innovation cases.

Finally, Izabela Cytlak and Joanna Jarmużek highlight one example of support for educational leaders by creating and developing the „Training School project", an example of a model for training future and current teachers in Poland.

The topics covered in this issue are diverse and prove the complexity of the task of managing and leading a school. Furthermore, they clearly validate the significance of specific support for school leaders in their work.

We wish our readers an engaging and inspiring read.

Milan Pol PhD
Mihaela Zavašnik PhD
Guest editors

Supporting School-leaders in Leadership for Social Justice Using a No-homework Policy After a Top-down Decision

About the author

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Abstract

This case study contributes to the research on leadership for leading school change and improvement for social justice, examining the research question: What kind of support do school leaders need when using a no-homework policy after a top-down decision? The study has a participative action research design and presents a complex case to elaborate on paradoxes for school leaders. Data collection is done via a qualitative survey (N=16 school leaders) and field notes from reflective conversations with lead groups at 11 schools. The findings reveal that leaders may need support to make a paradox reversal when using a no-homework policy to lead for social justice after a top-down decision.

Keywords: *leadership support | paradox reversal | no-homework policy | learning organisations*

Podpora vodjem šol pri izboljševanju socialne pravičnosti z uvajanjem politike brez domačih nalog po odločitvi od zgoraj navzdol

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Povzetek

Obravnavani primer prispeva k raziskavam o vodenju na področju uvajanja sprememb v šolah in k izboljševanju socialne pravičnosti, saj proučuje raziskovalno vprašanje: Kakšno podporo potrebujejo vodje šol, ko po odločitvi od zgoraj navzdol uvajajo politiko brez domačih nalog? Študija je zasnovana kot participativni akcijski raziskovalni načrt in predstavlja kompleksen primer, ki podrobneje predstavlja paradokse, s katerimi se soočajo vodstva šol. Podatki so bili zbrani s kvalitativno raziskavo (N = 16 ravnateljev) in terenskimi zapiski na osnovi refleksivnih pogovorov s skupinami vodij enajstih šol. Ugotovitve kažejo, da vodje pri tem, ko po odločitvi od zgoraj navzdol uvajajo politiko brez domačih nalog in s tem izboljšujejo socialno pravičnost, za preobrat paradoksa morda potrebujejo podporo.

Ključne besede: podpora pri vodenju | preobrat paradoksa | politika brez domačih nalog | učeče se organizacije

Introduction

Schools are pluralistic organisations with multiple stakeholders (Watson 2013). Moreover, organisations store knowledge in routines, norms, rules, and forms (March 1991). Organisations learn from their members, but members also become socialised within organisations. Learning paradoxes arise in the tensions between these two processes, which relate to adapting to current and changing contexts. This can lead to an apparent contradiction in which the learning rate of the organisation is inversely related to the knowledge held by its members and the ironic outcome that 'the development of knowledge may depend on maintaining an influx of the naive and ignorant' (March 1991). When a member of the Norwegian parliament, who was a school inspector and priest, put forward a proposal to ban the harsh and arbitrary methods of punishment in schools in 1881, it was voted down. His initiative to improve the integrity protection of children had significant personal consequences. He was mocked and scandalised in the Norwegian press and lost his political and civil position. It was not until 1936 that it was decided through a unanimous vote that a new law for education should contain the following provision: "Corporal punishment should not be used in schools." (Befring 2022).

Leading change that promotes social justice requires courage and conviction (Robertson 2021). When leading changes for social justice, educational leaders experience resistance from parents and teachers (Theoharis 2007). This may be why only 2 percent of headteachers report that they have developed and put into practice a no-homework policy for the whole school, and only 8 percent of schools have done this in one or more classes in Norway (Rogde, Daus, and Pedersen 2019). About 30 percent report that they are considering implementing a no-homework policy.

Social justice leadership is "the lessening or elimination of unfair inequalities in several areas of the school" (Robertson 2021). Regarding staff, this means fairness in the distribution of resources, participation in decisions (participative justice), respect for identity and beliefs (cultural justice), and opportunities for learning and personal development (developmental justice). Personal integrity means the protection of one's self-confidence, trust, and expectation of one's future and is often neglected in teaching (Befring 2022).

Homework and social justice

A growing body of literature recognises that homework has little effect on students learning and can be counterproductive concerning both learning

and non-academic effects. Hatties' meta-analysis of 161 studies, examining the effect of homework on learning, found almost no effect and ranks homework at 136th in terms of its effect on learning (Hattie 2009). Homework is more important for the learning outcomes of 15-year-olds from a high socio-economic background than for other pupils in most countries. This means that homework contributes to widening the performance gap between students from different socio-economic backgrounds (OECD 2014). Analyses of TIMSS data also show that homework has less effect on pupils' results in mathematics for pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds (Gustafsson, 2013; Nilsen and Bergem, 2016; Rønning, 2010). On the contrary, schools concerned with the quality of teaching and good follow-up of pupils during school hours are achieving better results for pupils from a low socio-economic background (without homework) compared to the effects with homework (Nilsen and Bergem 2016).

Lupton (2005) found that using homework effectively takes longer in a school where many pupils struggle with basic literacy and do not have support with reading at home than in schools where pupils are supported and have good basic skills. Therefore, homework needs to be more carefully designed and differentiated if used. The evidence shows that ensuring parents contribute to students' learning at home is quantitatively and qualitatively different for schools in high-poverty areas, for example, in schools where most parents are motivated and knowledgeable enough to contribute compared to where many parents have not had favourable experiences of school, are not familiar with the school system, or are not convinced of the value of the education their children are getting (Lupton 2005).

A cross-national study by Hampden-Thompson et. al. (2013) examined the association between parental involvement and student literacy in 21 countries by comparing PISA results. Three different parental involvement strategies were examined, social communication, cultural communication, and parental assistance with homework. Consistently across all 21 countries, they discovered that increases in the frequency of parental assistance with homework were negatively and significantly associated with student literacy. This finding provides robust cross-national support for the reactive hypothesis, meaning homework is counterproductive.

A qualitative study of homework in the Norwegian School context from 2016 concluded that homework is a significant risk factor according to essential quality indicators of a good childhood, causing conflicts in close relationships for some students and when teachers are not cautious when students have different kinds of extra challenges (Holte 2016). Evidence

from a quantitative study asking 4371 students from high-performing schools representing the higher middle-class show that the more homework they did, the more engaged they were in school, but also the higher were levels of school stress, physical health problems, and lack of life balance. The conclusion was that students from privileged families do have some advantages of homework in a competitive environment but that it inhibits their learning, being fully engaged, and their well-being (Galloway, Conner, and Pope 2013).

This backdrop shows that homework is an issue of social justice in education and a question of well-being for all students. Based on this evidence, some political parties in Norway want to ban school homework to protect students' integrity and promote education for social justice. The teachers' trade union objects to this, arguing that politicians should not interfere with their professional decision-making about teaching (Ertesvåg 2019). Since homework is strongly linked with long traditions and norms, and the identity of teachers and parents, some politicians have lost patience and faith that necessary learning will occur in professional learning communities. Although it is discussed at a national level, it is mainly locally that politicians have made decisions for schools to carry out no-homework or inclusive-homework policies. Some municipalities have chosen a few schools to test approaches to determine the innovation's consequences. When decisions about changes come from the top, it can be more challenging for all to have the conviction and courage to lead these processes (Weick and Quinn, 1999). How leaders can be best supported in such situations has yet to be fully understood. Therefore, I want to address the research question: What kind of support do educational school leaders need when using a no-homework policy after a top-down decision?

Theoretical framework

School leaders are critical for developing competence and addressing social justice issues. Furthermore, according to the literature on Leadership of School Development, school leaders play a crucial role in leading development. This can be looked into using five different theoretical approaches: theories of distributed management, theories of leadership for learning, theories of learning organisations, democratic leadership, and theories of leadership in organisational development (Aas et al. 2021). This paper mainly uses theories of learning organisations, leadership for learning, and leadership of organisational development.

Senge (1997) describes learning organisations as organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they want, where new and expansive ways of thinking are nurtured, where collective ambitions are set free, and where people continually learn to see everything as a whole. Stoll et al. (2006) connect professional communities with learning organisations. Orton and Weick (1990) understand organisational learning as sensemaking in social structures where you have both individual and collective development, and learning through reflexivity and dialectic. Therefore, it is interesting to find out in what ways and to what extent educational leaders need to build these capacities at their schools to deal with the top-down decision of a no-homework policy.

The leadership of learning is described as a constant orientation toward stimulating the will to learn and to sustain the teachers' engagement to ensure quality, as defined by the following five criteria: 1) focus on learning, 2) creating good conditions for learning, 3) dialogue, 4) distributed leadership through structures and routines that secure solid participation and 5) a shared understanding of responsibility (MacBeath and Dempster 2009). In a review of different models for teacher collaboration by Vangrieken et.al (2015), five characteristics of a well-functioning professional community were identified. The five characteristics are:

- supportive and active management
- shared values and common goals
- collective learning processes
- development of practice
- supportive environment

The decision to implement a no-homework policy will likely challenge the leaders on some of these criteria. Therefore, it is interesting to find out if they need support.

Theories of the leadership of organisation development point out resistance to be addressed and sometimes a need to take the role of the mediator where they coordinate political demands with internal demands (Shaked and Schechter 2017; Starr 2011). One crucial issue is contributing to sensemaking about decisions through dialogue (Henriksen 2018; Weick 1995). An interesting question is whether the leaders are convinced that a no-homework policy can contribute to social justice if they can make sense of the decision and and if they need support to mediate and lead development

processes. Smith, Binns, and Tushman (2010) suggest that leaders should engage and encourage conflict by providing an environment where tensions are explored and worked through and legitimate divergences in values are acknowledged. In this way, pluralism can be exploited to produce greater cognitive discord and ensure more creative debate and learning.

Extensive literature has developed on paradoxes and decision-making in organisational contexts (Watson 2013). A paradox may be defined as 'contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time' (Stoltzfus, Stohl, and Seibold 2011). Smith and Lewis (2011) set out a typology of such paradoxes in four core areas: organising, performing, belonging, and learning. Organisational paradoxes can, for example, be the need for stability yet change, collaboration yet competition, and empowerment yet direction.

Performing paradoxes refer to competing strategies and goals stemming from the plurality of stakeholders like the local community, governance, and society. Individual professional autonomy, characteristic of a pluralistic context 'can constitute a barrier to integrated organisational action. As mentioned, the teachers' trade union argues against a no-homework policy referring to professional autonomy, which applies in this case.

Belonging paradoxes are about the tension around organisational and individual identities. Identification with the organisation is regarded as beneficial in terms of loyalty. Assigning and expecting children to do homework is a question of identity for some teachers and parents. For some students doing homework can be a part of their identity (Watson 2013). A no-homework policy may, for them, represent a belonging paradox.

Learning paradoxes revolve around the processes of sense-making, innovation, and transformation that reveal interwoven tensions between old and new in an organisation and learning as exploration or exploitation. It can be that new teachers contribute less as individuals the more they become socialised within the organisation and adapt to the organisational norms (Watson 2013). Exploitation refers to activities that use current knowledge, giving rise to efficiency in the short term. By contrast, exploration 'includes things encapsulated by terms such as search, variation, risk-taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation' (March 1991).

Paradoxes in an organisation represent paradoxes for school leaders (Watson 2013). Paradoxes can produce anxiety and defensive responses at individual

and organisational levels, like repression, denial, and ambivalence, which can make the organisation dysfunctional (Lewis 2000). Smith and Lewis (2011) state some possible responses to manage the paradoxes:

- The paradox may be accepted and lived with
- Spatial separation – different parts of the organisation may deal with the oppositional aspects
- Temporal separation – oppositional aspects are dealt with at different times.
- Synthesis – seeking to accommodate and resolve the apparent tension

Living with the opposite poles of the paradox is only possible with the first of these responses. The others attempt to remove or bypass the contradiction (Watson 2013). Holding inconsistencies simultaneously fosters creative solutions to problems and can, in that way, be a powerful strategy and catalyst for innovation and school development.

Method

This case study is a part of a project with a Participation Action Research (PAR) design. That means that as a researcher, I take an active part in the ongoing processes in the organisation and act simultaneously as a researcher, entrepreneur, team member, and critical friend (Ottosson 2003). Unlike the other participants in the action research project, I am able to move out of the system to view it from a distance and compare what is happening with theory and other systems and processes. The point of doing this is to optimise for a deeper understanding of the complexity of what is going on in the organisation. Action research builds upon a long-established process-oriented approach to science that aims at "the transformation of power relationships in the direction of greater democracy" (Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy 1993). Action research, in general, can be understood as the collaborative production of scientifically and socially relevant knowledge, transformative action, and new social relations through a participatory process (Bradbury and Reason 2003; Dick 2004; Ramos 2006)

I was considered an experienced researcher on homework and how and why schools developed no-homework policies or inclusive-homework policies. Therefore, I was engaged by the Moss municipality through an arrangement for the local development of competence, in schools called DEKOMP. This was a partnership between universities with teacher education programs and local school governance and schools, for developing competencies.

The Moss municipality has about 50'000 inhabitants. Altogether they have 16 public schools, both primary and secondary. A political decision was made locally in January 2022 that all schools should have a no-homework policy by 2025 and that they should practice an inclusive-homework policy until then. After discussing principles for an inclusive-homework policy at a meeting with the network of headteachers, they agreed it would be easier and more practical to implement a no-homework policy earlier and decided to do that. The representatives of the school ownership were surprised and made it a topic of one more meeting, to be sure that that was a decision they wanted to opt for. The decision was made in March 2022, and the no-homework policy was expected to be implemented in August 2022. The teachers' trade union did not agree with the decision and complained about too little involvement in the decision and their freedom to choose teaching methods. Parents were informed about the decision in different ways, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Building on interviews with educational leaders in schools with a no-home-work policy and experiences from several schools piloting it, eight principles for a no–homework policy were developed. These were applied in this case as guidelines for development. The eight principles are:

1. Teachers will not assign students schoolwork to do after school hours.
2. The school takes the primary responsibility for the students achieving competence goals in the curriculum and can only relieve the responsibility from parents if the student is learning enough at school.
3. If the student is not learning or needs more motivation, adjustments must be made at school.
4. Parents will be encouraged to support their children's education in other ways (ensuring that their children get enough sleep, get varied nutrition and physical activity, sustain relationships supporting a growth mindset, and actively participate in local sports, music or art).
5. The teachers and the school value the student's role in the family, home environment, leisure activities, and the local community.
6. Teachers will facilitate the review of knowledge and skills at school if needed.
7. Teachers will give opportunities for the students to prepare for different forms of assessments within school hours.
8. The school will allow parents to get good information about their child's social and academic development.

After the decision was made, some headteachers felt uncertain and needed more information about no-homework policy schools, in order to lead the process in August. The school owner arranged a session where a headteacher from a school which had had a no-homework policy for three years, presented her experiences and gave some advice. On request of the municipality, I gave a presentation on the research and experiences from schools with no-homework and inclusive-homework policies in general. This presentation was made available for teachers in long and short versions. The school owner provided the headteachers with presentations they could use when meeting teachers and parents.

The schools in Moss have a structure of distributed leadership. Every school has a group of leaders with at least three people, including the headteacher.

To find out more about what kind of support headteachers need when implementing a no-homework policy and how it can be done, I distributed a survey to the headteachers in August 2022. They were asked where the school was in the process of implementing a no-homework policy, how they experienced their staff's attitudes toward the decision, what they thought was most exciting about the change, what they thought was the most challenging, whether they needed leadership support and if so what kind of leadership support they needed. All sixteen headteachers filled out the survey. In addition, I scheduled a time to come and visit the headteachers, whereby they could sign up voluntarily. I had eleven school visits and made field notes from these.

The data was analysed using Braun and Clarkes' (2006) four steps for thematic analysis. The first step is preparation by looking through the material and making notes. During the second step, I made codes by writing down ideas, underlining parts of the text, and writing down essential words. In the third phase, I categorised the codes into several overall themes. Finally, presentation of the findings constitutes the fourth phase.

Results

The results showed that twelve leaders had reported wanting leadership support. Two leaders did not know if they wanted support, and two answered that they did not need it.

Some headteachers reported concerns about the process leading to the decision to implement a no-homework policy in all schools, and that the attitude

towards the changes could have been different. The headteachers who reported this also reported that they had moved on and focused on ensuring quality teaching. During my school visits, I observed resistance against the decision within the leader groups at four schools. Resistance has also occurred in groups of parents at two schools where they took action through the media, social media, and via democratic instruments for participation at school.

The results also showed how some headteachers had used their concerns to make a paradox reversal, embracing the differences in values and interests of students, parents, politicians, and teachers. Some headteachers reported that they experienced the decision as a catalyst in the staff for interest, sharing, and discussions of how to ensure quality teaching. Many of the headteachers experienced the decision as fuel for school development. On the question of what they were excited about in this one headteacher answered:

> Our work with assessment!! Collaboration with parents. Reflections around our ways of teaching. The possibility of discussing our practice in light of the new curriculum. That teaching is not outsourced but taken care of by professionals. This is like a gold mine with many opportunities for us.

Five headteachers reported that they found sensemaking of the policy difficult and needed to get ownership of the change narrative, and support, in order to mediate. One headteacher was particularly concerned if this could cause an increased workload for the teachers. Some reported that they needed to clear up misunderstandings about a no-homework policy, assess to what degree the school needs to change teaching practices, and take responsibility for the changes.

Interest in leading teachers learning and development was highlighted clearly by seven headteachers and was not exclusively related to the decision. They had a positive attitude towards this and saw parallels between implementing the new curriculum and the no-homework policy. They saw this as an excellent opportunity for schools to develop pedagogical practice in fellowship. For instance, one headteacher expresses how the decision opens things up for deeper learning by opening up the place where the student's life and experience of motivation are central. Most of these headteachers had prioritised concrete areas for development. They wanted support to succeed in these. Many of these schools had many creative examples of good practices to be shared in a possible network setting. These schools had ideal structures and systems for being learning organisations. Development and learning through professional fellowship were possible. Some other head-

teachers reported concern about the learning culture and how to engage all teachers in learning and development at their school.

The findings showed that most headteachers wanted leadership support to ensure quality school teaching. Seven headteachers saw significant opportunities of this, while five headteachers saw it as a significant threat and needed to feel safer. This may mean they need more confidence in what teachers can achieve under the current conditions.

While some headteachers have a positive attitude and some are skeptical, there are also a few neutral headteachers. They express that they do not know if they need support and what the decision will mean for their practices. They do not have ownership of the process and do not see the decision either as an opportunity or a threat. These schools seem to be randomly distributed learning organisations, with considerable potential for empowering leaders, teachers, and students. They need support to build a learning culture. There are four schools in this category.

The differences in headteachers' attitudes and their need for support are related to how they respond to paradoxes.

On the question of how they would like to be supported, suggestions like conversations with a critical friend, support from the school owner, and networking groups of leaders came up. One headteacher would like to present good questions about developing the practice to see if they were heading in the right direction. Another headteacher said that support, in this case, should help them to develop the organisational culture at the school level, in order to consider the differences in contexts in a good way.

To sum up, the results reveal that some leaders need support directly related to the decision of the no-homework policy and support in sensemaking, mediation, making a 'paradox reversal,' and creating sound systems for collaboration with parents. Nevertheless, most headteachers needed general support, on things like ensuring quality teaching and responding to paradoxes, for the professional community to function well.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that top-down decisions can be difficult for leaders to handle if they need to be convinced that the decision is sound. This is particularly important with a decision about a no-homework policy

because of social justice issues. As Robertson (2021) states, an educational leader dealing with social justice issues needs conviction and courage. Dealing with social justice issues implies experiences with resistance (Theoharis 2007). In the case I examined, some educational leaders said that the fact that all the schools had to implement the same was a relief. As leaders of just one school making these changes, they would expect it to be more challenging regarding resistance. While the teachers' trade union strongly disagreed with the decision and the way it was made, sensemaking of both the decision and the process of deciding was needed, according to Henriksen (2018) and Weick (1995). This is an example of a learning paradox (Watson 2013). Some leaders shared their skepticism towards a no-homework policy and revealed that they were unconvinced. This can cause difficulties leading the school as a learning organisation; how can one facilitate people to expand their capacity to create results, find new and expansive ways of thinking, and see things as a whole in the way that Senge (1997) describes learning organisations, when one as the leader does not participate? This discovery is an example of school leaders' involvement in the belonging paradox (Watson 2013), experiencing that their identity differs from the organisational identity. These findings indicate a need for support in responding to the paradoxes by accepting and living with them instead of trying different ways to bypass and remove the contradictions. The findings revealed that some headteachers did this and that it had worked as fuel for development in professional learning communities. An essential aspect of this is to take the dilemmas of teaching, the competing interests, logic, and values, and use them as tools for reflection and learning. When supporting leaders in this, the task can be to problematise to learn as much as possible from change. The minor problem, in this case, is to stop giving assignments. According to the leaders, the most significant challenges are ensuring high-quality teaching, finding new ways to engage parents, and engaging all the teachers in developing practices. Besides the new curriculum to comply with which many were developing their approach, the principles guiding the no-homework policy opened new and expansive ways of thinking. This underpins Watson's (2013) point about the benefits of making a paradoxical reversal for developing the school. However, Smith, Binn, and Tushman (2005) argue that school leaders must be "capable of building and maintaining organisational designs that are internally inconsistent, of managing the ongoing conflict and engaging in long-term integrative thinking." Given our psychological and sociological penchant for consistency, conflict avoidance, and rational thinking, this can be challenging, and leadership support will be needed.

Furthermore, how can one contribute with supportive and active management to find shared values and common goals and a collective learning process, as found by Vangrieken et.al (2015) to be two of the essential characteristics of a well-functioning professional community, while not being convinced about the policy? This indicates that different kinds of contributions to understanding the research and ethical foundations for a no-homework policy are essential. One challenge is that while the evidence of the problems with homework is clear, more evidence is needed on the effects of the no-homework policy for many to be convinced. Still, there are standards for high-quality teaching that can serve as guidelines for inclusive education at school. It is important not to shame those who are reticent. That can cause leaders to pretend to be convinced and refrain from speaking up about their concerns and questions, things which can be helpful to both ensure the hold of the decision and to get more understanding of concerns that different stakeholders can have.

Methods of leadership support

The findings suggest supporting methods like internal and external counselling, guiding questions, being part of a network of educational leaders, and increasing competence in leadership for cultivating learning cultures for well-functioning professional communities, where all teachers participate actively in developing practices.

Counselling from the school administration and university or consultant firms can help support leadership. However, according to headteachers, school improvement partners or coaches had varied effects (Swaffield 2015). Swaffield found that, according to headteachers, school improvement partners can be used for learning dialogue if they have the necessary insight, competence, trust, and patience and if the dialogue leads to learning. What makes this a good strategy depends on whether the headteachers accept the school improvement partner or not.

Guiding questions can be used both for learning and developing conversations. The leaders wanted to know more about how they could lead well-functioning professional communities. Questions concerning the five characteristics of Vangrieken et.al (2015) and the guiding principles can be helpful. In that case, important questions for supporting leaders' can be: Is the leader group at your school convinced about the decision and capable of executing supportive and active management for development? Does the

professional community have shared values and goals aligned with the decision and the new curriculum? Are there collective learning processes going on for more inclusive education? How do you develop the practices?

Moreover, how supportive is the environment? Questions like this can be used to cultivate a learning culture for learning organisations. Learning will improve if the communication is respectful, honest, and without fear. Practicing this type of collaboration is essential to model collaborative learning for the students (Vangrieken et al. 2015).

Strand and Emstad (2020) researched the use of Principal Professional Learning Communities and found that it was important for supporting headteachers' leadership skills and promoting strong leadership for school development. In this case, there is an established network for the headteachers and one for all school leaders. According to Strand and Emstad's findings, this can be effective and give positive experiences. They suggest inviting external support to these groups to create structure and improve their results.

Conclusion

This article has aimed to contribute to understanding on how school leaders can be supported in leadership for social justice and school development while implementing a No-Homework policy after a top-down decision. A top-down decision on a no-homework policy creates organisational, belonging, performing, and learning paradoxes. To ensure a professional learning community, school leaders must respond to paradoxes by living with them and embracing them as catalysts for the school's engagement, creativity, and development. The results reveal that this is challenging and that leadership support like counselling and guiding questions should be given.

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The Role of School Management in Institutional Absorption Capacity

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Abstract

This paper provides an insight into research results on network-based school management. Many findings show that while horizontal learning within schools is often strong, external links are weaker, and there are only a few educational actors able to collaborate effectively with other sectors. In this paper, we present a management practice that sees schools as a part of the socio-ecological system, able to recognise the resources of the environment and access them in the longer term. The model developed provides a clear view of the content areas and platforms for internal and external collaboration, selection filters, and dynamics.

Keywords: *innovation-ecosystem | networking | absorption capacity | management practice | case study*

Vloga vodstva šole pri institucionalni absorpcijski sposobnosti

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Povzetek

Prispevek ponuja vpogled v rezultate raziskav o mrežnem vodenju šol. Številne ugotovitve kažejo, da je horizontalno poučevanje v šolah pogosto učinkovito, vendar so zunanje povezave šibkejše in le nekaj izobraževalnih akterjev je sposobnih uspešno sodelovati z drugimi sektorji. V tem prispevku predstavljamo prakso vodenja, ki šole obravnava kot del socialnoekološkega sistema, obenem pa je sposobna prepoznati in dolgoročno uporabljati vire v okolju. Razviti model omogoča jasen vpogled v vsebinska področja in platforme za notranje in zunanje sodelovanje, v filtre za izbor in v dinamiko.

Ključne besede: inovacijski ekosistem | mreženje | absorpcijska sposobnost | praksa vodenja | študija primera

Introduction

What is the importance of absorption capacity in public education institutions? What effective way do we see for an organisation to support the creation, maintenance and spread of innovations? What exemplary good leadership practices could we observe in the Hungarian public education system? Among other things, we are looking for answers to these questions in our present study.

Below we present a case study that was born as a result of the research work of two Hungarian universities, Eötvös Loránd University and Óbuda University[1]. The related research reached thousands of teachers and their schools in Hungary using a mixed method and examined the characteristics of organisational functioning, educational innovations, and workplace learning. In line with the literature and previous research in Hungary, the results of these works also pointed to the importance of the functioning of learning organisations and that, although many aspects of the latter were often strong among the examined institutions, the active operation of external and cross-sectoral networks represents a significantly greater challenge for schools.

In this study, we present and analyse an existing school management practice that considers the school as an integral part of the social-ecological system, which is able to recognise the resources of the social environment and access them in the long term. Our goal was to publish this model for development purposes, to clearly outline the content areas and platforms of internal and external collaborations that can contribute to a definite increase in the absorptive capacity of schools. Thus, we recommend our study primarily to school leaders, but it can also be a valuable resource for practitioners and academics in educational development.

Absorptive capacity and school management

Innovations play a decisive role in the renewal of educational systems. Meanwhile, the organisational context can be a substantial barrier or incentive for

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1 Research at Eötvös Loránd University: INNOVA research ID.: OTKA 115857, MoTeL research ID: OTKA 128738. Research at Óbuda University: STEAM research.

the creation, preservation and spread of innovations. In the organisational dimension of the evolutionary process of innovations, absorptive capacity is an important factor that comprehensively captures the internal dynamics of a given system.

The concept of absorption refers to the phenomenon of inclusion in both the natural and social sciences. In the world of educational changes and educational developments, absorptive capacity refers to the ability of development sites (schools) to consolidate resources, it describes how and to what extent schools can utilise the available external resources in such a way that they generate actual effects and prove to be sustainable. The resource involved can be money, infrastructure, technology, human power or even new knowledge and cognitive content (Bourguignon, 2006; Cohen–Levinthal, 1990; Lane, 2006).

Many theoretical explorations have been undertaken to grasp the absorption capacity; in this study we use the activity theory perspective to help identify possible investigation dimensions. We are connected to the most widespread activity theory model of the Western approach, which is associated with the name of Yrjö Engeström, a University of Helsinki professor dealing with adult learning. According to this, the purpose of the activity is to solve a task to be performed, a perceived problem, or other need, for which the participants develop new procedures during the activity (Figure 1).

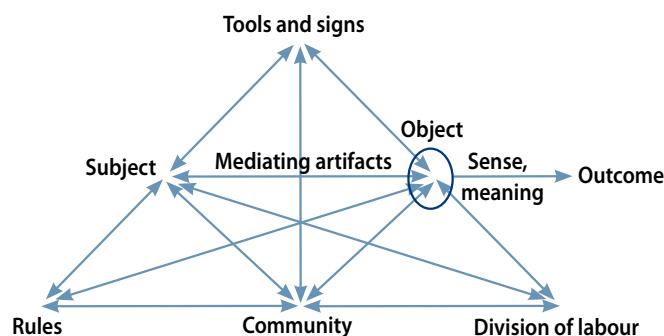
Figure 1: A general model of the activity system
Source: Engeström, 1987, p. 78.

A peculiarity of the model is that it thinks about learning as a process embedded in a system of social, cultural and technical effects. There are several versions of the model: it describes the activation process as the interaction of the first three dimensions, the acting individual (subject), the object of

problem-solving (goal, meaning) and the tools used (tools and signals). Secondly, these three poles are integrated into the force field of community, rules and division of labour. Finally, in the third, most complex framework, the connection of different activity systems is modelled.

The management of the institution plays a key role in the development of the organisation's conditions for supporting innovations, whether it is the tools (e.g. new digital technology), the rules (e.g. the appearance of experimental learning as an institutional value), the communities (e.g. project teams), or the division of labour (e.g. teamwork). In the system of actions that increase the absorption capacity of the institutional management, development attitude has a decisive influence, motives that are clearly outlined in the 4I model of transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Marzanos et al., 2004). Where the leadership appears as the engine of renewal and development in the school, idealised influence (1) can be seen in action. With this leadership model, (2) respect for the individual is emphasised. The leader gets to know the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers and offers them tasks that match their personality, thereby opening up space for professional development based on internal motivation. (3) Inspirational motivation appears when teachers experience support for individual initiatives. Together, all of these represent (4) intellectual stimulation for teachers, which not only initiates development but also continuously maintains it, thereby putting the organisational culture at the service of the common goal.

This management model fits well with the concept of the learning organisation. Schools that can be identified as learning organisations typically rely heavily on the developing expertise of the employees, the motivating power of collective problem-solving, knowledge embedded in practice, and the potential inherent in external relationship systems (Mulford, 2005; Baráth, 2013). According to a study on learning organisations in Hungarian schools (Anka et al., 2016), schools that (1.) have well-defined values, vision and goals supported by the employees, (2.) are intensively shared by employees who share their knowledge with each other, and (3.) the employees can take responsibility for their activities and are characterised by cooperation and trust, can be considered learning organisations. The teachers in these schools (4.) have a high level of initiative and willingness to take risks, and (5.) have a strong network capital. In all of these processes, (6.) the leadership, which supports dynamic operation and focuses on learning, has a special role. In this way, schools operating as learning organisations can create workplace environments that efficiently help the teachers' professional development and learning involving cognitive and affective changes.

It is important to note that the opposite of all these can also be proven empirically, i.e. certain organisational conditions that hinder adaptation, development and innovation activities can have a blocking effect on teachers' risk-taking, innovativeness and proactivity, i.e. on the attitudes and behavioural characteristics that are often associated with the concept of entrepreneurship (Halász, 2016). In the last ten years, large-scale Hungarian innovation and workplace learning research projects (Fazekas, 2021; Lénárd et al, 2022; Anka et al., 2016; Kersánszki, 2020;) placed a particular emphasis on examining the characteristics of learning organisations. The related exploratory works examined the organisational functioning, management characteristics, internal and external knowledge sharing practices, and workplace learning routines of thousands of institutions. As mentioned above, based on research results, we see that the educational sector is generally characterised by a conscious awareness of the importance of learning organisation functioning and knowledge-intensive leadership. Leaders place great emphasis on strengthening the related factors with relatively high effectiveness, cooperation within schools and horizontal learning are often particularly strong. However, external and inter-sectoral networks are functioning poorly, and schools are rarely able to benefit from the potential of their environment.

According to the INNOVA survey (Fazekas, 2021) - which reached around two thousand Hungarian school leaders and four thousand teachers - only 2% of teachers reported that they had regularly received new ideas and thoughts from external partners (e.g. parents, NGOs, employers) in the last two years that had improved the effectiveness of their work, while 88% said that this had not happened or had happened at most once or twice. Moreover, it is interesting to note that almost half (46.5%) of the agents of the pedagogical innovations collected in the survey said that the innovation had not affected external relations with partners/customers at all. A third of the leaders said that their institution is fundamentally hampered by the environment (33.5%), that it operates in isolation from its environment and rarely adopts or shares good practices (27.1%), and that it is generally not so involved in external cooperation that supports innovative efforts to improve performance (25.2%).

In this paper it is not our purpose, nor is it possible, to go into the data collected in significant depth. It is presumable that the ability to identify and absorb resources from external relations is one of the most common deficit areas of absorptive capacity. In the above-mentioned research studies, we set the goal of a deeper analysis of the management and operational practices

of institutions that understand their own existence as an integral part of the socio-ecological system, that are able to recognise the resources of the social environment and to access them in the longer term. If leaders are able, with the involvement of external partners, to introduce new perspectives, tools and goals into the organisation, that broaden teachers' perspectives and encourage innovation, we can have faith that the potential of transformational leadership can be realised within organisations.

Tools and process of data collection

The institution presented here – Saint Nicholas Greek Catholic Primary School, Kindergarten and Primary Art School of Edelény – was noticed in 2020 by the Óbuda University's STEAM-researchers, due to its strong STEAM-focused curriculum and equipment park. The first data collection phase, which took place this year, clearly pointed out the peculiarities of the organisational operation, which logically attracted the attention of employees interested in educational innovations and workplace learning. In the following years, ELTE's educational researchers investigating pedagogical innovations and professional development paths also visited the institution, building on the initial case study with ever more profound and richer knowledge.

It quickly becomes visible to an external observer: this school is an organisation that places particular emphasis on interaction with its environment, monitoring external needs and processes and identifying and developing labour market competence needs. The organisation has acquired an impressive infrastructural and methodological richness thanks to the resources made available through its network connections, and by taking advantage of these favorable conditions, the school's definite goal is to be able to provide valid answers to the current and local labour market needs within the framework of the school.

During the case study, which was carried out with longitudinal and inter-university cooperation, we used a classic research design: we examined the most important documents of the organisation, reviewed the available competence measurement data and their analyses, collected data with our questionnaires (leader, teacher), individual and focus group interviews were conducted with students, teachers, working group leaders, leaders, and a representative of the maintainer in both in person and online formats. In addition, we conducted classroom and work community discussion observations.

Prior to visiting the school in person, we examined the organisation's key documents and digital resources (website, pedagogical program, management strategies, multimedia resources presenting innovations), and reviewed available measurement data back to 2015, the results of internal measurements and data analyses of the institution and the maintainer. An analysis of these sources focused on the positioning of the organisation, and was carried out before the main case study steps, including the first and additional data collection phases. The main tools used to collect data for the whole longitudinal case study were semi-structured interviews with individuals and (focus) groups, which most often covered the following content (see Table 1).

Table 1: Focus of the interviews

Organisational features	The history of the organisation's development (going back several decades)
	Key characteristics of the organisation and its management and how they have changed over time
	The nature of trust and emotional relationships among the teaching employees
Curriculum specifics	Pedagogical practices used, their originality and relation to the mainstream
	Changes in classroom processes over time
	Social relations and learning outcomes
Development processes	Characteristics of organisational and teacher learning (e.g. working with data, knowledge sharing, experimentation, role of experts)
	External development interventions and their impact on the school
	The school's internal innovations (e.g. frequency, areas, actors, specific improvements)
Models to be captured	The system and nature of the innovations developed (e.g. complexity, context dependency, infrastructure requirements, adaptation time)
	Testing of the pedagogical and organisational models that can be drawn up
	The expected evolution of current processes over time

In selecting teachers, we sought to diversify the respondents by disciplinary area, year level taught, innovation and digital activity, and number of years in the organisation. In selecting students, we aimed to interview students who represented both lower and upper years, children with outstanding learning outcomes and those with learning difficulties, and children from different socio-economic backgrounds. The teachers and students interviewed were also observed in classroom situations. The interviews conducted are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviews conducted September 2020 - September 2022

Respondents	Type of interviews	Number of interviews (in total)
School headteacher	Individual	4
2 deputy headteachers	Individual and focus groups	5
Representative of the maintainer (school chaplain)	Individual and focus groups	3
5 working group leaders	Focus groups	2
12 teachers	Focus groups	5
17 students	Focus groups	4

During the longitudinal case study, 11 lessons and classroom sessions were visited, including some where teachers had implemented their own internal improvements, where they had organised student learning according to implemented innovative curricula, and which had not been strongly affected by different waves of development. We have tried to observe as wide a variety as possible of lessons and school sessions for the years and subject areas concerned. The table below (see Table 3) lists the lessons observed.

During the case study, we also conducted our own data collection using two large sample education research questionnaires, one on the birth and diffusion of local innovations and the other on teachers' workplace learning.

The data thus provided an opportunity to compare the organisation's operations and the nature of innovations with the original research samples, which, although not representative, gives a picture of how we can position the institution in these areas.

Table 3: Classroom observations

Age of students	Subject/ Activity	Content	Year of observation
6-7 Y	Mathematics	LEGO Maths (adaptively implemented curricula)	2020
7-8 Y	Mathematics	LEGO Math (adaptively implemented curricula)	2021
8-9 Y	English	LEGO-LET'S GO (own innovation)	2020
9-10 Y	Robotics - primary school	LEGO robots (adaptively implemented curricula)	2020
10-11 Y	Biology	T-Systems and LEGO systems (own innovation)	2020
10-11 Y	Cooking class	Integrated cross-curricular competence development (own innovation)	2020
10-11 Y	History	Battle of Nándorfehérvár - LEGO, smartboard	2021
11-12 Y	Computer Science	3D printer application (own innovation)	2020
11-13 Y	Robotics - upper school	LEGO robots (adaptively implemented curricula)	2021
12-13 Y	English	Cross-curricular competence development (own innovation)	2020
13-14 Y	Computer Science	Cross-curricular competence development	2021

The means of data collection allowed us the opportunity to examine: (1) the professional characteristics and effectiveness of the sessions organised between the Year 1 and Year 8 and in different disciplinary areas, (2) the knowledge and opinions of the teachers on educational and pedagogical theory, (3) the teachers' paths of professional development and learning (4) and the school's organisational and management characteristics. In the present case study, we focus on the latter, and within this, our goal is to analyse the characteristics of the organisational operation embedded in the network. The case study is also expected to be useful in the practice of educational development, especially within the framework of the school-development program of the Mathias Corvinus Collegium learning institute (the case study is published under this program).

The operation of the school

The institution operates in a small town in the North Hungarian Region, under the maintenance of the Greek Catholic church. It is currently the city's largest and most sought-after elementary school, even among non-denominational parents. In the past ten years, serious changes have been observed in the demographic composition of the small town as a result of the influx of middle-class strata into the area, and according to the representative of the maintainer and the school management, the "power of attraction" of the school played a significant role in these processes.

The institution was maintained by the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc in 2011, when the headteacher, who is currently leading the institution, was appointed to head the organisation. With regard to the current size of the school, it operates with 50 teaching employees at the site of the investigated headquarters and welcomes 700 students in approximately 25 classes. The proportion of disadvantaged students is around 10%, and children with special educational needs make up nearly 4%. The management of the school has a classical structure, the work of the leader is assisted by three deputy headteachers, and the work groups are essentially organised according to disciplinary areas and lower to upper years. It is important to note that an interdisciplinary thematic working group also facilitates knowledge sharing in the school. Strong relationships of trust are perceptible within the organisation. The period of more than ten years that has passed since the change of maintenance has proved to be sufficient to strengthen interpersonal ties.

The organisational climate favors the exchange of experience and creative planning. Based on the data collected through a questionnaire among teachers, about 33% of the teaching employees can be considered teachers who regularly try out new tools and methods, and who dare to change and accept the accompanying temporary regression periods.

> *"We have a lot of experience, but it is true for many of the tools we use that we were not the pioneers, but we started at the very beginning. (…) Obviously, they [teachers of other schools] come to us to observe these lessons not because we are the smartest, but because we have travelled more roads and have (both) good and not so positive experiences to share."*
> (Deputy Headteacher)

Before 2011, the institution operated as a public school whose profile focused primarily on foreign language education. With the change of admin-

istration, the previous leadership-continuity was broken, and the school management was reorganised along with new values and goals. This had two fundamental pillars: on the one hand, the intention to be rooted in religious values, and on the other hand, the need for pedagogical modernisation based on network resources. The former is a logical consequence of the identity of the maintainer, it is well reflected in all the organisational documents and permeates the entire ethos of the institution. The spirituality of faith works as a strong cohesive force, but it partially masks the less pronounced but decisive organisational and pedagogical goals that oriented the institution towards a learning organisation that uses a system of modern skill development. So much so that in the official documents, we cannot come across the latter, or only tangentially. However, the intention to reflect on the needs of the modern age and the need to use scientific achievements is especially strongly present within the religious approach.

Pedagogical modernisation based on network resources, following the previous professional experience of the newly appointed leader, became an implicit organisational goal orienting the school's everyday life and movement. For two years, the leader worked as an employee of a network coordination center to support horizontal knowledge sharing; in practice he helped to spread the good practices born in the region's schools, and he supported the cooperation of the region's public education institutions with other representatives of the public education sector and actors from other subsystems of the education sector. As a result of this professional experience, the strengthening of the school's network connections and monitoring and utilisation of opportunity windows began with the change of management.

Over the past ten years, the school has developed intensive relationships with universities, professional-methodological service providers, and market actors who approach social responsibility from the educational side. Among others, it has an intensive relationship with the University of Óbuda, which focuses mainly on IT training, H-Didakt Ltd., which offers LEGO Education teaching methods for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) educational concepts, T-Systems Ltd., which undertakes the modernisation of the school's digital infrastructure, and the Danish International School of Billund.

The institution has a spectacular infrastructure thanks to the utilisation of opportunity windows revealed through the establishing of these relationships. For example, the building has many interactive whiteboards, student laptops and tablets, a digital sandbox, a 3D printer, and a robotics device

system. These relationships play an important role in orienting the pedagogical work in the institution, implementing modernising educational developments, and inspiring local innovations. Based on the leadership responses in the questionnaire survey, we see that the former account for 70% of the organisation's developments, while the latter account for 30%. The more progressive developments concerning the curriculum started in 2015 with the introduction of LEGO methods as a response to a decrease in the number of students.

> *"In 2014, our numbers started to decrease, we were told that it was demographics, but we didn't believe it, we knew that we weren't doing something right and we started to think. Within a year, we found LEGO and contacted the distributor. My more innovative employees were happy to use this method."* (Headteacher)

The innovation-inspiring intersectoral relations ("boundary crossing") are also strong within the walls of the school. First of all, the internal sharing of knowledge is active among the teaching employees; all of the responding teachers indicated that in recent years they had been part of horizontal knowledge-sharing processes within the school, which helps the intersectoral nature of learning situations, the teacher's room that "condenses" employees from many fields in one space, and the specialised online knowledge-sharing platform which is accessible without boundaries. Furthermore, pedagogical procedures that implement the development of an area by real coordination of the work of several teachers are common in the school; not only do cross-curricular solutions appear here, but also the development of an area of competence over a particularly long period time. An example of this is the recently launched curriculum innovation, which, in cooperation with the local kindergarten, plans the process of learning programming skills from the kindergarten years until the end of Year 8. In addition, concerning internal border crossing, it is important to highlight: the school now has a long tradition of involving non-teaching professionals in educational processes. For example, the system administrator with a degree in IT holds robotics classes, a employee who now has an English teaching degree joined the school as a musician in the beginning, and a staff member with a degree in economics helps the students in the school.

> *"In the early years, I did the financial things for the school, and little by little I got involved in the children's lives and the everyday life of the school. My colleague and I regularly talk about the children, about one-*

off, individual cases, and I think our thinking is no longer different at all." (Finance Manager)

Employees from other sectors - whose proportion can be considered high (30%) - invigorate the intellectual life of the school and are often themselves the source of enriching the pedagogical work. Thus, for example, the name of employee who was originally took on as a musician is associated with a self-developed language teaching program (LEGO-LET'S GO), while the IT employee is one of the inspirers and agents of cross-curricular solutions.

Figure 2: LEGO-LET'S GO Year 3

The new management aim was to place the pedagogical culture on several pillars, so in addition to the leading language development, local and adapted development was started in the fields of natural sciences and sports. The development of the students' digital competencies was connected to the school's rich ICT equipment park - as a horizontal pillar - and the church character also gave an additional focus, strengthening the students' social competencies.

Two important directions of pedagogical processes have unfolded in the organisation: (1) The process organisation, which is considered a pioneer both in its tools and in its pedagogical approach, accounting for about 30% of the learning pathways taking place in the school within the framework of classroom and extracurricular activities; furthermore, (2) learning management, which is innovative in its tools but related to the mainstream in its pedagogical procedures, dominates roughly 70% of learning pathways.

In the former, students work in a learning environment and paradigm that is quite different from the mainstream. This learning pathway can be identified as an open system that builds on the utilisation of students' existing competencies and develops them further during the work. In this situation, student cooperation and horizontal student learning are strong, (theoretical) knowledge that cannot be applied in practice, is not present and has no value, and truly valid learning results are those forms of knowledge, at least a part of which is given by tacit knowledge that is difficult to verbalise. The school first offers students the above methods of a learning organisation within the classroom, and then through the years, more and more opportunities to practice this form of learning outside of classroom sessions become available. In the area of competence development in mathematics, for example, there is LEGO or classroom activities, while in extracurricular form there is advanced robotics.

Figure 3: Maths class in the training kitchen

> *"Students receive a recipe and calculate how many ingredients are needed, so they have to pay attention to the size of the baking tray, the proportion, how much is thrown away, and what is used up, they have to convert units of measurement."* (Maths Teacher)

Based on our complex method - which includes observing the students' performance of tasks, conversations that test their thinking, and the analysis of individual progress cases - the development of the students' competencies is remarkable in several areas. Such areas include foreign language competencies, abstraction skills, algorithmic thought operations, and dig-

ital competencies. The quality of the students' results is confirmed by the fact that the entire range of teachers who responded to our questionnaire, as well as the leader, indicated that, in their view, the school is more effective compared to similar organisations, and that there has been a positive shift in this field in recent years. However, it is important to note that while the national measurements for the above areas show a significant positive shift compared to the national average (e.g. foreign language measurements), the school's results in the traditional areas of measurement (literacy, mathematics) only meet or slightly exceed the average in the reference area (small urban schools). However, the institutional averages of the latter measurements also show that the institution provided a consistent pedagogical added value over the last years (2015-2021) with a small confidence interval, regardless of the composition of the year group, and regardless of the attitude and methods of individual teachers (Kocsis, 2021).

Network-based school management model

According to the school's organisational model, it maintains an active relationship with (1) actors in the local society, which, in addition to the parents, covers local labour market actors and illustrious actors from social life, (2) the academic and higher education world, (3) its maintainer, who directly influences the operation of the school, and (4) with those actors in the development of public education whose innovations are a valuable inspiration for teachers working in the organisation. The latter group includes both educational companies that offer innovative technologies, tools and methods, and institutions - including foreign organisations - that develop their local developments or that can help the institution by adapting the innovative practices developed by the school for further shaping their development, and the school's teachers for their professional development.

It is important to emphasise that regardless of the sector, when thinking about a successful knowledge management system, we typically pay special attention to the dynamics of the governing authorities, holders of academic knowledge (universities), industry players and local social actors, and connections of the Triple and Quadruple Helix model (Carayannis-Campbell, 2010). It is considered that those forms of cooperation can provide the most favorable ground for the creation of innovations, during which overlaps

between these spheres and clusters that provide space for intense, frequent, deep communication are formed (Tsui-Law, 2007).

Cooperation between the school and its partners is based on professional partnership management, perhaps the most important feature of which is that it operates the various forms of cooperation on a dual basis. Firstly, (1) it is operated through partnership arrangements outside the school, in which the school management is primarily involved on the part of the organisation. Their primary purpose is to build trust, define common mid- and long-term goals, and plan frequent, but rather smaller, forms of cooperation. These relationships can typically be described as strategic cooperation relationships, which move only slightly towards the exact assignment of customer/supplier roles, even if joint projects could justify this. Secondly, (2) great emphasis is placed on embedding external partners in the internal life of the school, during which the work of teachers and external actors is connected. A good example of this is when higher education actors, actors from local economic life, high-prestige social figures (Figure 4), or even parents hold sessions from time to time within the classroom framework.

Figure 4: Olympians at the school
Remark: the picture on the right shows one of the institution's gymnasiums with pictures of Olympians, and the two pictures on the left show actual sports meetings.
Source: Own photo and school website.

An important tool for this embedding is the forming of a common culture and language of actors connected to different sectors. A spectacular form of realising this was the STEM working group which emerged from the natural science working community through the perception of external labour market expectations and knowledge management trends. Along with the change, the community became a team that implements real collaborative learning and is far beyond functional collaboration from a formal, administrative, internal organisational unit. Now, in addition to the leader

of the work community who majored in biology and technology, teachers who majored in mathematics, physics, geography, and IT are also present with solid intensity. This interdisciplinary group of teachers works as a real professional learning community. In addition to the collaborative learning between teachers during the implementation of various projects (e.g. geography week), thanks to experiments and interdisciplinary connections, processes that can be interpreted as powerful, expansive learning take place in the school. The diversity of the team members, their experiences, competencies and diversity of approach has an inspiring and fertilising effect on the team. Thus, more and more new, unplanned and unforeseeable innovations appear in the life of the community. As a result of the transformation of external trends, the group started to develop the STEAM (STEM+ART) profile, where the natural science tool system is complemented by the arts (ART) and creates uttterly new learning situations. However, not only do the external actors in the school adapt to the market approach, but the school management and the teachers also consider it important to sensitise the external partners who come into the school environment in the direction of pedagogical problems.

Among the opportunity windows revealed during cooperation with external actors, the institution typically tries to seize those that correspond to some - not necessarily stated - priorities. During our case study, we identified a total of five such selection criteria ("filters").

> *"We don't shovel everything in. There are plenty of things on the market. We see it as pointless to search and buy again and again. It is necessary to set a direction that orients the decisions in the longer term."* (Headteacher)

The first (1) is the adaptively implementable nature of knowledge from external sources; among the pedagogical procedures and/or educational tools introduced in the school and developed by others, we did not come across any whose owner would have demanded strictly faithful implementation. Accordingly, in the case of all adapted tools and methods, we saw smaller, often classroom-level developments, but sometimes we also found innovations based on these that could already be named independently (e.g., the implementation of LEGO MoreToMath, the development of LEGO-LET'S GO). The second filter is closely related to (2) the preference for modular structures. The common characteristic of a significant proportion of the external innovations introduced in the school is that individual parts can be freely introduced, left out, and exchanged, thus favoring diverse im-

plementation. The first two filters primarily make their impact felt during the adaptation of the innovative tools and methods from educational companies, and the local developments of other schools. The third filter (3) is the implementation of tools that have a motivating force in themselves, due to which the latest information communication technologies and logical or moving tools (e.g., climbing wall, 3D printer) came to the fore.

The fourth filter (4) prioritises practices that reflect the competence demands in the labour market. Following this filter, development areas such as programming or Chinese language skills were included in the school's daily practices. The third and fourth priority areas mainly concern the opportunity windows that arise through the relationships with educational companies, the maintainer, and labour market actors.

> *"We saw that there is an increasing need to strengthen applied mathematical competencies, to prioritise IT knowledge, to put the children who want to find a job in such a position that they have the necessary knowledge in this field, and that they have the commitment."* (Headteacher)

Finally, the fifth filter (5) is the need to channel knowledge of an academic nature that can be practically used in school, which can cover both subject areas and educational science, organisational theory and management knowledge. An excellent example of this is the school's partnership with the university sector, or the involvement of employees in international training courses.

> *"We contacted higher education institutions; it was very important to acquire modern knowledge there (…) their representatives came to us, held a lecture and motivated the children."* (Headteacher)

When examining these filters, it can be seen that all elements that are typically identified as "innovation pumps" appear during the exploitation of the opportunities inherent in the environment (OECD, 2004, 2013). In addition, a network-based organisational operation that can be said to be comprehensive must also include a colorful array of tools for horizontal knowledge sharing within the school (Figure 5). The starting point for this is the background, that the development of the quality of pedagogical methods is now typically interpreted as a social process. It is considered that collaborative forms of workplace learning can promote higher-level, real learning outcomes and the development of tacit knowledge (Gilbert, 2011; Bakkenes et al., 2009).
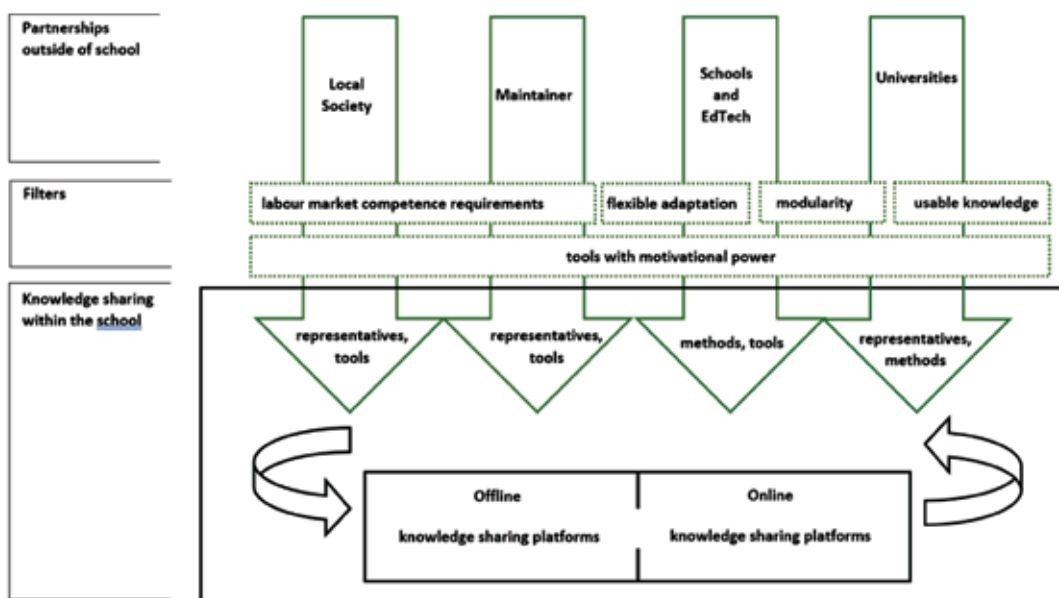
Figure 5: School management model organised on a network basis

Engeström's activity theory system was a good framework for the structured description of the organisation's networking and the resulting individual and organisational learning processes. Thanks to this framework, models emerged that are able to highlight the most important factors of a complex development process and show the dynamics between them.

All interviewees identified the headteacher as the starting point for the network embedding of the organisation and the development and professional learning processes taking place at the institutional level. The leadership behavior of the headteacher (*subject*), representing a network-building management model, responded to the need for student retention (*object*) and opened the school's social space to the maintainer, parents, local market actors and university partners (*community*). The search for partnerships has become part of the new organisational culture (*rules*), an expanded interpretation of learning where external partners appear as a source of knowledge. The headteacher played an exemplary leading role in building partnerships, while also supporting internally motivated grassroots initiatives initiated by members of the teaching employees (a division of labour) with fund-raising activities (Figure 6). This is how the LEGO-LET'S GO program started, as well as LEGO EDUCATION, for the foundation of which the major part of the costs of the study trip abroad was provided by the organiser with the

help of the school leader. Finding and building partnerships and networking and horizontal professional development and learning through them (outcome) brought spectacular results in the tool system and equipment of the entire institution, including the outstanding EDTECH modernisation (*outcome*).
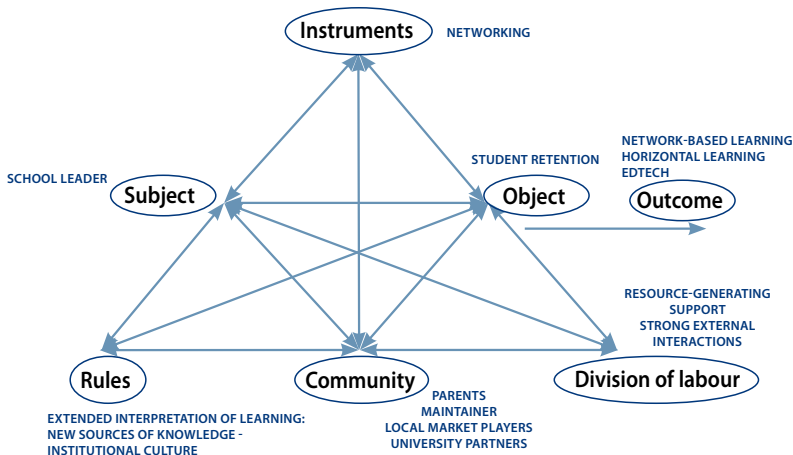
Figure 6: The activity theory model adapted to the school

Technological enrichment, the appearance of EDTECH tools, and the implementation of new procedures (instruments) can be interpreted as the second-generation source of change processes that determine organisational learning and individual professional development in this specific development history. With the emergence of new tools and educational solutions, collaborations within the school have become particularly strong both on interdisciplinary platforms and within individual fields of expertise. A good example of the former is the joint application of the EDTECH solutions introduced by the previously mentioned STEM/STEAM work community (e.g. 3D printer, robotics devices, 3D sandbox); while a good example of the latter is the innovative educational tools used within the humanities working groups (e.g. LEGO, student tablets, digital boards). The majority of the tools brought significant renewal and seriously strengthened the decisive convergence of the applied procedures in the direction of experience-based pedagogy. The tools were both sources of formal - project-based or community-of-practice - renewal processes, as well as collaborations emerging as a result of informal social connections. The latter is based on personal, friendly connections based on goodwill, so we can mostly talk about long-

term, mutually supportive micro-ecosystems, which can also be viable with more serious organisational support, external planning and organisation. The strength of these collaborations comes from the protective function against isolation, the potential to deal with problems and trust-based social relationships.

Through Engeström's activity system, it became clear how the conscious strengthening of the external relationship system can be connected to the internal formal and informal aspects of the division of labour. To open the individual from the closed system of solitary work and to place him in the wide field of organisational action, which cuts across specialised fields and is often free from external regulation.

Conclusion

For several decades, we have considered modern learning environments as those whose operation is strongly based on the flow of knowledge. Institutional management has organised themselves accordingly, and pay a lot of attention to internal knowledge-sharing, as well as to cooperation with external partners, channeling the knowledge that can be obtained there, and monitoring opportunity windows. From the point of view of the latter forms of partnership, it is critical whether the institutions are able to connect across borders. Are they open to actors related to other subsystems, or sectors? Connections outside the organisation can have a particularly stimulating effect on the creation of innovations, which we typically identify as one of the most important "innovation pumps".

Certain aspects of network-based organisational operation can be observed in many institutions in Hungary. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the development interventions taking place in the last twenty years have necessitated the presence of different forms of knowledge-sharing processes in schools and in the practices of individual teachers. In addition, this direction is typically supported by the professional knowledge and commitment of school leaders, given that it is difficult to imagine management training that does not currently place special emphasis on incentive systems for innovative professional solutions, and within this, on the operation of knowledge-sharing communities of practice, and network connections.

Among the mechanisms related to network operation and horizontal knowledge flow in a large proportion of domestic schools, internal knowledge

sharing practice is the one that can function actively. The sharing of knowledge between teachers in these places is facilitated by online and offline knowledge sharing platforms at various organisational levels. Institutions that pay much attention to such internal knowledge sharing are also usually characterised by paying particular attention to monitoring external processes and analysing and using data related to their institution.

A much narrower range of schools can use the potential inherent in external network connections to support their operations with knowledge sharing processes that enable the influx of external knowledge, including good practices developed in other schools. However, the most difficult terrain is not this form of knowledge sharing, but the active involvement in meso-level ecosystems that bring together actors from different sectors. The management of the school presented in this study applies particularly effective management techniques in this field, and we hope that modelling their practice can inspire a group of interested institutional leaders and school developers who want to open up to networking.

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Students From Ukraine in Polish Schools – The Main Difficulties and Areas for School Leader Support

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the challenge and task faced by Polish schools, their leaders and headteachers in supporting the development and education of child refugees from Ukraine. Social, political and economic upheavals, together with natural disasters, are major, recurring causes of the displacement of people worldwide. Hosting nations are constantly seeking ways and means to meet the diverse needs of refugees, with schools incessantly being urged to play a major role in the inclusion of migrant students in all aspects of school life. The refugee crisis has affected the Polish school system and its management on an unprecedented scale. Reducing any obstacles to accessing the Polish educational system for Ukrainian/child refugees was a priority, to avoid any type of jeopardy to their rights to education. The immediate priority was to ensure education continuity primarily by integration into the mainstream education system or, if this was not possible, with temporary preparatory classes. It is worth noting, that Polish teachers were generally unprepared to teach foreigners, and in many cases opening classes to Ukrainian refugees was their first experience in tackling this challenge. Due to the effort of school leaders, the government and NGO's, foreign students received psychological and pedagogical assistance in connection with their migration experience.

Key words: *headteachers | management | schools | ukrainian refugees | teachers | support*

Učenci iz Ukrajine v poljskih šolah – glavne težave in področja podpore vodjem šol

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Povzetek

Namen tega prispevka je analizirati izzive in naloge, s katerimi se soočajo poljske šole, njihovi vodje in ravnatelji pri podpiranju razvoja in izobraževanja otrok beguncev iz Ukrajine. Poleg naravnih nesreč so družbeni, politični in gospodarski pretresi glavni in ponavljajoči se vzroki za razseljevanje ljudi po vsem svetu. Države gostiteljice nenehno iščejo načine in sredstva za zadovoljevanje različnih potreb beguncev, šole pa morajo odigrati pomembno vlogo pri vključevanju učencev migrantov v vse vidike šolskega življenja. Begunska kriza je poljski šolski sistem in njegovo vodenje prizadela v obsegu brez primere. Prednostna naloga je bila zmanjševanje ovir za dostop ukrajinskih otrok do poljskega izobraževalnega sistema in s tem preprečevanje morebitnega ogrožanja pravice do izobraževanja. Najprej je bilo treba zagotoviti kontinuiteto izobraževanja, zlasti z vključevanjem v redni izobraževalni sistem ali, če to ni bilo mogoče, z začasnim pripravljalnim poukom. Omeniti velja, da poljski učitelji na splošno niso bili pripravljeni na poučevanje tujcev, tako da je bilo organiziranje pouka za ukrajinske begunce pogosto njihova prva izkušnja pri soočanju s takšnim izzivom. S prizadevanjem vodstev šol, vlade in nevladnih organizacij so bili tuji učenci deležni psihološke in pedagoške pomoči pri svoji migracijski izkušnji.

Ključne besede: ravnatelji | vodenje | šole | ukrajinski begunci | učitelji | podpora

Introduction

The war in Ukraine has uprooted children and families from their homes, creating a child protection and children's rights emergency. Over 11 million people have fled their homes: nearly a quarter of the total population of Ukraine. The majority, over 7.1 million people, have been internally displaced, of which an estimated 2.8 million are children[1]. Displacement has placed women and children at increased risk of gender-based violence, abuse, psychological trauma, trafficking, and family separation. Due to the introduction of martial law, men of Ukrainian citizenship aged 18 to 60 are forbidden from leaving the country.

Millions of Ukrainian children who, with their families, have been severely traumatised by displacement, separation, loss and war are seeking refuge throughout Europe. Once the physical imperative of resettlement into communities, accommodation and schools is met, attention must critically focus on restoring children's social and emotional well-being. Without this immediate and on-going support, child refugees suffer long term disruption to their growth, development and life chances. Social, political and economic upheavals, coupled with natural disasters, are major, recurring causes of the displacement of people worldwide. Hosting nations are constantly seeking ways and means to meet the diverse needs of refugees, with schools incessantly being urged to play a major role in the inclusion of migrant students in all aspects of school life.

All people fleeing from Ukraine and seeking refuge in Poland, are legally allowed to stay in Poland. At reception points, which are the refugee's first point of contact after crossing the Polish border, they are provided with food, medical care and other necessary supplies, with the help of the army and volunteers. From there, refugees are directed to temporary accommodation near the Polish border, and later to major cities in Poland. In a matter of days, the movement spread throughout the whole of Poland. In addition, a large number of citizens and organisations voluntarily offered free accommodation and other assistance for Ukrainians in need. Refugees are provided with free medical care, free transport, financial benefits, and the possibility of obtaining a PESEL number[2]. In each voivodeship (province),

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1 Information obtained from www.unicef.org

2 The PESEL number (ID number) is an eleven-digit numeric symbol, used in Poland, which allows for easy identification of the person who has it. The PESEL number includes the date of birth, serial number, gender and control number.

reception points for refugees were opened, where local authorities and huge numbers of volunteers provided free accommodation, food and other necessary supplies. Approximately 3.37 million Ukrainian people are now residing in Poland[3].

Ukrainian children in Polish schools

Children and youths, who come to Poland due to the war in Ukraine, can continue their education in Polish schools. According to estimates, there are about 7-800'000 children from Ukraine of school age in Poland[4]. At the beginning of the summer holidays in 2022, there was noticeably a lower number (185'000) of Ukrainian children taking up education for the school year 2022/2023.

The number of Ukrainian children, with their families, that arrived in Europe's schools (mainly to Polish schools) was unprecedented, but it is worth pointing out that the number of children from Ukraine who joined Polish schools varies greatly between school units. Nevertheless, since the beginning of war, the number of foreign children in school units at every level of education increased significantly. Due to such a large number of refugees, the Ministry of Education and Science regulations on the organisation of education, upbringing and care for children and youths who are citizens of Ukraine[5] had to be amended. In almost 21.6 percent of schools units, population growth has not exceeded 5 percent of its pre-crisis amount. In one third of the classes (33.3%) the student population increased by 5 to 10 percent due to accepting the Ukrainian students. In the next 21.6 percent of the school units, child refugees enlarged the class community by 10 to 15 percent, which has almost certainly influenced the functioning of the classes – the process of integration and communication and most importantly the teaching itself has been affected. For 2 percent of schools, the change was much greater, ranging from 35 to 40 percent of new children into the school units.

The incoming refugees in such numbers influence the structure of the class groups and become another challenge for the school headteacher and teachers assigned to these classes. This represents a major logistical challenge,

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3 Information obtained from Polish government site: https://www.gov.pl/
4 Vide footnote nr 21, data from September 2022
5 Information obtained from Polish government site: https://www.gov.pl/

as well as social responsibility. It requires substantial additional capacities, both in terms of infrastructure and staff (Białek, 2015).

Additional urgent needs in relation to Ukrainian refugees concerned clarification of the procedure applied for the graduation of final grades in the current school year and the delivery of certificates, and for access to the next level of education, and has been resolved in Poland by simplifying the procedures. Children and adolescents from Ukraine of compulsory education age (7-18 years) are admitted to public schools and taken into care on the terms applicable to Polish citizens. In order to enrol a child in a school, an application must be submitted to the school leader. The year (of study) is determined on the basis of documents issued by the school in the home country, and in their absence, the parents' declaration of the total years of education abroad. Moreover, the child's parents may ask the school head-teacher for them to be admitted to a lower grade than that which results from the sum of completed school years, e.g., due to the child's age. Admission to schools takes place throughout the entire school year and the determination of the year in which education is to be continued is based on the sum of the school years completed in Ukraine. With the admission of students from Ukraine into schools, many questions arose regarding the differences in the education system and curricula in Ukraine[6].

Support in education for children coming from abroad

Reducing any obstacles to accessing the Polish educational system for Ukrainian child refugees was a priority to avoid any type of jeopardy to their rights to education and further delays in their future pathways. The immediate priority was to ensure education continuity, primarily by integration into the mainstream education system or, if this was not possible, with temporary preparatory classes. As stated, foreigners who do not speak Polish fluently enough can benefit from education at school in different forms. They can participate in additional Polish language classes, while learning in public units, which can be conducted individually or in groups for a minimum of two hours (up to maximum of six hours) a week for an indefinite

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6 Ukrainian school starts at the age of 6. Since the reform of 2017, the period of education in Ukraine is gradually being extended from 11 to 12 years. Its implementation is taking place over three stages: primary school (4 years), lower secondary school (5 years), high school (full secondary education) - currently 2 years (3 years from 2027). Information obtained from Polish government site: https://www.gov.pl/

period. Or they can carry out education in the form of a preparatory units, where the teaching process is adapted to the needs and educational capabilities of the students. Learning lasts one year with the possibility of extending it to two years. A student from Ukraine attending the preparatory department will not be subjected to the annual assessment. Classes are carried out in groups of up to 15 students with a minimum of 20 to 26 hours a week (depending on the year of study and the type of school)[7].

To conclude, in the Polish education system there are two ways of teaching foreign students: either they enter a unit at the level obtained in their home county, or they attend preparatory units. Ninety percent of schools educate children from Ukraine in regular units, and approximately only 40 percent of Polish schools have launched preparatory units. But it is worth emphasising, that only 10 percent of Ukrainian children are taught in the preparatory units! This means that the vast majority have been included in the existing classes under the Polish curriculum, together with Polish students. Or at least they are trying. Given the abovementioned data on the number of Ukrainian children enlarging existing classes, we can state that the learning process for Ukrainian and also Polish children can be difficult, and it surely presents teachers with a huge challenge (Rafał-Łuniewska J., 2022).

Teaching a foreigner

It is worth noting that Polish teachers were generally unprepared to teach foreigners. In most cases opening classes to Ukrainian refugees was their first experience in tackling this challenge. In the process of becoming teachers, students are learning to be experts in the field of tough subject(s). They are also required to complete psychological and pedagogical courses, in order to learn how to teach and become effective, reflective teachers. If they are lucky, they may have had a class concerning the topic of diversity and tolerance. Teaching a foreign student or refugee is not included in the compulsory study programme for future teachers as stated by the Journals of Law of the Polish Parliament![8]

Some recent research conducted on-line on teachers showed how difficult and challenging this situation is for them (Pyżalski et al, 2022). The team

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7 Information obtained from Polish government site, resources from Ministry of Education and Science: https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka.pl

8 https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170001575/O/D20171575.pdf

researched over seven hundred teachers and it was clearly shown that it is a huge challenge for the majority of teachers. The data showed that most of the teachers, who were currently educating students from Ukraine, had no or little experience with teaching young people from Ukraine or other countries. Only four percent of surveyed teachers had worked with students from Ukraine before. In addition, almost nine out of ten teachers did not speak any of the Ukrainian language. It is worth emphasising that one-third of surveyed teachers teaching in units with Polish and Ukrainian students, have not participated in any training on the methodology of working with migrant or refugee groups of children, because the school headteacher didn't arrange any training for them! It clearly shows that some school headteachers didn't recognise the need to prepare for the child refugees and moreover didn't take advantage of help offered by many non-governmental organisations at that time.

The analysed report also showed that almost 30 percent of teachers indicate that most child refugees want to share information about their culture. Unfortunately, teachers indicate that half of the Polish students are reluctant to talk to children who have come to Poland as a result of the war. Nine percent of teachers point out that a lot of Polish students say that they are treated unfairly compared to children from Ukraine and that too much attention is focused on Ukrainian children. It shows that the inclusion process was not monitored as carefully as it should have been, or perhaps even that it was neglected by school headteachers (Lutterbach, Beelmann, 2021). This shows us that school headteachers, who opened up to the school community needs of teachers, other staff and most importantly to Polish and Ukrainian children, got the help they needed from the government, NGOs's and parents of children attending the school. Some headteachers didn't reflect enough on the need of the school community and decided that admitting the child refugees was enough (Pyżalski et al, 2022).

These clear results therefore indicate a risk of exclusion or directed peer violence against the children of this group. Only a few children from Ukraine adapt well in the peer group. Various issues related to the mental health of this group of children also prove to be a challenge. Every fifth teacher indicates that half or more of the children in this group have symptoms of depression and low mood; four out of ten teachers indicate that most or all children from Ukraine with whom they work express concern and fear for their relatives who stayed in Ukraine. We have to emphasise, that 7% of teachers believe that most or all children who started learning in Polish

schools show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and every eleventh teacher that half or more of the students have special requirements. At the same time, over 44% of the respondents could not assess whether they have such students in their class. 25% of the surveyed teachers believe that children and adolescents who have come from Ukraine are brought up in families that are currently in a difficult financial situation. In their opinion, it concerns half or more of students who were forced to leave their country as a result of the war. 25% of teachers note that half of the families from Ukraine join various school initiatives, even those unrelated to their children. 16% of teachers say that parents or guardians of children from Ukraine do not contact school. 25% of teachers believe that all of the Polish parents, or most of them, actively help Ukrainian families. Although negative attitudes towards this group of families are very rare, it is impossible not to notice that they do occassionally appear (Pyżalski et al, 2022).

The teachers themselves also require support. Research shows that they are heavily burdened by new duties. Overload was confirmed by 40 percent of the teachers. 10 percent of teachers indicate great difficulties in coping with stereotypical and negative opinions about Ukrainian students, verbalised by Polish students (Lutterbach, Beelmann, 2021). This represents another important issue, which should be recognised by school headteachers and leaders in the process of the inclusion (Białek, 2015).

School leadership

More than half of the school headteachers state they have started, since the beginning of the Ukraine invasion, deepened cooperation with the governing body, social welfare institutions, psychological and pedagogical clinics aimed at good quality education of students from Ukraine, and other institutions (Pyżalski et al, 2022). Effective action in the face of a new challenge for Poland, namely the influx of refugees, required the leadership of the school headteachers to foster an innovative and inclusive educational environment (Magno & Schiff, 2010; Theoharis, & Causton-Theoharis, 2010;).

As the number of students with refugee backgrounds grew, schools faced many new challenges. How could school leaders ensure they provided a positive, supportive and inclusive educational environment for these students and their families? Different researchers have pointed out several important actions, which can easily be implemented by school headteachers/leaders. We point out the most important of them below:

Raise awareness in the school community that knowing the students, their backgrounds, their histories and their current situation is key to putting in place appropriate people and programmes to support those who need more care or special support. Get to know the students and their families and communities, because it is important for school leaders and teachers to work collaboratively with students, parents and their communities to support students' learning programmes (Wilkinson, Kaukko, 2018). Moreover, research indicates that successful school leaders demonstrate a common set of understandings, dispositions, and practices (Howard, 2007; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016;). For instance, Howard (2007) suggests that headteachers who are effective in diverse contexts adhere to five phases, namely building trust, engaging personal culture, confronting issues of social dominance and social justice, transforming instructional practices, and engaging the entire school community. On average, leaders who are successful in diverse settings are critically self-reflective, cognizant of the internal and external school contexts, and centred on improving student educational experience. Riehl points to three critical tasks or practices she identified after conducting a vast analysis of scholarship, about the headteacher's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: fostering new meanings about diversity, promoting inclusive school cultures and instructional programmes, and building relationships between schools and communities. In the following sections, Riehl noted that sense-making or meaning making inside and outside the school community about any form of change is constructed around peoples' beliefs about the school. Importantly, "facilitating the inclusion of elementary refugee students occurs not simply when technical changes in structure and process are undertaken, but when persons inside and outside of the school construct new understandings about what the change means" (Riehl, 2000, p.60).

Appoint a respected staff member to take charge of the refugee student's needs (Kaukko, Wilkinson, 2018). By appointing, training and caring for suitably resource qualified staff, school headteachers take care of the school staff, ensuring that they are both efficient and well equipped for the given task. This point was often overlooked by school headteachers in Poland, as research shows (Pyżalski et al, 2022).

Have clear policies and protocols to address exclusion, push for modelling appropriate attitudes and behaviours, because no matter how well provided a supportive and inclusive environment, some discrimination processes will occur (Wilkinson, Kaukko, 2018). Concentrate on the strengths of the

community in supporting the effort of opening the school community to refugee students and their families. Never underestimate the goodwill that lies in your local community. Seek out people and groups of goodwill, join with them and work together (Kaukko, Wilkinson, 2018). Moreover, Howard suggested that headteachers can influence meaning-making through a variety of common school activities/events. For instance, headteachers can engage different stakeholders in fostering new meanings about diversity by seizing opportunities such as official school ceremonies, school meetings, and public school-community relations events. Also, headteachers could restructure, re-organise or redesign school procedures and practices that acknowledge and are sensitive to diversity. For the different school constituents to embrace new meanings, it requires a collective discursive process that engages everyone in co-creating the new meaning. (Howard, 2007).

Psychological and pedagogical help

The first point to consider is that the inclusion of refugees into education is not only about learning. Indeed, before displaced children can return to learning they need to be comfortable, composed and settled in their new school. Educational inclusion of refugee students can take place when education practices address three dimensions: learning needs (e.g. learning the language of instruction, catching up on schooling, and adjusting to the new education system), social needs (e.g. communication with others, including non-refugees, feeling a sense of belonging and bonding, and developing a strong personal identity) and last but not least - emotional needs (e.g. feeling safe, coping with separation, loss, grief, and trauma by restoring self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills). The immediate priority is to offer child refugees a place where they feel secure and can access education, together with addressing psychological trauma and language barriers. This requires a comprehensive approach, which combines the efforts of government, school community and the Ukrainian families themselves (Gooden, Davies, 2016).

A child's brain, like an adult brain, processes and reacts to experiences and step-by-step information. These stages generally range from immediate physical response, such as sweaty palms or a "lump" in the throat, to emotional reactions such as feeling angry or sad. Then there is an area of the brain that responds for thinking. When the thinking part is involved, we are able to organise our thoughts, devote time to reflecting and then take action to make sure of the best possible turn of events. Children and students who

have experienced injury or extremely mentally stressful situations often progress otherwise, because their brains are overwhelmed experiences of violence and stress that disrupt the normal flow of information and experience processing. Then the "thinking part" of the brain turns off while the areas responsible for more emotional and physical reactions are still active. This leads to more extremes of physical and emotional behaviour than those that might be expected in a given situation. For example, during a conversation with someone, a student may suddenly become angry and hit another child without even realising it; another student may suddenly start complaining of abdominal pain, and yet another student may keep an emotional distance from the environment and avoid everything (Pisaruk et al, 2022).

Refugee students, in particular, present a number of challenging aspects. Many have endured traumatic experiences (they carry the scars of post-traumatic stress disorder - PTSD), due to exposure to violence and torture, experiences in refugee camps, being displaced from their homes and, and disconnected from family members; language barriers; and the struggles with acculturation in their newly adopted home (McBrien, 2005).

Trauma is a permanent and severe psychological trauma caused by dramatic experiences. Very often the consequences of trauma form a set of symptoms known as traumatic stress (post-traumatic stress disorder), it changes the way students feel and react, due to dramatic external events or experiences. Trauma disintegrates life, changes personality, leads to mental disorders. The result of trauma can be depression, neurosis, anxiety, inability to cope with nervous tension. A traumatised person may react by withdrawing from interpersonal relations and social life, but may also show pathological hyperactivity, including, above all, aggression. One of the effects of trauma is traumatic stress. Typical symptoms of traumatic stress are: very high level of perceived anxiety, sleep disturbance, persistent return in the mind to the source of the trauma, avoiding any circumstances in real life that may be related to the stressor, the persistence of tension for a long time - even several years. Treatment of traumatic stress is based on psychotherapy, social integrating activities, and sometimes psychiatric medical treatment (ICD11 on PTSD[9]).

Building relationships between schools and communities acknowledges that educating the whole child cannot be accomplished by schools single-hand-

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9 https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/585833559

edly; schools are not quite equipped with the capacity to deal with this task alone. School-community partnerships create collaborative opportunities to meet student needs and, in the process, strengthen working relationships between schools and community organisations (Stefanski, Valli, & Jacobson, 2016).

Due to the efforts of school leaders, the government and NGO's, foreign students have been receiving psychological and pedagogical assistance in connection with their migration experience. The help consists of identifying and satisfying individual developmental and educational needs as well as recognising individual psychophysical abilities and environmental factors influencing its functioning. Psychological and pedagogical assistance at school is organised by the school leader and assistance is provided by teachers and specialists who work at the school: psychologists, pedagogues, speech therapists, vocational counsellors and pedagogical therapists. Psychological and pedagogical assistance is organised and provided in cooperation with parents of students and is conducted in cooperation with other entities such as: psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, teacher training centres, other schools, non-governmental organisations and other institutions and entities acting for families, children and adolescents.

Psychological and pedagogical help could also be extended to students' parents. Ukrainian children and youths could also obtain support outside school - psychological and pedagogical counselling centres (psychotherapy, psychologist, pedagogue, speech therapist) and mental health clinics (psychiatrist, psychotherapist, neurologist, speech therapist). Psychological and pedagogical counselling centres also support teachers on how to teach and react in the event of the difficult behaviour or educational difficulties of students. Often, in psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, there are also supportive activities for children and parents. Many associations and foundations take care of refugees from Ukraine, offering free psychological and psychiatric help, as well as help in learning the Polish language. (por. Gov.pl)

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to emphasise the role of school headteachers and the school community in coping with the new challenge of the refugee crisis resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Polish schools are increasingly confronted with cultural diversity. Despite the positive changes, the

need to develop the cultural identity of Polish students in the conditions of a heterogeneous (rather than homogeneous) society and students of different national, ethnic and religious origins (not only those belonging to national minorities, ethnic minorities and those with a regional language) is still underestimated or even overlooked. In the longer term, such a state poses a danger of dispersing the cultural identity of young people, and consequently a sense of lack of roots, uncertainty and loss. In the context of the refugee crisis, systemic and mental changes have had to be accelerated.

It is important for foreign students to receive support from school directors, and for school counsellors and teachers support in adapting the forms and methods of work, school requirements and assessment as well as an individual approach to discover the potential and strengths of foreign children. Only an individual approach will open the way for this group of students to succeed according to their own abilities and will guarantee development opportunities in various areas of life. It is important to refer to the results of the diagnosis, in a manner adequate to current needs, to support foreigners in learning Polish as a foreign language, levelling out curriculum differences and school backlogs, and to create space for them to develop their own cultural and religious identity, and inter-cultural integration. It should not be forgotten that working with foreign students and culturally diverse classes requires the teaching staff to constantly develop inter-cultural competence, acquire methodological knowledge and diagnostic skills. It should also be remembered that there is no one universal program and methodological model that would enable dealing with all situations that arise at the crossroads of cultures, therefore continuous self-education in this field is necessary.

Genuine help for children, apart from access to education, should focus on deepened integration, openness to dealing with new problems and the needs of child refugees and their families, who are a part of the school community. Community leaders, such as the school headteacher and others, who take responsibility for this process, should use the help and resources available so that the whole community is united and cared for.

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Collegial Support in Schools: Potential and Challenges

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Abstract

The aim of the text is to present selected results of research focused on coaching and respectively other forms of collegial support in schools, on conditions for the implementation of these forms in schools and, to a certain degree, also on practice in sectors other than education. The data shows different and often lacking support of these forms of professional development in the school systems, including unclear financing. This is so even though these forms seem to be principal for the support of quality work for people in schools, just as they were proven principal in other organisations, and it is desirable to develop them in schools as well.

Keywords: *coaching | mentoring | supervision | collegial support | schools | school leaders*

Kolegialna podpora v šolah: priložnosti in izzivi

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Povzetek

Namen prispevka je predstaviti izbrane rezultate raziskav, ki so se osredotočale na coaching oziroma druge oblike kolegialne podpore v šolah, na pogoje za izvajanje omenjene podpore v šolah in v določeni meri tudi na prakso v drugih sektorjih, ne le v šolstvu. Podatki kažejo, da so takšne oblike profesionalnega razvoja v šolskih sistemih zelo različne in zanje primanjkuje podpore, obenem pa je nejasno tudi financiranje – čeprav so omenjene oblike podpore ključne za kakovostno delo zaposlenih v šolah, ravno tako kot so se izkazale za bistvene v drugih organizacijah, zato bi jih bilo treba razvijati tudi v šolah.

Ključne besede: coaching | mentorstvo | supervizija | kolegialna podpora | šole | vodje šol

1. Introduction

A rapidly changing society places increasing demands on teachers to provide effective education and instruction. To meet these demands, teachers must adopt and acquire new professional practices, skills, competences, and knowledge. This does not only relate to their intake of new knowledge but also to their ability to use their individual potential and implicit knowledge in taking on various forms of teacher support such as coaching, mentoring and supervision. The potential of these types of support for professional development, indisputable as it is, has been used in a variety of forms and intensities in various European countries.

In the last decades, there has been a growing debate about the efficiency of internal support for teachers, and plenty of research has been conducted. The research clearly indicates that professional and collegial support in the workplace is a useful stimulus for the development of competencies and the improvement of teaching quality (Devine, Housseman, & Meyers, 2013; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). However, it also helps to prevent burnout syndrome, supports teachers' wellbeing, decreases professional stress, supports good relationships in the organisation and serves as a potentially positive influence for the school's development as a whole (Allan, 2007; Brock & Beama-Diglia, 2018; and more). Furthermore, research confirms that teachers who have been coached or mentored are more likely than non-coached peers to transfer newly acquired teaching practices into the classroom (Cornett & Knight, 2009). It is also known that the collegial support in all forms decreases the risk of developing burnout syndrome and, at the same time, increases teachers' commitment to the school. Several studies demonstrate its potential for increasing student achievement (Kretlow et al., 2012; Stormont et al., 2015). Meanwhile, there is often less attention given to collegial support in schools than to education through the means of internal or external courses and seminars. Data from Talis showed relatively low participation of teachers in peer collaboration, coaching or mentoring relations, learning visits etc. (Eurydice, 2018, 2021). It is also beyond doubt that the management in schools hold an important role in supporting these activities (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013).

It is the support of coaching on which the Erasmus+ project titled 'Coaching for Staff Professional Development in Education' (CoDe)[1] was focused. The primary aim of this three-year-long project, which started in 2019, was to explore the experience and best practices of partner countries in using coaching as a tool for more effective change management and for creating a supportive and growth-oriented environment, and additionally to identify the opportunities that coaching provides for staff development and collaboration. The project focused on the transfer of potential and experience from coaching activities in companies into schools as well.

In this text, the primary focus is put on coaching in schools. It is evident that collegial support incorporates a whole range of forms. Among the forms of collegial support most often mentioned include coaching, then also mentoring and supervision.

All these forms of support usually take place directly in the workplace and are implemented by internal or external employees. In the secondary research, which was done as a part of the above-mentioned project, the focus was intentionally broadened to other forms of collegial support due to a whole range of reasons described in the methodology section below.

2. Coaching, Mentoring and Supervision as the Forms of Professional Support in Schools

The term 'coaching', which is the primary focus of the aforementioned project, is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as 'mentoring', 'teaching', 'tutoring' (van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2016) and sometimes with the term 'supervision' as well. All these forms of 'collegial support' are used in the education milieu and they are not strictly differentiated from one another. In this text, we focus on coaching, mentoring and supervision because these forms of collegial support are typically (though not uniformly) used in partner countries participating in the project and they therefore became the center of the project's concern.

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1 CoDe, ref. number 2019-1-LV01-KA201-060345. Project's coordinator is the National Centre for Education (VISC - Latvia), in partnership with Information Services of Riga City (Latvia /LV/), Masaryk University (Czech Republic /CZ/), Learn Sheffield (United Kingdom /UK/), Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (Cyprus /CY/), Education and Teacher Training Agency (Croatia /HR/) and School Inspectorate of Iasi County (Romania /RO/).

Coaching has traditionally been associated with sports and business; however, the idea of coaching has already been present in the school environment for many years as well. Coaching has been defined in many ways and there is currently no agreed definition of coaching. However, there is a broad agreement that coaching is an intervention that can help people to achieve their goals or improve performance through structured conversations (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; van Nieuwerburgh & Passmore, 2012).

Similarly to mentoring and supervision, coaching is considered a powerful tool for personal change and learning. In other words, coaching is considered a collaborative relationship between a coach and a participant, which involves a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting to construct solutions and to employ a goal attainment process with the aim of fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the participant (Grant & Stober, 2006). Coaching is understood as a facilitative intervention, which is aimed at supporting a coachee in taking responsibility for adapting his/her behavior or ways of thinking in order to achieve better results (Whitemore, 2009). At the core of the coaching approach, there is the facilitation of learning which uses active listening and inquiry and provides appropriate challenge and support (Devine, Meyers, & Houssemand, 2013).

Within the educational setting, the term 'coaching in education' covers a broad range of interventions with the objective of improving outcomes for learners. The goal of a coach in schools is to improve student achievement by building teachers' capacity and understanding of instructional practices (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Similarly, van Nieuwerburgh (2012, p. 17) states that coaching in education is 'A one-to-one conversation that focuses on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate'.

Devine, Meyers, and Houssemand (2013, p. 1383-4), supported by a great number of other authors, summarise several types of coaching in the education field based on their focus and methods of work: behavioral coaching, solution-focused coaching, cognitive-behavioral approaches, executive coaching (or coaching for educational leadership) and peer coaching.

In schools, coaching is offered not only to the school's management, teachers and advisors, but to students as well (Whitmore, 2009). "Participants" of coaching (similarly to mentoring and supervision) therefore do not have to be only the teachers, but student teachers or students of the school as well.

In contrast to mentoring, coaching is not focused directly on gaining professional competencies with professional support from an expert in the field. It is understood more widely as a tool for 'unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance' (Whitmore, 2009, p. 10). The coach is not necessarily a domain-specific specialist (Grant & Stober, 2006); however, he/she should be prepared to lead the process of coaching.

On the contrary, in mentoring it is usually demanded that the mentor has the same or similar expertise as the mentee (Jonson, 2008) even though the term mentoring is not only encountered on the professional level. It can be understood as a support of the youth in their growth and direction (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009).

Mentoring is considered one of the oldest models of human development. Literature focused on professional development defines mentoring as a relationship between the more experienced and those less experienced with the more experienced offering support, advice or help. A mentor is considered a friend, "guide", and especially as a teacher (Drago–Severson, 2004). Usually, mentorship is the special relationship that is cultivated between a mentor and protégé whereby the mentor counsels, guides, and helps the protégé to develop both personally and professionally (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000).

In school practice, mentoring is often connected to the induction of beginner teachers (Jonson, 2008; Portner, 2005) or even students of teaching (Píšová et al., 2011) with its aim being especially to support professional growth. Mentoring, however, does not only aim to support beginners but has an important role in the peer support of experienced teachers as well, with the objective of improving the quality of teaching, support collaboration in the school, and the prevention of burnout syndrome.

The term **supervision** evokes monitoring and control from superiors (Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001); however, both the process and the aims of supervision have a variety of forms and models. It is a form of support

rather typical for care-providing professions, originally used in clinical practice and social work especially. Together with the increasing number of specialised employees (school psychologists, counsellors and more) in schools, this term has gradually settled in the education field as well. In recent years, an emphasis has been put on "healthy" relations in schools. There has also been an increase of pupils at risk. Therefore, relationship supervision and clinical supervision have found themselves in an important position in schools. This means that in the school milieu both "clinical supervision" (focused on parents or pupils as "participants") and the "managerial model of supervision", which suggests rather a controlling version of supervision, can occur. In the last few decades, supervision has been looked upon (similarly to coaching and mentoring) especially as a type of help and support. In this sense, it could imply the "cooperative model" of supervision which accentuates rather the process of learning (Orlans & Edwards, 2001).

Supervision can be aimed at improving self-awareness or understanding of a given situation, nurturing creative thinking and developing new perspectives of professional behavior. The supervisor helps the supervised individual, group or organisation to pay attention to and reflect on his/her/their work, relations, and find new solutions to problematic situations.

Supervision is more typically provided by an external supervisor – expert in the given field with training in supervision – and it does not necessarily have to be a long term relationship, which is more typical in mentoring. In many cases, it is therefore not a "classical" form of collegial support, even though it has an irreplaceable position in some schools and school systems as a form of professional development.

It is therefore possible to summarise the presented forms of collegial support that are the center of interest of this project as having different histories and different aims that can be partially differentiated (in mentoring, there is the focus on specific professional competency; in supervision, there is the supervision of a difficult case or work promotion; or in coaching, the development of people's potential).

If all three presented forms are understood as non-directive collegial support with the objective of supporting professional growth, then it is possible to refer to the similarities in regards to relations, contracts or processes and methods used in all forms of collegial support (active listening, open

dialogue, techniques for increasing self-awareness and taking responsibility, and more). In the last few decades, non-directive approaches have been typical not only for coaching, but for mentoring and supervision as well. Whitmore (2009) explicitly states that coaching is about 'helping [people] to learn, rather than teaching them', thus setting 'coaching' apart from 'teaching'. This can similarly be said about mentoring and supervision. In this sense, all forms of collegial support can broaden the repertoire of educators by providing a non-directive approach which supports others to learn for themselves. When it comes to practice and their relationship, these forms overlap in many cases and often can only be differentiated from one another by the specific term that is traditionally used in a specific institution. It is therefore likely necessary to count on the fact that in various schools these terms will keep being used in many cases inaccurately, with regards their needs, context and traditions.

In connection to the implementation of all forms of collegial support in schools, it is important to mention the role of school administrations, which have the objective of creating not only a comprehensible and manageable program for the realisation of collegial support, but particularly to also support a climate and culture in which collaboration and sharing between teachers will thrive (Evans 2011).

A range of authors offer inspiration for individual steps in implementing programs of mentoring or coaching and provide recommendations on improving the culture of collegial support (Aguilar, 2019; Brock, 1999; Creasy & Paterson, 2005; Gromley & van Niewerburgh, 2014; Tolhurst, 2010).

A school is a specific institution which has a specific time structure and organisation; the profession of a teacher is often labeled as individualistic. A teacher is ready to pass on rather than to receive (knowledge, stimuli), and the culture of openness can be threatening to him/her. Furthermore, after their work in class teachers often do not have enough energy to do time-demanding activities (Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992).

Hawkins (2012) describes the need for a 'coaching infrastructure' which includes governance and management aspects and a requirement for integration of coaching interventions within an organisation together with an evaluation of impact. Van Nieuwerburgh & Passmore (2012) identify the characteristics of effective coaching, which seem to be analogically relat-

able to mentoring and supporting supervision: mutual trust, timeliness, awareness of the need for change, ownership of goals, supportive relationships, genuine care and a positive outlook. It is suggested that these characteristics could inform a school-wide 'collegial support culture for learning'.

3. Professional Support of Teachers in Selected Countries – from Qualitative Research

3.1 Methodology

The first task of the project was the secondary research with its aims being: (1) to describe the arrangement, opportunities and limitations of coaching in selected schools and companies, and (2) to identify the specifics and challenges/limitations of the implementation of coaching in selected schools. For these purposes, we opted for a qualitative approach. During January and February 2020, we conducted in-depth interviews with selected coaches and coachees (those who provide and receive support) in each partner country. The questioning structure for coaches was as follows:

- *What is the target group of your coaching?*
- *How is the coaching process organised in the institutions you are involved in?*
- *What are the main coaching topics?*
- *What is the impact of coaching?*
- *Where are the major limitations?*

As to the semi-structured interviews with coachees, the structure of questions was as follows:

- *What were your expectations related to coaching?*
- *How is coaching organised in your institution/school?*
- *What is the benefit/impact of the coaching?*
- *Where are the limitations of the coaching?*

The data was obtained through 27 interviews with men and women of various ages, respectively:

15 coaches (mentors, supervisors) active in various sectors (schools of various levels, NGOs, businesses) and various professions or positions – headteachers, business managers, educators, school counsellors etc.; and 12 coachees (mentees, supervisees) active as teachers and headteachers, educators, clown-doctors, athletes, and leaders in various sectors such as schools, businesses and NGOs.

The respondents were coaches and coachees from various sectors since we intentionally focused on inspiration also from a non-education environment. During the dialogues at schools, it was not, however, possible to focus only on coaches, as different forms of support were typical for the schools in partnered countries. Aside from coaches and coachees, supervisors/supervisees and mentors/mentees were therefore also our respondents from schools.

Thus, it was not possible to distinguish unambiguously between data valid for coaching in companies and that in schools; they agree with, one other in many respects and we do not have data on identical types of respondents from all countries. The criteria for a strict selection of respondents could not be adjusted because some coaches were involved in multiple forms of support and were engaged in a variety of organisations. Identifiable differences in coaching in businesses, NGOs, schools, and other institutions, as well between countries, are pointed out as they are encountered.

This text does not take into consideration coaching alone, but refers to all these forms of professional support. In line with the focus of this project, we will predominantly use the term 'coaching' although it is evident that 'mentoring' or 'supervision' might be used as well. The data shows that coaching is connected with the continuous development of competences and personal potential. It is free of intentions to externally evaluate the status quo, or any errors committed.

> *Some 7-8 years ago, the perception of coaching was like 'fixing a problem'… there were negative reactions from the employees… if they offer me coaching, it means I am problematic. Today, it is seen as 'top talent development' and the company wishes to retain these people and invest in them. The positive perception is: you are valuable; therefore, we give you a coach.* (HR)

The interviews were conducted in the respective languages of the partner countries, recorded and transcribed. The data was categorised with open

coding and arranged into an interpretation framework in relation to the research questions. In order to strengthen the validity of the gathered data, the authors/researchers evidenced these categories with respondents' direct quotations.

In this text, only selected data is presented.

3.2 Selected results: Main topics, Expectations and the Impacts of Coaching

The main topics and expectations from coaching are connected to the development of personal potential (i.e., development of personal competences or personal potential, communication skills, creativity, independence, and the ability to take decisions and responsibility). In the schooling sector, the coaches commented on the need to develop teachers' well-being, self-recognition, positive view of themselves, self-confidence, and work satisfaction.

> *Sometimes they need to adopt a feeling of self-confidence, but in the beginning, they don't tell you, of course… Sometimes it's weird to see how insecure teachers are, it's just horrible self-exploration, they are stuck in bitter doubts… It's a part of their insecure profession.* (CZ)

The coaches consider positive support to be one of the most important objectives of coaching. Besides the development of personal competencies, the participants expect the development of professional skills as well. In schools, specifically, the objective is support which develops the quality of teaching, innovations in teaching, testing of new methods and the quest for options to promote school success, class management and so forth. Coaching makes it possible for teachers to realise that a problem is not their fault and helps them to discover and use hidden skills and knowledge. In the process of coaching, teachers and school leaders must often solve problems of work relations on all levels: between leaders and teachers, between teachers, between teachers and pupils, between teachers and parents, between leaders and the establishing entities. School leaders expect that coaching will clarify their leadership roles, improve their competences in staff leadership and, consequently, increase the quality of work. It is evident that the expectations are not only related to the development of individuals or teams, but to whole organisations as well.

> *I'm speaking as headteacher now: I've had mentoring and coaching here for years, and first of all I expected it would change the school culture. I thought teachers would start talking to each other and learn to support each other. (CZ)*

If coaching is sponsored by an organisation or project, there can be a more or less specific topic in which the organisation is interested (e.g., improvement of relations), especially in the case of group coaching or supervision. However, objectives and expectations should be the participant's own or, at least, agreed on by a group of participants.

> *The sponsor tells the coachee: These are your main qualities and strengths, and these are the prospective areas for your development, so my expectations from the process are the following… When the organisation orders coaching, first a contract is signed with the sponsor. The sponsor defines what the coach should achieve during the process…* (HR)

As to specific topics of coaching in businesses, coaches mainly mention: time management, change management, problem solving, human relation management, capacity building and innovations in the company, among others.

The respondents described the impacts of coaching in relation to the expectations and aims of the coaching. They commented on the impacts of the coaching in many domains: the change in thinking, attitudes and working behavior, the improvement of performance, awareness, and the calming effect. If performance is difficult to evaluate in schools, so is the effect of coaching on pupils' learning. Most impacts cannot be seen immediately; some coaches say it takes half a year at least. The respondents opine that positive effects are faster and more important if the coachee has been coached before.

According to the respondents, teachers and other coachees can calm down, adopt more self-confidence and self-assurance, and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. People feel better about themselves (UK). Furthermore, coaching enables people to find time for themselves and think about their work and themselves in a safe, understanding and uncritical setting. They also have the opportunity to reflect on their goals, current reality and resources, both their own and external.

The impacts of coaching are often discussed, because most of them cannot be seen immediately and are hardly measurable. On the other hand, some coaches observe teachers in classes, therefore they can observe the changes directly. In the evaluation of impacts, the coaches often rely solely on their feelings.

> *I feel there's an impact on the school. If this observation is a positive example, teachers won't be afraid when someone comes to observe their lessons next time. Introducing the culture of observation can change school culture as such and help the school to open up.* (LV)

> *A clear impact for individuals working at the school was that there was a self-esteem 'boost' for the participants… This foundation of trust in the individual means that they are confident in moving the process forward… People are more inclined to reform rather than repeat unsuccessful behaviour.* (UK)

Unlike schools, businesses and manufacturing companies generate results that are more clearly measurable for both the whole organisation and individual employees. Therefore, coaching must have a clear and valuable effect on the performance of teams as well as individuals.

An important expectation and realistic impact of collegial support that was mentioned by the respondents is also the influence on the school's culture. The main indicators of changes occurring in school culture are modifications in teachers' openness and increased courage to collaborate, express doubts and try new things. The open culture of a school is therefore a condition for success in establishing all forms of teacher support, and these processes also support an open and collaborative school culture.

3.3 Selected results: Limitations Related to Coaching

According to our respondents, relevant limitations are related to the organisation of coaching, the coachees and coaches. Coaches and coachees remark that there is a lack of infrastructure, facilities and funding in other settings too.

In the school systems of some of the participating countries (e.g., Czech Republic), the system of mentoring or coaching in schools is mainly built on European projects, while specific communities promote coaching in

British schools, generating isotopes of good practice. With regards to where the system is lacking, the requirements for education of coaches who should provide support for schools are usually defined in an unclear way. A different system is offered in Croatia where supervision is provided centrally. Some institutions with a closed organisational culture can face a variety of burdens, which naturally happens in and beyond the domain of schools.

> *Mistrustful individuals create mistrustful systems. Some systems believe themselves to be self-sufficient. There's also prejudice that helpers, due to their profession, are good at helping themselves, which isn't true. When I know, as a helper, that I need help, it's a sign of being mature in terms of my profession.* (HR)

Several questions emerge in some of the countries involved: Who are in fact the coaches in education? What should their training consist of? Who should finance coaching in schools? Who should have access to coaching in schools? Financing through projects is a limiting factor as it does not guarantee sustainability. Once the project financial support is over, coaching does not survive long. Moreover, coaching administered through a project can result in formal discharge of the duties and an increased administrative load. In a very few instances headteachers strive for their own internal system of coaching/mentoring and intend to train most teachers in coaching/mentoring. These can then provide support to each other. Particular attention is paid to the option of coaching by superiors, which is considered limiting by the coaches themselves.

> *As headteacher I avoid coaching and mentoring in my own school, although the double role of a headteacher coach would be immensely useful for me. I could disseminate a specific form of communication in the school, using the principles of coaching, but I don't do it.* (CZ)

However, every system requires a clear distribution of roles, tasks and responsibilities, and the necessary transparency. In education, local coaches and mentors do not usually work full-time but are encouraged to pursue their main job (as teachers, consultants, lecturers, and so on) and their education; authorisation and responsibilities among others must be clear.

The more coaching is enforced in a top-down fashion (by school leaders, education policy and others), the more it will be formalised. Also, the

more it is perceived as reaction to mistakes, the bigger the probability is that coaching will not be accepted positively by all people in the school. This, of course, is true beyond schools as well: coaches in all domains sometimes work with unwilling participants, which makes their work frustrating for both sides.

> *The biggest problem comes when a company hires a coach for someone who's not interested in personal development, when coaching is used as a punishment and managers don't know what to do with an employee, having unrealistic expectations that coaching can change the guy. I find it unacceptable, and I have an agreement with the companies I work for: coaching is for those who are successful and want more.* (HR)

It is the problem participants, in particular those who are unwilling or on the threshold in terms of their personality, or even mentally ill, whom the respondents consider to be one of the most important limitations for their work. Also, the group of challenging participants includes those who have unrealistic expectations or are not prepared for accepting support. These participants are not able to be open in an adequate way, express feelings, reflect, be authentic and have confidence.

> *(A lack of) emotional barriers, empathy and willingness to speak openly with another individual are paramount factors for the effectiveness of the coaching process. So is the authentic involvement of both parties in the process, clear goals, relevant and complete information, mutual trust and respect.* (RO)

In failed cases, coaches are helped with supervision and observation of work psycho-hygiene. In any case, all participants are steered towards taking responsibility for the results of coaching, their own development and the change they find the resolve to make. The coach is mainly responsible for the process and his/her professional approach and readiness.

Some coaches can see another limitation in the fact that coachees or the leaders of the organisation do not understand the mission of coaching and fear it. Teachers can be afraid of being watched by someone who would discover their mistakes; they are afraid of criticism.

> *One of the big misunderstandings is what coaching is. People often mix up the terms coach, trainer and consultant. The coach is seen as someone*

> who gives advice and offers solutions, which is not the case… *Supervision sounds to people like some sort of control. Someone will check how good or not good I am, and my superior may find out.* (HR)

It again confirms that the misapprehension of the concept of coaching or a bad initial experience can affect the attitude of teachers and the whole school for a long time. Therefore, a selection of great coaches is essential for successful coaching.

We mentioned in the beginning that many of our respondents worked as both coaches and mentors, without many distinguishing features between these two forms of work. Though they can distinguish between coaching, mentoring and supervision in theory, the ways of work merge into each other in practice. Also, they use similar work procedures and techniques and do not ponder about whether it is coaching or mentoring. They do not consider it important to distinguish between coaching and mentoring 'here and now'.

> *I simply can't differentiate whether I do coaching or supervision. If it digresses somewhere I can't say this is supervision, which is what I don't do, so let's call it a day. That's why I don't differentiate sometimes.* (CZ)

As already remarked, coaches with an unclear professional identity and those frustrated by difficult communication with challenging participants or even organisations are supported with supervision and psycho-hygiene.

Special attention was paid by respondent coaches to their own possibilities and limitations. They mentioned conditions under which coaching cannot be carried out properly. Not only does this refer to the type of participants discussed above, lack of time or remuneration, but also one's own mood. The coaches say that they must not have the feeling of being overloaded, manipulated and acting as if they were a victim.

> *This can't be done in a rush. I've got to get in the mood, prepare myself, sometimes I first read what we did last time so that I get started more easily. Then I feel I'm not absent-minded. Once I took my notebook with me and prepared for lessons on the train, but it was strange then… I've got to take my time with self-reflection… calm down and slow down. I miss this in my hectic life. I've got to start coolheaded, have a coffee, get myself in the mood in the car. I have to concentrate.* (CZ)

Although money is not always an essential condition, it plays its role, and coaching in schools must be appreciated and remunerated. Also, coaches say that sometimes they can feel pressure from participants or organisations about expressing certain opinions or attitudes. It is a true test of professionalism to maintain neutrality and keep a distance, a detached view and impartiality.

4. Discussion

The character of teachers' work is related to the specificities of school culture, which is different from the culture of businesses. It is also a matter of employer-employee relations, interpersonal relations, methods of communication and evaluation of work. According to the respondents, what are the main differences between coaching in schools and businesses?

There are two main types of career structures in teaching: flat (single level) and hierarchical (multi-level). Half of the education systems in Europe organise their career structures hierarchically, in formal ascending career levels, usually denoting a greater complexity of tasks and responsibilities. However, in many countries, the teacher career remains rather flat (Eurydice, 2018). Within the school there are not many levels for a teacher to ascend, and they usually do not engage outside school.

Coaching in businesses is more closely related to career growth and people are more often reminded that it is up to them to decide how they will grow (Hillman et al., 1990). Employees in companies know that responsibility and career growth is in their hands, so they are more motivated to be responsible for themselves. The data from our research confirms that people in companies are more often reminded that it is up to them to decide how they will grow. People in companies receive more feedback on their work and their managers evaluate their performance more profoundly, suggesting topics for coaching of individuals and teams.

Conversely, in schools and NGOs, more attention is given to employees' current needs. Coaches in companies are used to deploying a variety of tools (e.g., questionnaires) for diagnosing and evaluating the effects of their work; they are professionals and require the best working conditions (The Coaching, undated).

The above-presented data shows that coaching systems in businesses are more transparently anchored, particularly in big companies, as part of an

employees' professional development. The responsibility for these processes is usually carried by HR departments. It is an integral component in large companies whose leaders plan, organise and evaluate coaching. On the other hand, in schools teachers might feel that coaching and mentoring have a lesser impact on their professional growth and on bettering their position in the school. People can lack motivation for coaching and supervision in schools where coaching is financed through projects and a transparent and sustainable system is missing, or in NGOs where supervision is ordered (and provided 'free'). Teachers can also feel that they are only 'completing someone else's objectives'. Worthy of mention is also the higher professionalisation of coaches in the business sphere, where coaches are clearly certified and use more tools for diagnosing and evaluating the effects.

If we want to transfer some of the good experience and traditions of coaching from businesses to schools, it is, first of all, necessary to take into consideration and respect the specificities of schools as organisations (Pol, 2007) as well as the specifics of teaching. The coaching of teachers in schools is specific because of the target group; teachers are used to 'transferring the truth' and working individually. They do not like to reveal their work, they protect their know-how and use a certain time structure in which there is no scope left for collegial discussions. Therefore, teachers who have no experience with coaching look at these processes distrustfully, considering them to be aimed at revealing errors rather than a development activity and learning process.

Conclusions

The differences between coaching in companies and schools reflect the distinct forms of financing and internal adjustments of culture and accountability. Commercial businesses can invest large amounts in coaching and require clear evidence of efficiency. Coaching in them is more professionalised and is a part of human resource development, helping the career advancement of employees.

As for schooling, it seems that there is generally a lack of experience and high-quality tools that could facilitate the work of coaches. Moreover, despite the shift to evidence-based interventions, it is questionable to what extent we measure the efficiency of coaching in schools. Schools, which are accountable to their establishing entities, must abide by relevant legis-

lation; coaching therefore must face a variety of limitations. Most of them are related to financing and coach training. Some countries have adjusted coaching or supervision systems in schools according to their legislation, whilst others feature coaching in schools as rather an informal or semi-formalised process.

The data shows that an important introductory step is to increase the awareness of schools/teachers about coaching and similar forms of collegial support. At the same time, it is necessary to present these processes as helpful, not to penalise or expose errors. Teachers' trust in these forms of collegial support can be increased by a good first experience with expert coaches. Indeed, a bad first coaching experience, lack of transparency and unclear systems can cause more harm than good. The role of school leaders is essential in this context.

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Headteachers' Networks for Leadership Development

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Abstract

The National School for Leadership in Education, a unit within the National Education Institute of Slovenia, designed the Headteachers' Networks for Leadership Development Programme in 2009. Since then, some three hundred experienced headteachers from kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools, have taken part in this one-year professional development programme. The Programme is based on three principles: networking, peer counselling, and self-reflection on leadership. Qualitative research on the development of leadership competencies was conducted in the year 2021. The data provided by the participants was gathered by way of a questionnaire, while the facilitators submitted written reports after each network meeting, elaborating on topics related to educators (including the headteacher), teaching and learning, cooperation with the environment, and resources.

Key words: *leadership | professional development | headteachers' networks | peer learning | peer counselling | self-reflection*

Mreže ravnateljev za razvoj vodenja

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Povzetek

Šola za ravnatelje deluje kot enota Zavoda RS za šolstvo. Odkar je leta 2009 zasnovala program Mreže ravnateljev za razvoj vodenja, se je tega enoletnega programa strokovnega usposabljanja udeležilo približno tristo izkušenih ravnateljev vrtcev, osnovnih in srednjih šol. Program temelji na treh načelih: mreženje, medsebojno svetovanje in samorefleksija o vodenju. Leta 2021 je bila izvedena kvalitativna raziskava o razvoju vodstvenih kompetenc. Podatki, ki so jih posredovali udeleženci, so bili zbrani z vprašalnikom, medtem ko so moderatorji po vsakem srečanju mreže predložili pisna poročila, v katerih so obdelali teme, povezane z vzgojitelji oz. učitelji (vključno z ravnatelji), poučevanjem in učenjem ter sodelovanjem z okoljem in viri.

Ključne besede: vodenje | profesionalni razvoj | mreže ravnateljev | kolegialno učenje | kolegialno svetovanje | samorefleksija

Introduction

The National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE) was established in 1995 by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to provide for training and the professional development of (aspiring) headteachers. It has been the central public institution responsible for the education and training of headteachers and other school leaders. In 2021, the Government altered the status of NSLE, organising it as a unit within the National Education Institute of Slovenia (NEI).

NSLE takes care of the professional development of headteachers. Over the years it has established a *"system of lifelong learning of headteachers"* that provides for various forms of headteachers' professional development in different stages/periods of school leadership. Internal analyses regarding headteachers' participation in various forms and activities of lifelong learning show that more than 87% of Slovenian headteachers participate in one of the forms of professional development provided by the NSLE at least once a year (Zavašnik Arčnik et al. 2014). The data corresponds with the TALIS 2018 survey (Japelj Pavešić et al. 2020).

The NSLE implements numerous programmes and other types of life-long learning support for all periods of headship:
- induction (pre-service): headship licence; obligatory; 1 year
- initial: mentoring newly appointed headteachers; optional; 1 year
- in-service: annual conferences; **headteachers' networks for leadership development**; counselling; coaching; thematic seminars; middle leadership programme; school self-evaluation programme, etc. (Zavašnik Arčnik et al. 2014; Brejc and Ažman 2021)

Various kinds of learning activities for headteachers and other school leaders are aimed at:
- learning and teaching processes and student achievement, since schools cannot change and improve unless they change classroom work at its core;
- implementing the whole school approach and assuming responsibility for quality by all stakeholders;
- fostering a school culture favourable to learning at all levels, as well as to introducing change, constant monitoring and self-evaluation of work and the use of data;

- supporting distributed/collaborative leadership; and

- recognising the importance of considering the specifics of each school. (Koren and Brejc 2020)

Among the most important NSLE strengths are trust and close relationships between its staff and headteachers, imbedded in the inclusion of headteachers in its activities as trainers, mentors, peer counsellors, external evaluators, (co)authors of papers, monographs and publications, Journal Editorial board members, etc.

In Slovenia, headteachers exercise pedagogical leadership as well as manage their school. They are autonomous in their selection of staff, managing finances, purchasing equipment, designing the content of the elective part of the school programme, organising school work, ensuring the quality of educational processes and facilitating their school's cooperation with the environment. The Slovenian headteachers' context is very specific in terms of their selection and appointment, with teachers exercising a strong influence. Headteachers are appointed for the term of five years only, but they may be reappointed. Their appointment and dismissal is in the hands of the school council, which is obliged to acquire separate approvals beforehand by the teaching staff, the local community, and the Minister of Education. (Koren and Brejc 2020)

Theoretical background

Vast research and school practice prove that headteachers' care for their own professional and career development and that of their teachers are the main levers of the quality work of educational institutions. The TALIS 2018 survey (Japelj Pavešić et al. 2020) emphasises that professional development activities prove to be an essential condition for establishing a culture of continuous improvement and a shared learning vision between teachers and school leadership. Headteachers should not only provide opportunities for participation in professional development activities but also participate in them themselves, to strengthen their administrative-legal and organisational skills, and manage their headteacher skills (Sparks 2002; Zepeda, Parylo and Bengtson 2013; OECD 2016). Furthermore, professional development activities are the cornerstone of any successfully implemented major education reform in OECD countries (Schleicher 2015). Professional development activities help teachers and headteachers to acquire the necessary

competencies related to being informed and accepting policy efforts critically (Kennedy 2005). Recent policy reviews have identified professional development activities as a key advantage of the most successful education systems (Davis et al. 2020; Darling-Hammond 2017; Jensen et al. 2016).

The thematic working group of the Education and training programme (European Commission 2020), which deals with the education and training of leaders and other professionals in education and training, has formulated starting points and guidelines for the professional learning of school leaders: (a) professional learning is a right and a professional responsibility, (b) it must be organised in groups that allow interaction, (c) it must be in accordance with the development needs of the individual leader and the educational institution, (d) it must be based on critical (self-)reflection of one's own management, the practice and operation of the educational institution, and (e) aimed at improving the educational institution.

Similarly, other research also proves that effective lifelong learning programmes for leadership in education and training are exploratory (e.g. action research), experiential (e.g. shadowing) and reflection-oriented (e.g. self-evaluation, diary); they enable contact with the workplace (shadowing, practice), are based on collaboration (mentoring, coaching, networking, study groups, peer learning), use diverse learning and teaching methods, and balance theory and practice (see e.g. Kontautiene and Melnikova 2008). New models of learning and education for the 21st Century are increasingly based on collaboration and networking (Muijs, Ainskow, Chapman and West 2011). The goals of networking as a form of professional learning and development are: to share experiences among experienced headteachers; to disseminate examples of good practice; to help and provide advice; to strengthen personal and collective capabilities; to reduce institutional polarisation and competitiveness; to share personnel resources; to foster innovation ("together we can do more"); to increase efficiency (as networking allows us to achieve goals that would otherwise be very difficult to achieve individually) (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman, West 2011).

According to Davies et al. (2020), the five validation criteria for any professional learning for headteachers to be effective are that it should:

- individualise the headteacher's learning by considering his/her context, needs and details of his institution;

- take place mostly at the headteacher's workplace and be carried out on a regular basis (not only occasionally);

- be a collaborative process that includes (peer) counselling and problem solving;

- be reflective and based on actual needs and experiences, appealing to the students' attitudes/beliefs and raising awareness of the headteacher's context; and

- be supported (if possible) by regular coaching or mentoring with the help of an external professional.

In recent years, the research into the needs of experienced Slovenian head-teachers has confirmed the aforementioned trends. The headteachers stated that they needed diverse forms of education in order to grow and develop professionally. In addition to extensive attendance of conferences and consultations mainly aimed at the dissemination of information, they emphasised their need for extensive and longer lasting programmes that would enable them to be better supported in solving individual challenges. Every headteacher sometimes feels isolated in his/her role and wishes to share the weight of responsibility for difficult decisions with another competent professional. (Brejc, Zavašnik, Mlekuž 2022)

Headteachers' Networks for Leadership Development Programme (HN Programme)

This form of support was introduced in the school year 2009/2010. Every year one group of around 30 headteachers has enrolled in the Programme. Since then 300 headteachers from kindergartens (54), primary schools (151), secondary schools (50), dormitories and special needs education institutions (12 in total) took part in the Programme.

Starting point

The Headteachers' Networks for Leadership Development Programme was designed in accordance with modern principles, for already experienced headteachers. It is based on three theoretical principles typical for the contemporary learning of (experienced) headteachers: networking, peer counselling, and self-reflection.

1. *Networking*. Research proves (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman, West 2011) that a moderator (broker) who leads, directs and monitors the network is crucial for successful networking. Networking is not a goal in itself, it is only a means that allows us to achieve the goal; the actual goal is an enriched learning environment for teachers and children (Hopkins 2005). The effects of networking are diverse and can be identified at four levels. On the first level, acquaintances and casual contacts are in the foreground; on the second level, members build relationships, get to know each other and exchange experiences; on the third level, they cooperate in solving challenges; and on the fourth and highest level, networking is characterised by joint work, co-responsibility, interdependence, and permanent collaboration (Muijs, Ainschow, Chapman, West 2011). With the HN Programme, we aim to reach the third and the fourth level of networking.

2. *Peer counselling*. Peer counselling is a form of professional development during which headteachers advise each other, exchange good practice, encourage cooperation and support, and help each other to find the best solutions. In practice, this means that several headteachers thinking about their work meet and talk about their leadership practices, thus improving them. It is important that they trust each other, as it is about sharing good practice as well as discovering and solving leadership problems or challenges. Well-conceived and well executed mutual counselling brings benefits on many levels. Its advantages can be summarised as follows: better cooperation and generation of new networks, as most of the headteacher's work is done in isolation; boosted reflection on leadership practices and thereto related analysis; provision and reception of leadership feedback; improvements to or positive changes of leadership practices. (Ažman, Gradišnik 2013).

3. *Self-reflection*. The first definition of reflection was contributed by Dewey (1933 in Mezirow 1991; Rogers 2002), who emphasised that reflection is a key process of deep learning. It is the process of critically evaluating content, our efforts, and/or our assumptions about them in order to explain the experience and give it meaning. The headteacher sheds light on their experiences through reflection and assesses the quality of their work from a critical distance. He can improve his insight into the work of the school he leads as well as into his own practice by determining what his leadership competencies are and by strengthening them. Self-reflection is the first step to getting to know yourself and your work. MacBeath

(1999) argues that in teaching and many other professions, a commitment to critical and systematic reflection on one's practice is at the heart of what it means to 'be a professional'.

In the Programme, we considered the elements of innovative learning environments (OECD 2013): incorporating advanced principles of learning and teaching, the focus on the student and thus on modern pedagogy, the strengthening of competencies, as well as on the care for educators, and various resources.

Aim, goals and structure of the Programme

The purpose of the HN Programme was to critically shed light on existing leadership practices and develop new approaches, enabling effective leadership for learning. With it, we wanted to support the professional development of headteachers and strengthen networking among them.
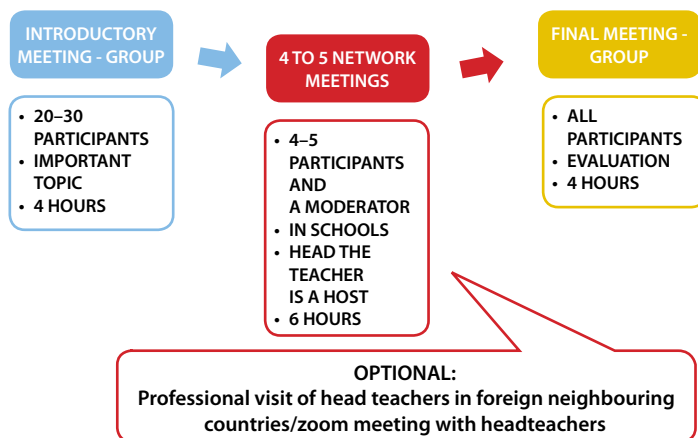
The Programme was aimed at:

- encouraging networking of headteachers to strengthen leadership;
- facilitating the exchange of examples of good practice;
- solving current leadership challenges;
- strengthening professional discussions and (self-)reflection on one's own work; and
- the publication and presentation of examples of good practice (learning community).

The main goals were to:

- self-evaluate leadership and improve leadership practices;
- apply critical mutual assessment of leadership practices;
- exchange good practices in the field of leadership;
- network and exchange experiences;
- empower headteachers to act in certain situations; and
- strengthen sustainable networking and cooperation.

Structure

The HN Programme was intended for experienced headteachers (after the first five-year term) from kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, music schools, and boarding schools. It was designed in the form of peer learning and counselling in small groups (networks) of headteachers with different backgrounds. As a rule, each network includes four to five head-teachers meeting alternately during the year in the institutions they come from, giving each other an opportunity to learn about different leadership practices in real life situations and in an authentic work environment. Leadership and all its various images, loops and puzzles are the common thread of professional discussions at the network's meetings facilitated by a NSLE lecturer. Headteachers reflect on leadership, discuss and evaluate it by highlighting the practices in each institution, presenting examples of good practice, and solving current challenges at hand. Mutual trust and open communication in each group fostered from the initial meeting allows the members to openly present problems as well as good leadership experiences. The one-year Programme consists of 32 compulsory hours and 16 optional hours per participant spanning six meetings: two joint meetings of the main group (the introductory and the conclusion meeting) and four meetings of each of the eight subgroups – networks (picture below).

INTRODUCTORY MEETING - GROUP	4 TO 5 NETWORK MEETINGS	FINAL MEETING - GROUP
• 20–30 PARTICIPANTS • IMPORTANT TOPIC • 4 HOURS	• 4–5 PARTICIPANTS AND A MODERATOR • IN SCHOOLS • HEAD THE TEACHER IS A HOST • 6 HOURS	• ALL PARTICIPANTS • EVALUATION • 4 HOURS

OPTIONAL:
Professional visit of head teachers in foreign neighbouring countries/zoom meeting with headteachers

Picture: The structure of the HN Programme

Over the course of ten years, we supplemented the Programme and changed certain parts, depending on the circumstances and needs of the headteach-ers. For example: from 2009 to 2017, the Programme consisted of 10 meet-ings (four more than usual). In that extra time, the headteachers carried out

project work in groups according to challenges they chose, and an article was then published in our leadership magazine. As the social circumstances burdened by the COVID-19 pandemic commanded headteachers to invest additional effort and put in extra hours at work, we reduced the number of Programme hours, dropping the project work. In 2018, we had added optional content to the Programme: the possibility of headteachers' visiting neighbouring countries, but we could only carry it out for one year, due to the subsequent COVID–19 measures; however, in the COVID-19 period we did manage to enrich the Programme with online meetings with Slovenian headteachers running schools abroad. During the lockdown, we partially implemented the Program online, which proved to be a very good support for headteachers in those challenging times.

Each network of four to five headteachers is facilitated by a NSLE lecturer in charge of:

- coordination of dates of network meetings;
- assistance to the host in preparing the meeting at the hosting institution (programme, invitation, notification);
- participation in network meetings;
- facilitating a particular network meeting (scenario);
- evaluation of the network meeting;
- coordination of work with other facilitators;
- monitoring the work dynamics and networking effects; and
- Programme co-design, monitoring and evaluation.

The network meetings are held at the kindergartens and schools with the headteachers playing a role of either the host in the Programme (once) or participant in the exchange of experiences and in the critical reflection of the leadership of the host headteacher concerned. The meeting intended for mutual counselling follows Kolb's learning cycle (1984): the host headteacher shares his/her experiences, chooses one of them as an example of good practice, and also a challenge, and with the help of the group, makes a reflection during the meeting. He/she makes sense of the experience already at the meeting itself, both orally and with the help of diary entries.

The duties of the headteacher hosting a network meeting are to:

- take care of the organisation and leadership of the work meeting at the institution;

- present the history of his/her leadership in the school and make a self-evaluation of the results/impact;
- present the school's three best achievements;
- present an example of good leadership practice; and
- present a leadership challenge and actively seek solutions.

The tasks of the headteachers acting as participants at a network meeting are to share their experiences on the presented topics with the host, take an active part in solving the host's challenge, and be a critical friend to the host.

Finally, the expected results of the Programme are a set of examples of good leadership practices (published in an e-book); and a set of challenges headteachers face in their leadership. We expect that each headteacher will record observations in a personal diary and, based on the notes, at the end of the Programme, reflect on their learning during the Programme (Ažman, Zavašnik 2020). After completing the Programme, the participants receive a formal certificate of having completed the Programme.

Research, evaluation and results

The purpose of this qualitative research was to provide an in-depth evaluation of the Programme implemented in 2020/2021 (Avguštin, Ažman 2021). The results were compared and supplemented with evaluations from previous years (Ažman, Avguštin 2020; Ažman 2019). The data was collected by way of a questionnaire and structured written reports of the moderators.

Questionnaire. At the end of the Programme, coinciding with the end of June 2021, an on-line questionnaire was sent to 36 participating headteachers, and 25 headteachers responded in the time designated. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions. As to the question of how much they strengthened their leadership competencies in the HN Programme, the answers spanned a four-point scale ranging from zero (1), partly (2), quite a lot (3) to very much (4). The detailed results are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Level of strengthening leadership competencies

In the HN Programme, I strengthened my leadership competencies...		Zero	Partly	Quite a lot	Very much	Sum	Mean	Standard deviation
by sharing examples of good practice	f	0	0	4	20	25	3.9	0.44
	%	0	0	16	80	100		
through discussions on current issues	f	0	0	4	20	25	3.9	0.44
	%	0	0	16	80	100		
by solving leadership challenges	f	0	3	2	19	25	3.7	0.74
	%	0	12	8	76	100		
through self-reflection of one's own work/ leadership (presentation of the history, path and results of leadership, diary)	f	0	3	6	15	25	3.6	0.77
	%	0	12	24	60	100		
through networking	f	0	3	7	14	25	3.5	0.77
	%	0	12	28	56	100		

The mean score of all answers was high, 3.7, with a standard deviation between 0.4 and 0.8. The most highly ranked are the activities of sharing examples of good practice and discussions on current issues (3.9), followed by solving leadership challenges (3.7), self-reflection of one's own work/leadership (3.6) and networking (3.5).

At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were expected to answer an open question: *Please highlight one of the insights regarding your leadership you gained in the past year (use notes, journal).* Typical statements clearly showing how the Programme helped headteachers to strengthen their leadership role include:

a) *Each of us has something to be proud of and was faced with a challenge.*

b) *Until my colleagues' visit, I didn't have the feeling that we were working hard, I didn't notice the achievements; now I notice our progress more.*

c) *The different approaches taken by the headteachers lead to the same goals, but what works in one school does not necessarily mean that it will also work in ours.*

d) *Managing and working with people (teachers) is very demanding and responsible.*

e) *I still have room for improvement and change in my leadership.*

f) *It is important that you also love yourself, not just your colleagues.*

g) *I want to strengthen the delegation of tasks.*

h) *I have to think about myself; because I accept all tasks with enthusiasm, I have to slow down, otherwise I go ahead too enthusiastically.*

i) *Sometimes you have to take time to think, consult with others, and then decide.*

The headteachers' statements confirm that the Programme goals were achieved: the principals have become more aware of their own leadership qualities (statements a, b), of the importance of the school context for their leadership style (statement c), that leading colleagues is a challenging task (statement d) and that they can still improve their leadership (statement e). The comments also confirm that some headteachers have decided to change their leadership activities in the direction of better care for their work-life balance (statement f), to strengthen the delegation of tasks (statement g), to slow down the introduction of changes (statement h) and to consult before taking decisions (statement i).

Structured written reports. The monitoring of network meetings was done through structured written reports, written by facilitators (that was the role of an NSLE lecturer) after each meeting. All 36 reports from the four facilitators were collected after the end of the Programme. The methodology of the research was based on the document analysis method. The statements were analysed through the coding of key words allocated to one of the four categories defined by Innovative Learning Environments (2013):

A. *Educators* – teachers, educators and other employees, leaders of employees

B. *Learning and teaching* – principles, content, competences, pedagogies, students

C. *Cooperation with the environment* – parents, local community

D. *Resources* – learning environments, technology

From the reports, we collected examples of good practice and challenges separately.

Examples of **good practice** presented at group meetings (45 cases)

A. *Educators* – 21 cases (examples: rewarding colleagues; assigning teams as needed; regular annual conversations; knowledge exchange between teachers; inbox for praise and criticism; distributed leadership);

B. *Learning and teaching* – 15 cases (examples: distance teaching, positive teaching practice; very good international cooperation on various projects; what good things the epidemic has washed away; well-executed preparation for the next school year; implementation of the school's vision);

C. *Cooperation with the environment* – 8 cases (examples: connection and communication between students, parents and teachers; kindergarten for parents; introductory meetings for parents of newcomers); and

D. *Resources* – 1 case (example: arranging the surroundings and the interior of the kindergarten)

Challenges presented and discussed in group meetings (54 cases):

A. *Educators*: 26 cases

B. *Learning and teaching*: 12 cases

C. *Cooperation with the environment*: 5 cases

D. *Resources*: 11 cases

A. *Educators* - The typical questions and issues discussed were related, for example, to the professional learning and performance of teachers: How to encourage teachers for their own professional development and change teaching practices in the classroom (new forms and methods of teaching, use of ICT and education in this area, considering individual differences);

B. *Learning and teaching* - Safe and stimulating learning environment: How to overcome external factors that affect a safe and stimulating learning environment (imposing more and more obligations on headteachers, socio-economic status of parents, lack of interest of students). Student achievements: How to create a safe environment where the student/child will be accepted, happy, and satisfied and where he will have equal opportunities (regarding needs – deficits or greater abilities) and will be praised for his performance;

C. *Cooperation with the environment* – examples: how to strengthen the promotion of the school, how to deal with the local authority hindering the work of the headteacher, anonymous reports to the school inspectorate, lack of students;

D. *Resources* - examples: school renovation, costs of sick leave, financing the school canteen.

At the final meeting headteachers were asked to assess the Programme in just one statement.

Here are some typical statements, which confirm that the aim, goals and structure of the Programme are efficient:

- This Programme is one of the best possible ways for headteachers to connect and collaborate.

- I would like this Programme to continue for it allows for professional debates in small groups, sharing good practices, and solving different leadership challenges.

- Networking is an excellent Programme that gives each of us many ideas, encourages each of us to think about our work, evaluate it, and it enriches us greatly. I want more programmes like this.

- Thank you for preparing the programme for experienced headteachers. The content and the forms of work are up-to-date and flexible. In these challenging times related to the COVID-19 epidemic, the Programme has been among the first to adapt to the new circumstances.

- This Programme must remain. In this year's very challenging conditions, it helped me to keep my "head above water".

These statements allow us to conclude that the headteachers actively reflected on their work and, based upon their reflections, also set goals for their future professional and personal growth.

Conclusion

The results of the yearly evaluations confirm the effectiveness of the HN Program. The purpose and the goals of the Programme have been achieved every year, even during the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the 10 years of its existence, The Headteachers' networks for leadership development Programme has been successfully realised and adjusted according to regular evaluations of the participating headteachers' needs. Its foundation was regular group meetings in kindergartens and schools, contributing greatly to the achievement of the set goals. The NSLE lecturers as facilitators direct the Programme and are key to establishing trust in each group/network, take care of the organisation of meetings, and lead the meeting dynamics towards the set goals, allowing for enough flexibility as required by the group. The key features to be considered in further developments of the Programme are: small groups of experienced headteachers, professional facilitator, trust, learning in the field (at the schools), individual approach, reflection and peer feedback.

The future of the Programme might be challenged in several ways: (a) there may not be enough applicants eager to learn from diversity; (b) the majority of the headteachers enrolled in the Programme come from kindergartens and primary schools, only a few of them from other institutions; (c) quite a few headteachers who see the benefits of their participation in the Programme enrol repeatedly, consequently lowering the diversity of the networks/groups. A further challenge is to bring the Programme closer to the wider community of headteachers, for the Programme is (too) expensive due to the role of the facilitators. It is necessary to consider whether or not and how to transform the Programme while preserving its positive effects.

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The Philosophical Facilitation of a Professional Practitioner's Worldview

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Abstract

In this philosophical paper, I review different perspectives on the world-views of professional practitioners. I describe how a philosophical facilitator might help a practitioner adopt a coherent world-view through harmonising their way of being by bringing their actions and thoughts in line with their character.

In Ancient Greek thought, cosmology was capable of orienting human action only as theoria. This means that theoria is a person's world-view, which unfolds in the character of that person as their way of being. My main question is, how can a person's theoria or world-view become refined and harmonised in that person's thoughts and praxis?

A world-view is a synthesis of a person's wisdom and their ethical, aesthetical, practical and metaphysical reasoning about meaning in life. There will always be conflicts between these different forms of reasoning inside a human being, but the ideal is the Platonic metaphor of the harmonic and energetic soul as a person driving a chariot pulled by two horses.

A philosophical facilitator helps a person to know themselves by directing them towards questions about their world-view. There are many tools to accomplish this goal, such as pointing out logical inconsistencies, using metaphors and analogies, theory orientation or by drawing on art, culture and nature. I will raise philosophical questions and use the art of Edvard Munch to mediate on the character of being.

Keywords: *reflection | question | orientational knowledge | art mediation*

Filozofska facilitacija o svetovnem nazoru strokovnega delavca

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Povzetek

V filozofskem prispevku avtor preučuje različne poglede na svetovni nazor strokovnih delavcev in opisuje, kako lahko filozofski facilitator pomaga strokovnemu delavcu sprejeti skladen pogled na svet, tako da dejanja in misli uskladi z značajem in s tem harmonizira svoj način bivanja.

Stari Grki so menili, da je kozmologija sposobna usmerjati človekovo delovanje zgolj kot *theoria*. To pomeni, da je *theoria* človekov svetovni nazor, ki se v njegovem značaju odraža kot način bivanja. Avtorjevo glavno vprašanje pa je, kako se lahko *theoria* ali človekov pogled na svet izpopolni ter uskladi v njegovih mislih in praksi.

Svetovni nazor je sinteza človekove modrosti ter njegovega etičnega, estetskega, praktičnega in metafizičnega razmišljanja o smislu življenja. Med različnimi oblikami razmišljanja v človeku so vedno prisotni konflikti, vendar pa je ideal platonska prispodoba harmonične in energične duše kot osebe, ki vozi voz, v katerega sta vprežena in ga vlečeta dva konja.

Filozof človeku pomaga spoznati samega sebe tako, da ga usmerja k vprašanjem o svojem pogledu na svet. Za dosego tega cilja obstaja veliko orodij, kot so opozarjanje na logične nedoslednosti, uporaba metafor in analogij, usmerjanje v teorijo ali črpanje iz umetnosti, kulture in narave. Avtor bo zastavljal filozofska vprašanja, za mediacijo o značaju bivanja pa bo uporabil umetnost Edvarda Muncha.

Ključne besede: refleksija | vprašanje | orientacijsko znanje | umetniška mediacija

Introduction

To facilitate means to be an external aid in another person's life. In this paper, I will discuss what, if anything, philosophy has to offer the study of facilitation in the service of a professional practitioner. The painting by Edvard Munch in Figure 1 can be used as a metaphor to provoke thought on this question. The facilitator can be seen as the workers providing knowledge

Figure 1. Edvard Munch: Digging Men With Horse and Cart (1920)

(the burden) to a practitioner (the horse). Or, the facilitator can be like the horse removing burdens or wrong thoughts from the practitioner. The facilitator might even be the soil. If we understand the horse as the practitioner's will and the men as the practitioner's reasoning, the facilitator's actions become the soil the practitioner's reasoning picks up and delivers to the will.

Philosophy as facilitation has a long tradition and is still alive. One of the first cases we know about is Plato, who went to Sicily to facilitate a tyrant's pursuit of the studies necessary for becoming a good statesman. However, Plato understands this facilitation as difficult because it is not possible to rely upon verbal recipes in the search for good statesmanship:

> There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise [handbook on statesmanship] of mine dealing therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself. (Plato, Letter 7, 341 c–d)

Plato does not believe that a philosopher can convince someone else to be a good ruler through words or that a human can write a handbook on statesmanship telling the statesman how to lead their own life and the 'polis'.

However, through continued study and communication on subjects such as philosophy and mathematics, the statesman might nourish what is good in themselves. The philosophical facilitator can orient them on the subject and ask questions to create a dialogue until the student has gained enough power to be capable of directing their own actions without the aid of the instructor. For Plato, this means that the soil of facilitation is unchangeable knowledge, which nourishes the person's soul or inner life.

Today, we have a different kind of philosophical facilitation (Fatic and Amir 2015). One philosophical facilitator working with professional practitioners in Denmark is Finn Torbjørn Hansen. He uses non-therapeutic methods to coach nurses, priests and leaders, focusing on Socratic dialogue to promote open wonder about specific topics (Hansen 2018). In Norway, Anders Lindseth (2020) has written on the use of philosophical reflection to improve the professional practitioner's knowledge-in-practice. My thoughts are influenced by Hansen and Lindseth's perspectives on philosophical facilitation, but my work is directed towards the professional practitioner's world-view and character of being. I will elaborate on what soil we should unearth and not on how to provide the soil to the practitioner.

Worldview and character of being

Figure 2. Edvard Munch: The Pathfinder (1912–1913a)

Lindseth (2020) understands philosophical reflection as a method of improvement through action. But he does not understand this improvement as something one can learn through handbooks. He implicitly understands improvement as the human ability to commit fewer errors through continual reflection on why something went wrong. I find this perspective too problem oriented. Instead, I suggest that the purpose of philosophical facilitation is to help others become more in tune and accept themselves. To become more in tune with oneself might improve

one's actions, but the purpose is to be in balance. In virtue ethics, balance or harmony is understood as human well-being.

To be virtuous is to acknowledge one's character of being in practice. A human's character of being is their identity, and a person's actions reveal that person's identity or character of being in action. This is not connected to one specific situation but is a synthesis of many. The character of one's being is a holistic path that sums up one's specific way of life. This way of life is what a person stands for and includes the person's virtues, esteem, energy and motivations. If a person can express some of the path, they can understand some fragments of what directs their own action. The form of being that a person shows in action is not only individual but has more universal human characteristics, such as being courageous, truthful, just and prudent. The synthesis of these characteristics comprises a person's world-view.

Does reason motivate action?

Philosophy is closely connected to the human ability to think as an interaction between the individual and the world in a specific situation. This could involve reading a book on philosophy, enjoying literature or art, or concrete experiences, such as living through a pandemic or playing football. Philosophical thinking is a resonance or dialogue with the world. By incorporating art into this article, I bring forth a distinct form of knowing that might mediate the reader's experience of what I intend to unfold in a different way. The purpose is to nourish the reader's character and will to action.

If philosophy has anything to offer a practitioner, thoughts and reasoning must motivate action. Reason must be able to guide the intrinsic will like a man guiding a horse in the forest (Munch 1912–1913a). If the guidance is good, the will (the horse) will follow without any hesitation, resistance or distrust. There might be different paths to follow, but only the man has the ability to know the purpose and the goal of the trip. The horse might be motivated just by being with the man, but humans can be motivated by subtle meaningful purposes to direct our action.

If this philosophical facilitation is possible, we must explore what form of knowledge has this influence on the will to action. Molander (2015) differentiates between technical and orientational knowledge. Technical knowledge is reasoning that makes it possible for a person to master a specific task. Technical knowledge is understood as competences or life skills. This

kind of knowledge does not explain why the person decided to do a specific task or develop specific skills but how they did it. Orientational knowledge can help orient humans in what kinds of purposes and tasks they will direct themselves towards. Technical knowledge provides humans with a plan to follow, but orientational knowledge guides one's will towards that plan. Orientational knowledge is the deep, inner ground of human action. Molander (2015) elaborates five different key terms expressing orientational knowledge. His main discussion focuses on (logically) assessing and (morally) justifying goals and perspectives, but critical penetration, identity and reciprocal ego-formation are also connected to orientational knowledge. All of these different perspectives on orientational knowledge are part of a person's virtue and character of being.

To a large extent, orientational knowledge is a synthetic understanding of the relationship between a human and their world. It is a person's world-view and world-feeling that orients and motivates. This world-view contains physical, ethical, aesthetic and metaphysical reasoning. One's world-view is revealed in paths of action, and at the same time, one's actions are motivated and orientated by one's world-view. A person can improve their technical knowledge, but orientational knowledge is necessary to bring the person more in tune with themselves and the world.

Figure 3. Edvard Munch: Forest Cathedral (1909–1911)

An example of how orientational knowledge can be motivating appears in survivors of the Holocaust. Victor Frankl (2011) argues that the ability to reflect on meaning and maintain hope are essential for the ability to survive under harsh circumstances. In addition, Aaron Antonovsky (1987, p. 18) understands meaningfulness as a necessary part of a person's sense of coherence. 'But 'making sense' of the

world is as much a metaphysical process as an emotional one'. The ultimate meaning or purpose that allows a person to make sense of a concentration camp enough to survive it is based on a world-view that has a metaphysical dimension. It is connected to an inner realisation that there is more to life than what humans can empirically know. Empiricism, together with historicism and social constructivism, ends in an atheistic world-view that implies an almost nihilistic relation to the world. This may be the most widely expressed world-view of the modern age, yet it makes it difficult to have meaningful goals in and perspectives on life. It is also important to understand that this attempt at a purely rational world-view has a metaphysical ground that turns people into epistemological dogmatists who believe that human senses are capable of recognising all that is real.

Habermas (1987) argued that our modern world is post-metaphysical and implies that modern humans can be reasonable and motivated by reason without necessarily holding a metaphysical world-view. But Habermas' attempt to prove through logical argumentation that the sphere of reason exists does not exclude human life and action from metaphysical speculation. On the contrary, the form of reason that motivates action has metaphysical goals in one way or another. Humans might escape religion, but not theological questions about purpose in life or the meaning of life. In *Forest Cathedral* (1909–1911), Munch portrays the theological experience of being in a forest. His expressionism invokes a deeper nature of being, like a sensation of holiness humans can grasp in nature. To do so, one must use all of one's senses to search nature's sources (Munch 1912–1913). In other words, to paraphrase Hartmut Rose (2019), humans must be in resonance with the world and not only try to control and master the world.

The sources from which world-views arise

Humans draw on different sources to develop aspects of our world-views. Specific questions are important to reflect on, but a philosophical dialogue can also use other mediating sources. We can orient ourselves on a philosophical topic, survey theoretical perspectives or use metaphors, parables, fables or other kinds of stories. It is also possible to use poems, visual art or being in nature to reflect on oneself and one's own relation to the world. Munch tries to verbalise some of his ideas in scrapbooks, but his paintings are his best expressions of his own world-view (Stenersen 1945). In this pa-

per, I am not able to dig or dive into all these different sources. However, I will explore what questions must be embraced to experience one's own world-view while, at the same time, using Munch's art to mediate my explorations. His art is an example of a source humans can drink from, like a life-giving spring that awakens one's inner life or soul.

Reflection needs direction. A reflection without a direction is like a diluted remedy (Æsøy 2015). The more one reflects without direction, the less fruitful the reflection. In Æsøy 2015, I argued that reflection should have an existential dimension directed towards what is, how we know what is and what kinds of goals or meaningful purposes humans are connected to. If this is true, the practitioner needs theoretical knowledge about these existential questions. Hansen (2018) focuses on existential,

Figure 4. Edvard Munch: The Source (1912–1913b)

ethical and philosophical questions in the dialogue between philosophical and professional practice. His main intention seems to be keeping humans wondering.

All of these questions are directed towards world-views. The foundational question is, what exists? What kinds of sources provide humans with the ability to experience being? To have such an experience, we must also reflect on what being human means and what knowledge is. Furthermore, humans need moral orientation on what comprises a good life or well-being, what defines meaningful purposes in action and what makes one moral. The aesthetic dimension directs the questions towards one's own feelings. What did I feel when performing a given action, and what kinds of feelings did I discover through that action? The final question involves searching for the ultimate meaning of being and asking, how does everything come together? These questions are important for developing a more holistic view on being.

To orient oneself around one's own character of being, a person must reflect on the paths available for action and thought. The reflective part of a human soul can take orientation from how a human is like a pathfinder, guiding our horse through the forest in a good manner. Based on these reflections, we can critically penetrate our own actions, asking whether we should do what we are doing, and in some cases, deciding to follow new pathways or do more of what we experience as good. In all these cases, it is important to reflect on how one's surroundings react to and interact with one's character of being. Sources are both the inner life of a person and their interaction with the external world.

What kind of situation provides insight into one's own world-view?

To reflect on one's own world-view and character of being, one must begin in a real situation where one is emotionally activated and not when one is withdrawn from the world or has philosophical questions with no relevance to one's situation. It is possible to be alone in this situation – for instance, when one does something daring in interaction with the world. In a real situation, a human is always in relation to something. This could be other people or animals, but also technology, art, culture or natural things.

Anders Lindseth (2020) focuses on discrepancies between world-views and actions and how a professional practitioner tries to orient themselves through new understandings and the discovery of connections. But challenging situations are not the only routes to emotional activation. Humans are emotionally activated in situations where the practitioner is doing well – in the logical, ethical or emotional senses – and having a great time. Generally, professionals should focus more on doing well and less on looking for problems. Too much focus on problems often turns into personal criticism, and a professional practitioner can become disillusioned and lose confidence in their own actions. Still, that does not mean that we are able to escape discrepancies. When we do experience a discrepancy between our world-view and action, Lindseth says, we need to undertake a thorough exploration of the situation (p. 96). Such an exploration is not a justification but rather a search for understanding and a sense of coherence inside the context of wondering. Based on such reflection, the person uncovers inner evidence or insight. A good situation where a practitioner is doing great things could follow the same path towards insight.

111

To make my point clearer, I will present an example. Before the example, however, I must warn against too much reflection. Life is worth living, and searching too much for understanding might create a distance between self-awareness and action. To have character and be in tune means to be involved in life and not become a spectator to one's own existence. The dark side of reflection may disillusion a person and even kill them, if we are to believe Henrik Ibsen's drama of the wild duck. This is also a reason why philosophical facilitation should direct its questions towards what a person is doing well. A person's character of being must be nourished in the person's inner self like a light that is, as Plato says, kindled by a leaping spark.

An example: exploring a teacher's world-view

Philosophical facilitation is only a helping position. Reflections on one's own world-view must be carried out by oneself. Nevertheless the professional practitioner can also listen to a team reflect on their world-view, as shown in Sträng et al. (2016). As my example, I will use a narrative of a teacher's good actions in her own classroom, as the leader of the class. I do not personally know the teacher, but I was in the classroom observing her practices and will give a short interpretation of her actions and thoughts just to show how a teacher and leader's actions can be grounded in a world-view. The narrative is my translation of a passage in the book *Lærerpraksis og pedagogisk teori* (Fjeld et al. 2020). The situation concerns a fourth-grade class of 26 pupils. It is in the middle of a station teaching sequence, and the pupils are working together on different learning centres.

Odin is a small boy who sits by himself. The rest of his group are deeply concentrated on the task. Odin has just been diagnosed with diabetes and picks up his insulin meter. He looks around and finds the teacher occupied. Odin heads

Figure 5. Fjeld et al. 2020, p. 47

straight to the teacher and shows her the meter. They stand close together and the teacher lays a careful hand on the boy. The teacher clearly explains that she has talked with the boy's mom. His mom was at school before school started and was told what food the boy should eat at school to regulate his blood sugar. The teacher sits down with the boy; she looks into his eyes and asks mildly, "Do you agree that you should eat this?" She gently rubs his back: "You must know how you feel. Only you know how you feel." The meter is not significantly high. Odin nods quietly. "I will take care of you. I can take the meter and you can relax." (Fjeld et al. 2020, p. 47)

Based on this narrative, the teacher says the following:

> To me, as a teacher, it is all about respect. I must take the boy seriously. Listen to him. It's his diabetes, his body, but at the same time, I must be the adult who helps him, who gives him some relief – someone that he can trust. When there is a big upheaval in a child's life, it is not as easy to concentrate on school. The boy must have time to get used to having diabetes before I can demand something of him on the subject matter. (Fjeld et al. 2020, pp. 47–48)

The teacher's world-view is more realistic than idealistic. Feelings and actions are present in the situation, and the teacher accepts this reality. Even though she knows that the ideal action in school is to help the kids learn subject matter, she is realistic, knowing that the child must become more in tune before he can learn. She focuses on the ethical reality and on how the diagnosis changes the boy's feelings. She knows that humans are emotional and tells the boy that the feeling is his own. At the same time, through empathy, she seems to be able to understand that the boy is frightened, and her words and actions makes him more relaxed. The boy is an important source of knowledge, but at the same time, he is a child, and the teacher can relieve him from some of his feelings.

These actions and thoughts express the teacher's character as a leader. In this situation, the teacher shows courage and prudence. She must face the facts of the situation, and in her actions, she is empathic and wants to express respect by taking the boy seriously. To be serious is to participate in another person's life-world as the opposite of objectifying them (Skjervheim 1996). The teacher must listen to the boy, take his words into consideration and be willing to adjust her own behaviour without breaking her own character or sacrificing dignity. This is because of her understanding of what a human is.

A boy aged 9–10 can express his feelings and thoughts and reveal himself as an active individual on the way to autonomy.

One important fact in this story is the medical diagnosis that threatens the young boy. In this situation, a teacher will have a moral responsibility. The critical moral moment is when the boy disrupts the occupied teacher: should the teacher, as a leader, care, accept these feelings and take some of the responsibility from the boy? The answer seems to be yes. Her character of being orients her action in a good direction; her moral core affinity is care. What alternatives could have been chosen? She could order the child to go back to his chair and do his task. This would be a moral orientation towards learning efficiency. She could even become harsh and tell him that he is not allowed to walk around in the classroom without permission. This would be a moral rule-oriented action. She could ask him to handle his diabetes by himself and demand that he accepts autonomy. She could also refuse to have the boy in class, saying that she is not willing to take this responsibility, because her responsibility as a teacher is to teach subject matter. Such counter-factual thinking helps us evaluate actions and understand the moral core of actions.

The aesthetic dimension directs questions towards one's own feelings. What did the teacher as a leader feel when acting, and what kinds of feelings does she examine through the action? Her calm behaviour reveals her prudence. She is in balance. Even though the boy breaks a rule, she is kind. She responds without hesitation. Her feelings are directed towards not only the boy but the whole class. She perceives the whole of the situation. Her action creates a resonance in the classroom that affects all the pupils. The classroom maintains an atmosphere where everybody can be and interact with the world and each other. This understanding of the atmosphere and the whole class directs our interpretation towards metaphysical speculation. We are not able to measure an atmosphere, but everybody knows the impact a situation's atmosphere can have on our actions and well-being. A teacher concerned with atmosphere understands how every human in the class affects and is affected by the others. This effect combines aesthetic feeling with moral practice and the ability to learn subject matter. The teacher's actions in the situation demonstrate her ability to combine these forms of reasoning. The rational connection between logic, ethics and aesthetics can be understood as an existential truth, turning the situation into an existential collision. Habermas (1987, p. 56) points out in his anti-metaphysical work that taste and morality must still be part of the rational sphere. But the

question is whether the teacher can work under such a rational standard if this standard is not present deep inside her as part of her character of being. Her action is not something she could have learned from a handbook or even have become aware of in the situation. It is her own judgement that is connected to this existential truth, that she acts by and that is alive and ablaze inside her. She may not have been able to give a verbal expression of it, but her action reveals her tacit knowledge as her ability to act well for the whole class.

A teacher is a leader with a world-view that is applied in action. The world-view directs the leader's perceptions and choices and provides the teacher with a more holistic rationality in action. This is a rationality that includes logical, motor, ethical, aesthetic and even metaphysical forms of knowing.

Philosophical facilitation

If a facilitation is to be philosophical, it should direct the professional practitioner towards their own world-view. The philosophical facilitator provides the professional practitioner with questions and other sources that help illuminate their inner self. The goal is not to reveal or to control one's own world-view, but to accept and act according to one's character of being.

If human action is motivated by a person's world-view, a professional practitioner must explore their own world-view. Such world-views do not tell anyone how to act; the purpose is to become more in tune with oneself and one's surroundings. Munch's painting *Horse Team* (1916–1920) can be interpreted through the Platonic metaphor of the soul. The white horse is the moral driving force, while the brown horse is the diverse desires of the human being. The plough driver behind the horses is human rationality, which regulates and balances the other forces.

Figure 6. Edvard Munch: Horse Team Ploughing (1916–1920)

The whole horse team is a human world-view that motivates and directs actions in a good direction.

Hartmut Rosa (2020) writes that the driving cultural force of that form of life we call 'modern' is the desire to make the world controllable. Humans are supposed to have external control, mastering not only the world but also ourselves and others. This desire for self-mastery might turn the plough driver against the horses. The human search for self-control and technical knowledge might kill the horses, so the driver has to plough by himself. Such unnatural ways of being prevent humans from unfolding their character of being. People in this condition will end up burned out and aggressive towards the world and themselves. His alternative is resonance as the driving force of the human relationship with the world and oneself. Orientational knowledge might help us explore and gain insight into what we are, what the world is and what our motives should be in relation to this world.

Orientational knowledge is not knowledge that helps humans exploit and control the world, other human beings or ourselves; rather, it generates a resonance between a person and their world. Orientational knowledge might resonate in one's inner self and make us become part of the world. This paper, with its orientation and paintings, is an example of this form of knowledge. Hopefully, the content may nudge the reader's brown and white horses in the same direction, as we saw in the teacher's practice.

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Educational Changes and Crisis Management

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Abstract

The paper provides an insight into the results of large-scale research aimed at investigating educational change through empirical analysis of schools in Hungary. In the final phase of the research, the coronavirus pandemic provided an opportunity to analyze emergency changes. An important question was what organizational conditions, leadership strategies, development knowledge and previous pedagogical practices can effectively support expeditive steps in the changing environment. The presumed links between the pre-pandemic school characteristics and crisis-responses are illustrated by innovation cases. The paper also discusses how the exploratory activities of the research team have been shaped by social distancing.

Keywords: *school management | COVID | educational change | sustainability | research design*

Spremembe v izobraževanju in krizno vodenje

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Povzetek

Prispevek predstavlja rezultate obsežne raziskave, ki z empirično analizo šol na Madžarskem preučuje spremembe v izobraževanju. V zadnji fazi raziskave je pandemija koronavirusa ponudila priložnost za analizo sprememb v izrednih razmerah. Pomembno vprašanje je bilo, kateri organizacijski pogoji, strategije vodenja, razvojno znanje in predhodne pedagoške prakse lahko učinkovito podprejo hitre ukrepe v spreminjajočem se okolju. Domnevne povezave med značilnostmi šole pred pandemijo in kriznimi odzivi so ponazorjene s primeri inovacij. Obenem prispevek obravnava tudi, kako je omejevanje socialnih stikov vplivalo na raziskovalne dejavnosti raziskovalne skupine.

Ključne besede: vodenje šole | COVID | spremembe v izobraževanju | trajnostni razvoj | raziskovalni načrt

Introduction

In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic and related emergency restrictions have required serious adaptation in most sectors. During this period, countless new innovative solutions were created, which can help organizations increase their competitiveness even in the post-covid period. Schools had to close, so students learned from home. With the introduction of remote home learning in the education sector, solutions for imposing the curriculum were created in many institutions, the interpretation, analysis, and examination of which logically attracted the attention of those interested in workplace learning.

In this study, we rely on the results of two larger-scale studies,[1] which examine the theoretical connections of educational changes for a decade, through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of implementation and innovation processes in Hungary. The coronavirus pandemic in its final phase opened up the possibility of analyzing emergency changes. An important question arose, for example, as to what organizational conditions and previous pedagogical practices could best support individual institutions in responding to the changed environment with the rapid and efficient development of new solutions.

This study aims to provide insight into how educational research, which had been conducted according to a proven protocol for many years, was transformed because of the emergency transition: how research questions and theoretical frameworks were supplemented, and what new data collection and analysis solutions appeared. In addition, relying on empirical data, it illustrates the presumed relationships between the post-covid operational and leadership characteristics of educational institutions (e.g. management strategies, development practices) and their reactions to the emergency. These research results were an important background source for a presentation of the same title given at the ENIRDELM 2022 conference.

National research on educational changes

The research behind this study was aimed at exploring the theoretical connections of educational changes, to which two essential perspectives were

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connected: the investigation of the implementation of major changes and the exploration of the implementation mechanisms of innovations at the local level. In the following, we describe the development of these research focuses, and the related tools and methods.

Researchers of educational changes have known for a long time that there is inevitably a severe gap between the curriculum proposed according to central ideas and the curriculum implemented in individual schools. The planning and development frameworks, regulations and goals appear in practice as adaptable possibilities, on the basis of which the teachers and students together create genuine, real and infinitely different learning processes, i.e., the implemented curriculum (Ben-Peretz, 1975; Deng, 2011). Since the concept of "possible curriculum" took root in the 1970s, more and more curriculum theory treats the issue of changes in the learning environment as a priority problem area. In the field of educational changes, school development and educational innovation research, there have been many works that focus on the relationship between the planned and implemented curriculum (Clamdinin-Connelly, 1992; Mischke, 2010; Lieberman, 1998; Hopkins – Reynolds, 2001; OECD, 2013). The increasing importance of the problem area is also shown by the fact that numerous professional forums, conferences, workshops, or professional and development policy documents focus on the relationship between theory, policy, and practice.

Embedded in this context, our research into the implementation of educational development interventions that began in 2010 (Fazekas, 2021a) was carried out, which sought the answer to the question of which conditions can prove to be the most decisive from the point of view of the implementation of development programs, when non-linear systems of influence come into focus. By reviewing previous empirical results, they undertook to describe the complex world of the phenomena shaping the implementation of interventions along the lines of a few easy-to-grasp key factors. Based on these and related to them, they revealed new correlations through the qualitative and quantitative examination of the central curriculum development programs implemented in Hungary with EU funding between 2004 and 2012. An important feature of the research was the simultaneous focus on the individual (teacher), organisational (school) and systemic (public education) levels, combining the perspectives of the object (development programs) and subject (innovators, implementers) (OECD/Eurostat, 2018; Halász- Fazekas, 2021), the search for non-linear relationships, and the analysis of regression periods and harmful effects generated by the interven-

tions. It became clear: educational practices in a critical mass of schools are actively shaped by innovations that arise at the local level, often hidden, the commitment to which can significantly influence how external influences prevail. Mapping of the system of educational changes continued between 2016 and 2020 by exploring the birth, spread and systemic impact of interventions at the local level. The research design was constructed in the same way as the previous phase; after the theoretical foundation phase, the specifics of the innovative activities of the institutions and teachers who responded voluntarily were obtained through questionnaire data collection and case studies. A serious difference is that the questionnaire survey took place at two data collection points, enabling longitudinal studies. According to the results, learning-organisational characteristics and the innovative behaviour of individuals can significantly determine whether innovation can take root, spread and help the pedagogical processes in the long term. However, we cannot speak of linear relationships in these cases either (Fazekas, 2021b). An important discovery of the research is that a significant proportion of the innovations observed were inspired by the educational development programs and tools of private sector companies, primarily in the IT sector, which gained a prominent role during the pandemic period.

The epidemic started in the last year of the latter research and had a significant impact on its finalisation, in terms of content and management. It expanded the theoretical framework of the research with important new focuses; in addition to the implementation of centrally developed interventions and the birth and spread of local innovations, the framework for interpreting educational changes was also extended to the world of crisis innovations. In addition, special attention was paid to digital educational solutions in the former (implementation and innovation) areas. The empirical implementation of the research, tools and focuses also expanded. The suddenly accelerated innovation practice in schools offered an area of analysis that a research group examining educational changes could not outdo. In addition, the tools we used, including our case study protocol, which was used by the research group for almost ten years, and which was based on personal visits, could not be followed due to the restrictions caused by COVID-19.

According to our original protocol supporting the qualitative part, our research pairs spent a week in each educational institution and, in personal presence, first examined the specifics of the implementation of further developments and then the nature of the birth and spread of innovations.

During the school closures caused by the coronavirus epidemic, the research group could not continue this activity, so it developed a new type of case study protocol, that was adapted to remote education. This data collection procedure was based on online interviews, observation sessions (workgroup discussions, classes), and media content and documents. Within the framework of the research, two types of qualitative research were developed using online survey analysis.

In the first case, we worked with institutions whose operations we knew well from before, which were the locations of case studies in the first and/or second research phases. We conducted online interviews and class observations in a remote form, collected and analysed the most important related documents, and further, we asked the heads of institutions to provide written answers to a well-structured set of questions. This data collection method allowed us to examine what kind of crisis management systems were developing in those organisations that we previously - during our investigation - positioned on the axis of learning organisation operation, and organisations with development, implementation, and innovation knowledge. The case study model used in the second emergency included a parallel examination of several institutions' practice previously unknown to us. Here, too, the protocol was based on a combination of interviews, observations and media and document analyses. Compared to the previous case study protocol, there was a difference in that here we did not ask the institutions connected to the research to fill in the questionnaire about experiences during closures due to the coronavirus, but to complete our questionnaire about the institution's operation and innovation practice. Although we still gathered a wealth of knowledge about the functioning of individual schools, this new procedure did not allow us to get to know a particular organisation sufficiently. Thus, here the focus shifted from the subject to the object (Halász-Fazekas, 2021). In other words, the focus was no longer on the innovative activity, knowledge, and practice of a school and its teachers, but on a specific educational or management problem and its creative responses. In this case, these were institutional responses to the management of remote education. Both types of case studies can be considered proven research practices born out of the crisis, which, thanks to their many advantages in terms of resources, are expected to be included in the design of new research in the longer term (now, regardless of the coronavirus epidemic).

The qualitative data collection stages had already been completed by the time of the school closures caused by the emergency. Nevertheless, the re-

search group was motivated to enrich its knowledge in the field of crisis innovations by using the method of statistical analysis. To this end, they analysed the quantitative indicators of the locations of the case studies, aiming at investigating the nature of crisis innovations, that is, they examined what institutional and innovation specificities were reported by the organisations whose crisis responses were analysed in more depth during the questionnaire survey. Given that a significant proportion of innovations related to crisis management were digital educational solutions, special attention was paid to the analysis of data describing the birth and spread of innovations with a digital profile collected in the post-covid period (Lukács, 2020). In addition, it was also possible to join the quantitative data collection of two companion studies. One of them, in the final phase of the research, i.e. after the first wave of the epidemic, examined the relationship between the functioning of learning organisations, innovative and developmental activities, the solutions used during the closures caused by the virus, and digital competencies in the institutions of the Southern Hungarian Region (Baráth et al., 2021), while the other conducted international data collection concerning the above topics, specifically regarding innovations related to STEAM (Kersánszki, 2020). These two data collections contained institutional identifiers corresponding to our research and repeated many questions. Thus, it became possible to create a consolidated database: (1) which contains the cases of national institutions responding to several (1-5) data collection points, giving the opportunity for longitudinal investigation, which (2) includes national and international data, allowing for international comparison, and which (3) includes implementation, innovation, learning organisation, STEAM and crisis innovation focused issues, thus enabling complex content approaches that go significantly beyond the practical limits of the specific study. The research coordination practice that emerged due to the crisis offers long-term opportunities that, like the renewed case study protocols, are expected to be organically integrated into future research designs.

Crisis management and digital innovations

As we alluded to above, in the additional phase of the research, we expanded our conceptual frameworks used for examining educational changes in such a way that we supplemented our originally applied innovation and implementation approach with the examination of innovations created as a response to the crisis. The regularities of the birth, implementation, spread,

and viability of the latter may fundamentally differ from those whose purpose is general modernisation or some kind of response to a problem existing in the system's normal operation. In addition, we deepened our knowledge in the field of digital innovations, separating the problem area from the issue of crisis innovation. Pedagogical processes offer many opportunities to use digital tools and procedures, so for example, exciting exercises can be created through the educational use of video, gamification, simulation applications, statistical analysis programs, or international social media. The purpose of the development and adaptation of related exercises can be both to strengthen the motivation to learn and develop specific competencies, and to manage an emergency, such as the development of remote education caused by the coronavirus (Balázs et al., 2010; Halász, 2021).

In addition to digital solutions for pedagogical purposes, we must also mention digital innovations at the organisational level. Organisational innovations can be identified as an independent category that affects the organisation's business practices, workplace organisation or external relations. Such are, for example, innovations affecting the teachers' division of labour, external-internal communication or the conditions of administrative work (e.g., network operation, platforms enabling horizontal knowledge sharing, data collection and analysis systems, data collection, hosting systems), the effective operation of which in most cases requires digital support (OECD, 2005; OECD/Eurostat, 2018).

There are many forms of the birth and spread of educational changes, including processes supported by digital tools. As mentioned earlier, in our theoretical model applied research we distinguished from the beginning those that are, in the classical sense, self-initiated local-level innovations and those that are changes arising because of some central influence (regulation, reform, development). The latter include centrally initiated innovations that (1) expect faithful compliance with regulations ("top-down"), those that (2) are centrally initiated, but plan to give a large scope to the shaping effect of the change at the local level ("bottom-up"), and those in which the process of policymaking and implementation cannot be separated from each other ("joint creation") (Altrichter, 2005; Datnow–Park, 2009). Within the framework of these category systems, it was challenging to interpret the system of crisis innovations, although it mostly coincides with the third – open and multi-level – approach. According to this interpretation, based on network operation, the planning and implementation processes are blurred; both the central and school actors are interpreted as the creators of the developments, and the operation of the networks plays a prominent

role during the entire development. However this interpretive framework is also typically applied where an intention to innovate can be assumed, and the main starting point is not a state of emergency created by some crisis. Characteristics of the latter changes are that significantly less time is available, supporting resources are less available, but at the same time, the sense of responsibility and cooperation of the local participants is solid, and there is a large number of people in a similar situation who are willing to (or are forced to) cooperate. The number of institutions, teachers, and the nature of contact with partners (maintainers, parents, public administration bodies) can be drastically transformed, new relationship systems can be formed, and the intensity and form of cooperation of the existing ones can undergo profound transformations.

During the coronavirus pandemic, most education systems were transformed in a drastically short time, which is expected to permanently impact the operation of educational systems and everyday pedagogical practice at the international level (Tingzhou, 2020; United Nations, 2020). In most educational systems, the support effect of the mid-level could not take effect in time, so the individual schools had to develop their creative procedures themselves, in applying which it became possible to organise school learning and teaching even in the epidemic situation. The development of new forms of education and the introduction of the digital work schedule suddenly required leaders and teachers to have professional (digital, curriculum planning, management) competencies, which would take several years to develop or strengthen in the familiar environment (Schleicher, 2021; OECD, 2020). Many groups of those dealing with educational changes have started a project that tried to collect these solutions, innovations and changes, and whereby, in addition to directly supporting the adaptation of schools, understanding the nature of crisis innovations has also become a significant issue (Ferdig et al., 2020, Clark, 2020, Horváth et al., 2020). To this end, special attention was paid to previous research results that could help understand the innovations generated by reality (van Twist et al., 2013; Taalbi, 2017, Halász, 2014).

The related research – including our related data collection – clearly pointed out that there were big differences between schools and their teachers in terms of how they were able to solve the remote home learning issue and how well they were able to develop their professional knowledge in the right direction (both affective, and from a cognitive point of view). There were schools where the crisis triggered a tsunami of innovation, where

gamification, knowledge sharing platforms, and the appeal of the digital world captivated the participants, there were schools which transformed their whole learning program online, while there were schools where the teaching materials were sent to their students in electronic or paper form via mail without fundamental changes. It is shown that this (latter) group of schools could not adapt to the new situation and could not change their traditional system. It is a long-known fact that we can think of organisations capable of effectively developing their pedagogical practice – whether it is about adapting external developments or developing local innovations – as those that operate as learning organisations with high absorption and dynamic capabilities. According to our model, created in our empirical data collection, this organisational nature can be described with the following characteristics: (1) school management that encourages knowledge-creating and knowledge-sharing activities and applies effective management, (2) an atmosphere of trust that supports learning and knowledge sharing among teachers, (3) teacher learning in school, (4) data wealth and data processing, (5) development activity, and (6) horizontal cooperation of leaders and teachers within the school and with other schools, (7) openness of the stakeholders who influence the operation of the school. Although we can think that each of these factors may have played a major role in the responses to the crisis, based on the results of the research focusing directly on crisis innovations, we can consider that some of them may be particularly important to focus on, while others should be put in a new perspective when examining crisis innovations. Thus, for example, cooperation for a common goal, breaking away from routines, more flexible organisational arrangements, systematic institution-level research and development activities, analysis of technological possibilities, external communication and resource mobilisation practices, and the timing of strategic steps are valued (van Twist et al., 2013; Taalbi, 2017, Clark, 2020).

Crisis innovations and their characteristics

With our previous theoretical framework, during our case studies focusing on crisis innovations, we examined both the "seriousness" of developments we encounter (object approach), as well as under what conditions and in which organisational environments they were formed (subject approach).

An important question was how well the investigated innovations could provide adequate answers to the problems that arose, how well we can think that they can remain viable in their environment in the long term, and how well they can spread and have an impact in other contexts. From the perspective of the subject approach, we were primarily interested in those learning organisation characteristics which proved to be the most important in creating significant crisis innovations.

We analysed the practices of a total of eight educational institutions. In the selection of the said institutions, in addition to accessibility, an important aspect was to collect data in the most diverse areas possible, according to crisis responses and organisational functioning, different types of institutions (primary schools, secondary schools and higher education institutions, as well as reform pedagogy and foundation institutions, were also included in our sample). It can be stated that each of the examined institutions operated as an innovative institution from some point of view even before the closures due to the coronavirus pandemic, so without exception we can identify a major innovation in all of them, which we can think gave a real answer to the problems that arose, or that within the framework of the organisation it can be integrated into practice for the long term. In some cases, there is also the possibility of spreading. In the table below, we highlight one defining innovation from each institution.

One of the essential messages of the case analyses was that each of the characteristics of the learning organisation we identified could be important in terms of whether serious crisis responses like the ones above were able to arise in an institution. In addition, among the organisational characteristics, the strategic quality of leadership proved to be the most decisive in our cases. That is, how quickly the leaders managing the operation of the institution reacted to the crisis, how they monitored the environmental changes, analysed the expected government actions, and whether they reacted proactively to all this knowledge and information. In those organisations where the management reacted proactively with a strategic approach, students were typically ordered to have an extraordinary break even before the government announcement. Together with the teaching staff, the leadership started the transition to remote education, the technical preparation of the digital platforms, planning of the new work schedule and the implementation of the necessary intensive training and preparations (cases I, III, IV, VII).

Table 1: Identified innovations and their

Number	Area of innovaton	Innovation	Description	Institution
I	Curiculum	Virtual school	A virtual school constructed by students during the closure, which is a digital copy of the "real" building, and within which each student and teacher could continue teaching with their own avatar in online synchronous form	Private school ISCED 2-3
II	Organisational operation	Digital Working Group	An organisational innovation, which led to the creation of a digital work group, and which also ensures a prominent role for digital content in the operation of the institution in the longer term.	Public school ISCED 1-2
III	Curiculum	Method of slowed obsevation	Video usage procedure in observation-based educational situations, which helps to better illustrate phenomena with the help of slowing down and focus.	Private school ISCED 1-2
IV	Organisational operation	Mentor system	A mentor system structure that was created to strengthen network knowledge sharing, such is the organisational level.	Public school Higher Education
V	Curiculum	Digital gamification	A wave of digital gamification spreading at the organizational level, which meant the transfer of diverse previous games existing in the organization into an online form.	Public school ISCED 1-2
VI	Organisational operation	Digital form of applying the Complex instruction Program (DigiCIP)	The Complex instruction Program is a pedagogical method developed by Stanford University and adapted to the Hungarian context by an innovative teaching staff (see OECD, 2008). Today, CIP is widely used in Hungarian schools. One of the oganizing principles of the CIP method is that the teacher gives students a great deal of responsibility, which is strongly present in the digital form of CIP too.	Public school ISCED 1-2
VII	Organisational operation/ Curiculum	Parents' school	Preparing parents for the mathematical development of lower school students through homework.	Private school ISCED 1-2
VIII	Organisational operation/ Curiculum	Remote learning simulation	In-person remote learning simulation to support teachers' digital and professional competencies.	Church school ISCED 1-2

"A few days before the government decision, we decided to stop students going to school for some days. We sent the children home, and we were in the school from morning to night, looking for a way to continue. We knew the closures were coming and we had to be prepared." (head of school - case I.)

From the point of view of the organisational characteristics, it was also particularly important whether there was more serious development experience and knowledge in an organisation. Those organisations that were not unfamiliar with more radical shaping of the organisation's operation (cases I. II., IV, V., VI., VII.) were able to quickly activate the professional tools of change management, which represented a significant positional advantage over those institutions where management and teachers had to learn how to use these tools. We have seen that the definite presence of one of these two organisational characteristics (proactive leadership, development

knowledge) can be assumed to be a necessary and sufficient condition for the organisation to create adequate and viable crisis responses (innovations) in the longer term. Responses can be very different (panic reaction, a formal solution which helps the school to stay alive during the crisis period, strategic response, etc.). We focus on responses that are based on innovation; thus, the stakeholders consider the crisis not (only) as a threat but as a possibility as well. This approach relates to the proactive leadership style and the experience in development, which constitute characteristics of the learning organisation.

In accordance with our current knowledge of educational changes, spontaneous transformations, and direct development interventions, our case studies also highlighted the importance of internal and external relations and the intensity of knowledge-sharing. We have seen several examples where there can be considered a serious innovation aimed at building or strengthening the internal-external knowledge sharing system (cases II., IV. VI). However, it is important to emphasise, that among the institutions that created such innovations, there was also an institution (case IV) where most colleagues operated in an isolated manner when the crisis situation arose. Notwithstanding the fact that there were previous attempts to horizontally share the pedagogical procedures proven in the practice of individual colleagues, no truly functioning practice of internal knowledge sharing was developed. Here, the top-down mentoring system structure, the related platforms, and the clarified participation expectation from the management, which were launched following the leadership decision due to the crisis situation, provided the conditions that created a structured reflection on pedagogical practices and offered a viable space for horizontal knowledge sharing. In this case, two very prominent factors were behind the success of top-down innovation. Even before the crisis, the leadership of the organisation had serious theoretical and practical development knowledge, which is clearly shown by the fact that it had previously successfully (without much resistance) managed such top-down redistributive changes that required the application of complex change management. Furthermore, the crisis situation created an organisational atmosphere in which most participants could experience the planned intervention as an adequate response to their problems. This case made visible what was also supported by our previous research results: although internal and external knowledge sharing is an unquestionably important element of the context supporting the creation of serious innovations and possible crisis responses, if the innovation itself includes horizontal knowledge sharing elements, a remarkable and lasting

long term pedagogical innovation extending to the organisational level can also be imagined in institutions where professional collaborations did not work in the beginning.

In addition, our cases drew attention to another important organisational characteristic: the innovative professional knowledge of the teachers, including primary proficiency in the use of digital technologies, experience gained in innovative pedagogical procedures (e.g. gamification, project method), and innovation and risk management knowledge in general. Our cases showed that these three dimensions were particularly decisive in terms of whether the schools and their teachers could create viable and adequate innovations in their crisis responses for the longer term. Although a significant increase in the educational application of these procedures has been observed in Hungary over the past two decades (Fazekas, 2021, Anka et al., 2016), thanks to EU-funded interventions aimed at the development and dissemination of the new pedagogical solutions mentioned above, even together with the amount of classroom application, its level did not reach the international average before the start of the pandemic (OECD, 2014). The crisis innovations we identified clearly showed that the most significant pedagogical changes were typically based on advanced professional practice. Thus, for example, the structure of the virtual school (case I) was born in a school where the previous practice of teachers was characterised by a particularly high level of digitalisation, the online gamification of lessons (case V) was created in an organisation that had previously heavily utilised gamification, and the school that gave the students responsibility for their group learning process also had a strong tradition of using a special cooperative method well known and widespread in Hungary, namely the Complex Instruction Program (CIP) (school VI).

> "I also did a CIP class. Tasks for developing text comprehension were created for a (…) short story in the LearningApps application. The tasks assigned to the positions were different. The task of the 'mentor' was to organise which platform the group would use, the 'scribe' wrote the usual summary of the joint work, the device manager prepared LearningApps, and the 'time manager' paid attention to the timing. They were enthusiastic and skilled." (school VI teacher)

Our case studies show that the experience of change, the strategic nature of leadership (proactive/reactive), the innovative professional preparation of the teaching staff, including digital, innovation and learning organisation competencies, as well as the strength of external/internal relations, form the

force field within which it can be well appreciated that organisations are able to create quick, adequate and long term changes in crises. The following matrix presents this innovation force field, indicating the place of the innovations we have learned about and highlighted in the system.

Table 2: Identified innovations according to the characteristics of the institutions that created them

Organizational characteristics			School management			
			Radical change experience		No radical change experience	
			Proactive leadership	Reactive leadership	Proactive leadership	Reactive leadership
Teaching staff	Innovative professional knowledge	Strong external/internal relationships	Innovation I Virtual school	Innovation V Digital gamification	Innovation III Method of slowed observation	Innovation VIII Remote learning simulation
		Weak external/internal relationships	Innovation VI Digi CIP	Innovation II Digital Working Group		
	Traditional, mainstream professional knowledge	Strong external/internal relationships	Innovation VII Parents' school			
		Weak external/internal relationships		Innovation IV Mentor system		

Virtual school – case presentation

In the following, we present the remote operation of an ideal institution from the point of view of an innovation powerhouse, in which the organisation (1) has a radical change experience, (2) is characterised by proactive leadership, (3) is innovative and (4) has a teaching staff with strong internal networking capacities. This is an inclusive, student-centered school in Budapest with a fundamentally socio-constructivist approach to learning, a

democratic operation maintained by a foundation, and provides education at ISCED levels 5-12.

The school operates as a learning organisation with high absorption and dynamic capabilities, with a school leadership that encourages knowledge creativity and knowledge-sharing activities, applies effective management, and has an intense atmosphere of trust between teachers and students. The teachers share their knowledge with joy and openness. The institution's basic approach is that it is okay to make mistakes and that it is important to support each other with constructive criticism. Part of the basic operation of the school is that the teacher is an independent, self-determining individual who is responsible for their actions and work and is given freedom in terms of the chosen methods and tools and in the selection of further training. Much emphasis is placed on the order of the procedures, despite the fact that, or precisely because, the institutional structure is characterised by a flat structure. Problem-solving is characterised by a bureaucratic approach, which helps in bringing problems to the surface and thinking about them together.

With the announcement of remote education, teachers were faced with a new challenge, which was extremely motivating for many, as they had to look for solutions different from the usual ones, and learn new things. In this stage of the process, there was extremely active cross-institutional knowledge sharing, with real learning processes. Several people reported – especially when thinking back to the spring of 2020 – the excitement of experimenting and learning new things:

> "Spring was characterised by brainstorming and euphoria...we, the children, were very excited" (Teacher)

The operation of the school during remote education can be described as a dynamically changing, adaptive, resilient organisational operation (Figure 1).

The first step of the crisis response at the institutional level was the leadership's decision, that the institution should be closed prior to the government's decision. This decision was preceded by a longer discussion and was accompanied by communication to all parties concerned. The closing marked a new beginning, which is clearly shown by the fact that the period that followed was also given a project name: it was announced as the Home Study Program.
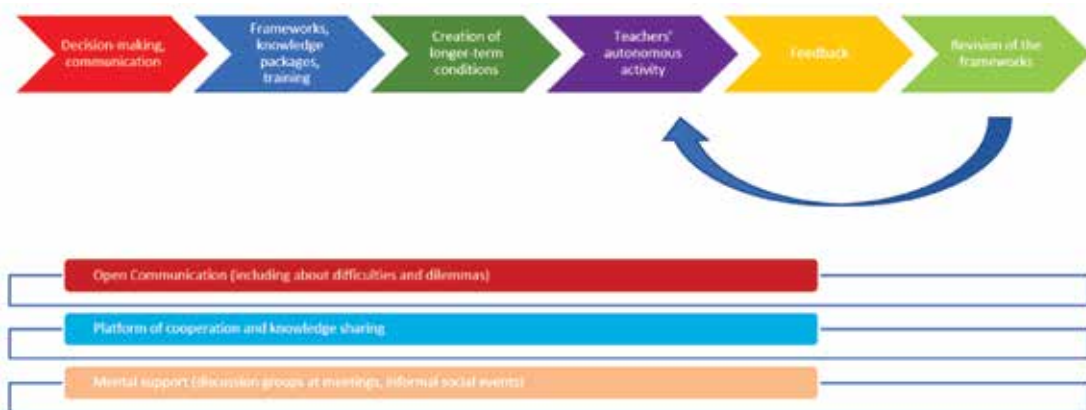
Figure 1: The functioning of the high school during remote education – example of resilient organisational functioning –

During the first weekend, a smaller group of teachers experienced in digital solutions systematised their knowledge, which they shared with the whole teaching staff as part of internal training. The knowledge was thus provided from an internal source, exploiting the organisation's resources, and making use of the knowledge and abilities of the organisation's members. The related training was implemented in a hybrid way on the first day of remote education, for which the management ordered a working day without teaching. On the preparation day, the teachers were given a "starter package" and defined the leading frameworks which they envisioned for the period ahead of them. According to the teachers interviewed, there was a real sharing of knowledge, they managed to calm down and see more clearly, which helped them to settle down. After that, internal knowledge sharing took place within an organised framework at meetings, in online community groups, in the form of joint professional discussions, sharing of best practices, and discussing cases.

The leadership of the institution also considered it important to create the infrastructure conditions to make it possible to use the institution's tools – both on the part of the teachers and the students. For this, they also acquired new tools, as well as specific platforms (e.g. Zoom, Discord) and additional task creation programs (which the teachers required for work) and subscribed for unlimited access. After creating these frameworks, the teachers worked independently and prepared their lessons (similarly to before remote education), so space was given for the autonomy of the teachers.

Students were also particularly active innovators in the crisis. The students provided a helping hand to their teachers in many areas: they helped their teachers with personal advice and educational materials, and they also created the online version of the institution on the Discord interface (in the list above, the operation of this interface appears as the most forward-looking innovation). This support gave extraordinary "strength" to the teachers. It is worth noting here that the institution has a long tradition of mutual learning, even in traditional circumstances, and the involvement of students in educational processes, a practice which provided the main basis for the students' involvement in the crisis resolution.

Mental support for teachers helped the adaptation process. At the working group meeting, special attention and time were devoted to one another's well-being; several people mentioned during the interviews the sustaining and empowering function of the initial "how are you?" circle. In addition, informal leisure meetings were also organised to support the connection and cooperation of the teachers, for mental strengthening and stress relief (e.g. online beer drinking, joint celebrations and mindfulness meditation training). Several interviewees emphasised – as we also experienced – that the leadership communicates openly about their dilemmas, difficulties, and possible mistakes. This creates a safe environment for teachers to experiment and make mistakes.

The conscious management of the process made it possible to create a safe, relatively predictable environment even in this uncertain situation. In order to summarise the experiences of the first quarter, the school collected questionnaire data from the various stakeholders (parents, students and teachers), and the educational framework was modified based on the results. Thus, for example, the number of platforms used was reduced and unified, class attendance was made mandatory, and teachers were provided with targeted professional support. As the remote education period progressed, the need to create rules decreased and the possibilities for developing routines and individual solutions became stronger. However, some dilemmas remained for the high school even during remote education, such as, for example, the question of camera use, the proportion of real-time classes versus the amount of remote learning assignments. These questions often also required the consideration of not strictly pedagogical issues (personality rights, financial opportunities).

The case clearly illustrated how the innovative professional knowledge of the teachers, including primarily proficiency in the application of digital

technologies, the experiences gained in innovative pedagogical procedures, as well as the knowledge of innovation and risk management in general, can support resilient organisational functioning and quick and effective crisis responses.

Summary

In this study, we have presented two studies exploring educational changes that have been going on for nearly ten years, and whose content and on whose methodological approaches we rely heavily in our exploration of workplace learning. In the study, we focused firmly on the research method and tool solutions that occurred in the wake of the crisis, as well as the crisis response aspects of the results. This unexpected change in the context provided a unique opportunity to analyse the organisational and educational learning processes of the institutions participating in the research. The new situation raised new research questions, and moreover, it made it necessary for research work based on a standard design for a long time to find new ways of collecting and analysing data at short notice. Accordingly, in the final (emergency) phase of the research, we extended our theoretical models to include crisis innovations (in addition to local innovations and development adaptations), conducted online case studies focusing on COVID-19 responses among the schools participating in the research, and added to the questionnaire data collection of companion research with some focused questions. The new research methods and tools are expected to be helpful in non-emergency research designs, including workplace learning research. Among the organisations we examined, remarkable crisis responses were observed in those that had more serious development knowledge, i.e. they had previous experience in managing more radical organisational or pedagogical changes and/or were able to utilise proactive crisis management tools that, firstly extended to finding crisis responses, acquiring the necessary competencies, and time frames for the organisation that could be used for communication with partners. In addition, the preventive level of digital and innovation competencies and the use of innovative learning organisation procedures proved particularly important. In accordance with our case studies, it was also possible to set up a hierarchical order between these factors, according to which digital competencies prove to be particularly important, and the most major crisis responses were usually connected to institutions that previously had outstanding practice in the development of digital and mathematical competencies.

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The Training School Project as an Example of a Model for Training Current and Future Teachers in Poland

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Abstract

The idea of the Training School project has evolved and has been researched from the ministerial to the local level and is reflected in the functioning of the Polish education system. Teacher training (professionalisation) in the form of continuous learning and the constant search for the best ways to fulfil a professional role is the key to self-development and self-satisfaction for teachers, and the high level functioning of schools.

The school leader plays an important role in the process, as a goal setter, change leader and designer. The school leader's role is to start and constantly diagnose and work on the needs and consistency of action of the school society in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, local Education Department, local Board of Education, local businesses and associations. Of course universities play an important role in helping to set and achieve goals. The Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań (AMU), apart from educating teachers, also educates management staff: headteachers of schools and educational institutions in master's studies and postgraduate studies, and then supports them by organising training schools and regular meetings within the headteacher's academy. Besides, AMU offer individualised support if needed.

Key words: *Training School project | teacher training | practical learning | innovation*

Projekt šole za usposabljanje kot primer modela za usposabljanje (bodočih) učiteljev na Poljskem

Dr. Izabela Cytlak in **dr. Joanna Jarmużek**, Univerza Adama Mickiewicza v Poznanju, Poljska

Povzetek

Zamisel o projektu šole za usposabljanje se je razvijala in je bila raziskana od ministrske do lokalne ravni ter se odraža v delovanju poljskega izobraževalnega sistema. Usposabljanje učiteljev (profesionalizacija) v obliki stalnega učenja in nenehnega iskanja najboljših načinov izpolnjevanja poklicne vloge je ključ do samorazvoja in zadovoljstva učiteljev ter do delovanja šol na visoki ravni.

Vodja šole v tem procesu igra pomembno vlogo, saj zastavlja cilje, vodi spremembe in jih oblikuje. Poleg tega v sodelovanju z ministrstvom za izobraževanje, lokalnim oddelkom za izobraževanje, lokalnim svetom za izobraževanje, lokalnimi podjetji in združenji spremlja potrebe šolske skupnosti ter uvaja ustrezne ukrepe, univerze pa pomagajo pri določanju in doseganju ciljev. Univerza Adama Mickiewicza v Poznanju poleg učiteljev izobražuje tudi vodstvene delavce: ravnatelje šol in izobraževalnih ustanov na magistrskem in podiplomskem študiju, nato pa jih podpira z organiziranjem šol za usposabljanje in rednih srečanj v okviru akademije za ravnatelje, po potrebi pa nudi tudi individualno podporo.

Ključne besede: projekt šol za usposabljanje | usposabljanje učiteljev | praktično učenje | inovacije

Training School concept outline

The guiding idea of the Training School, which is the basis for creating its model, is the continuous learning and constant improvement of teachers (professionalisation), which is key to the development of a school and its success. Due to the essence and the very concept of the model, which is a defined pattern of activities, it should be perceived simultaneously in a functional dimension. The functional approach to the Training School model indicates such features as: readability, usefulness, flexibility, adequacy and innovativeness of intervention in the practice of educating and improving teachers and students, aimed at increasing their quality and effectiveness. From the functional point of view, the model is a concept of systemic action, serving the purpose of achieving the assumed goals in terms of innovation and effectiveness by performing specific tasks with the use of resources that remain or will remain at the disposal of entities implementing the model (change). Therefore, the Training School model is based on a classic, hierarchical internal structure, in which operational goals are subordinated to strategic goals, which are elements or stages on the way to their achievement.

A Training School was defined as a school where future teachers will experience practical verification of the theory learned during their studies, and where already working teachers will improve their work skills. It is in such an institution that a student, under the guidance of a Training School teacher, will face educational practice in the areas of education and upbringing (Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T., 1991). In addition to the statutory duty to educate and raise children and young people using the most effective methods of work for the development of the student, a school that serves as a Training School co-organises practical preparation for the teaching profession. It is in this school that teachers are improved, and, through participatory observation, become acquainted with effective and innovative methods of didactic and educational work. Finally, new pedagogical directions and trends or methods of working with students can be tested at training schools.

Thus, an extremely important role in it is played by the teacher - who should be open to taking on challenges, at the same time having well-established practices. The teacher is accompanied by the staff of institutions that support the work of the school, along with the expert representation of the staff of pedagogical universities. All activities are jointly planned, prepared and,

consequently, used in improving the competence of other teachers, employees of the improvement system and universities. For leading authorities and educational supervisors, these are centres for innovative activities that can be used in activities related to supporting the work of schools and in inspiring innovative activities to develop students' key competencies (Supporting the creation of a Training School. The Training School model, Centre for Education Development). As part of its activities, the Training School:

- uses a subjective model of building teacher-student-parent relations;

- is distinguished by the effective introduction of innovative activities aimed at developing students' key competencies necessary for the labour market;

- develops, disseminates and promotes examples of good practice in terms of educational, didactic and organisational solutions;

- implements various pedagogical concepts and theories, and conducts activities in the field of their practical application in direct work with students;

- cooperates with supporting institutions, i.e. psychological and pedagogical counselling centres (PPP), teacher training centres (PDN), pedagogical libraries (TAs), implementing the process of support - from diagnosis of needs to evaluation of effects - which serves the development of the school as a learning organisation;

- works in partnership with teacher training universities, carrying out joint activities to break down the theory-practice divide, professionally prepare students for the profession and continuously modernise the educational process and teachers' workbench, and implement the support system, new theories, trends and pedagogical directions;

- is supported and involved in the development of local education (Supporting the establishment of a Training School: The Training School model).

The Training School model can therefore play an extremely useful role in the improvement process and teacher education by promoting the best ways of constructing the learning environment. Its role, however, is not only limited to the best teaching and upbringing of students by reaching for optimal forms and methods but is expressed in active participation in the process of educating candidates for teachers and active teachers professionally. This aspect of its functioning is of exceptional value for optimising the teacher education system in Poland and for crystallising its professional identity.

Assumptions about the function of the Training School in the education system

The Training School, as part of the teacher training system, cooperates with pedagogical libraries, teacher training centres and psychological and pedagogical counselling centres in diagnosing strengths, planning activities, implementing planned activities, evaluating them and determining the next stages of school development. It also points out proven organisational, didactic and educational solutions. The Training School is also a place for the dissemination of innovative activities to support the development of students' key competencies, with particular emphasis on the teaching of foreign languages, mathematics, natural sciences, information and communication technology (ICT), sharing knowledge and skills, cooperating with other schools, and supporting institutions: psychological and pedagogical clinics, pedagogical libraries, teacher training institutions and universities. Importantly, the Training School is a place to promote headteachers and teachers (a form of promotion) who apply interesting didactic, organisational, educational solutions in the field of activities that support the development of key competencies of students, with particular emphasis on the teaching of foreign languages, mathematics, natural sciences and ICT. The Training School is a partner of the school superintendent as a pedagogical supervisory body, as well as the body that runs the school. It is also worth mentioning that the Training School is an institution implementing the local educational strategy, related to building the profile of a graduate with a high level of competence, effectively prepared to function in the local labour market, in cooperation with local government units (Bednar A.K., Cunningham D., Duffy T.M., Perry J.D., 1991).
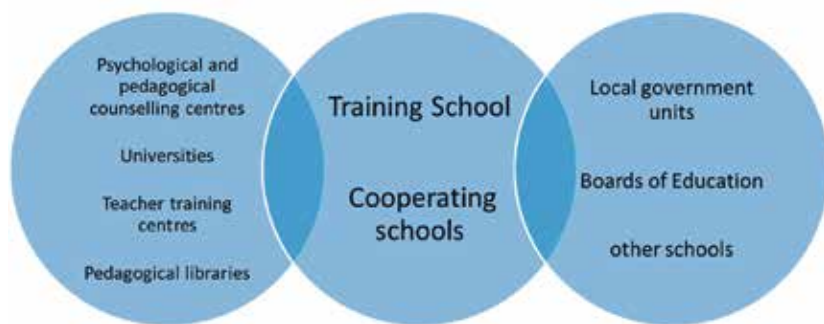
Figure 1.: Training School model by I. Cytlak.

The foundation of the Training School is "the joy of exploring and shaping one's environment, openness to all that is new, and affirmation of life. There is space for authentic, personal, intellectual development. The process of acquiring knowledge is based on experience, one's own experiences, interpretations and authentic interactions with others" (*Kompas budzącej się szkoły*).

However, it is not only assumptions about school operation that become the basis for the establishment of the Training School. Other prerequisites are also necessary that both serve the development of the school itself and enable interaction with other entities that make up the Training School. We refer to these as strategies for organising and operating the Training School, and they include:

1. **Cooperation:** "Developing tolerance, social skills, democratic attitudes and creating numerous educational opportunities for students to learn through their own activity" (Filipiak, Szymczak, 2014); at **child level:** developing key competencies, group work, conversations; at **school level:** joint planning, sharing experiences.

2. **Empowerment:** "As a multidimensional category, subjectivity paves the way for the modern model of human adaptation in the world. The task of the school is to help the child in the formation of subjectivity, especially its two aspects: causality and self-esteem" (Kreatorzy świata, Szkoła Cogito, Poznań); at **child level:** forming self-awareness and self-confidence in students, creating conditions for the development of individual character traits, adapting tasks and activities to the needs, abilities and interests of students; at **school level:** preservation of its own identity, the goals and role of the institution, autonomy of decision-making, verification of decisions, planning of its development, and accepting responsibility for achieving goals.

3. **Creating a climate conducive to learning:** "Geoff Petty emphasises the importance of relationships and equal opportunities for all students. He talks about the need for all students to feel that they are accepted and valued, that the effort they put into learning is noticed, and that they are evaluated fairly" (Borek, Kowalczyk-Rumak, 2015); at **child level:** activities to create an atmosphere conducive to learning for both students and teachers. The role of relationships and equal opportunities for all students is important. All students need to feel that they are accepted and valued, that the effort they put into learning is noticed, and that they are evaluated fairly; at **school level:** mutual inspiration and design of activities, constant diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the work in the Training School, and the promotion of its achievements.

4. **Innovative solutions:** "What is important is not only what we learn, but also how we learn…It is necessary to successively move away from the linear reproduction of the knowledge given, to stimulate students to be architects and co-creators of their own wisdom and competence" (Dylak, 2003).

5. **Use of modern technologies to support the learning process:** "Students at school should learn to use technology (not as a collection of tools), because it is a fundamental skill - the key to achieving success. In a difficult, changing, uncertain and complex world, human proven skills are no longer enough, so technology becomes an extension of our brains - it provides us with new and improved functions which we need; it is not an add-on to our mental activity, but is now part of it" (Prensky, 2010). Thus, one of the important elements of the Training School is to equip itself with new technologies, adapt technical facilities and train teachers in this area.

6. **Monitoring of activities and evaluation of work in the Training School:** Mizerek points out that conducting any type of evaluation requires adopting a research attitude, which in the case of self-evaluation means the teacher's examination of his or her own practice, "it is the attitude of the teacher acting as a researcher of his or her own practice" (Mizerek, 2010). This implies the regular monitoring, diagnosis of school activities, self-evaluation of teachers, active participation of headteachers, teachers, cooperating schools and universities in the evaluation process.

7. **School leader:** a school is an organisation where both students and teachers should learn. However, in order for the learning process to take place, the conditions for it must be provided. The conditions are not only the building itself, classrooms and their equipment - they are also the climate (and therefore the relations between members of the school community) and the organisation of teachers and students' learning. The school leader has a key role here - it is up to his leadership skills to ensure that the teachers work together as a team and learn from each other. Providing the right conditions also means building positive, beneficial relationships with the environment and parents, as well as the other factors mentioned in the requirements discussed above. Proper implementation of these requirements is a prerequisite for creating the right conditions for the teaching and learning process. The school leader's job is to attract allies and experts and create networks to support the school's efforts to improve student learning and the organisation as a whole (Borek., Kowalczyk-Rumak, 2015).

8. **Key competences:** key competences in lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the situation. They are essential for self-realisation and personal development, social integration, being an active citizen, and employment. Key competences can determine the scope of activities of Training Schools, so we can have Training Schools in the system that specialise in developing mathematical, linguistic or IT competences for example. However, it is important to remember that all key competences are interdependent, and in each case there is an emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision-making and constructive management of emotions.
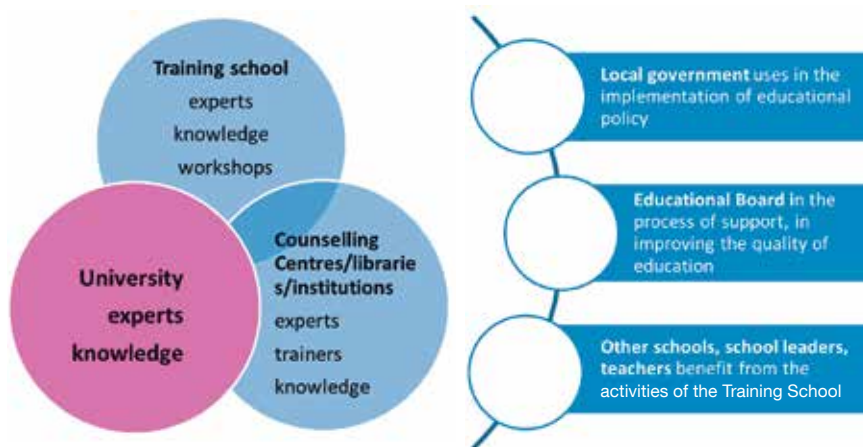
Figure 2.: Training School resources, I. Cytlak.

Forms and methods of work of the Training School

Networking and self-learning involves an inter-school team of teachers or headteachers working together on a selected issue. The purpose of the functioning of the network is to jointly solve problems, share ideas, insights and proposals - both through an on-line platform treated as a forum for the exchange of experiences, as well as face-to-face meetings. Members of the network benefit from their own experience but can also draw on the help of external experts. They work under the guidance of the coordinator of the cooperation and self-study network (Filipiak, Szymczak, 2014). Examples of methods and forms used: open classes for teachers led by a teacher at the training school, workshops for teachers, peer observation, action learning

or team coaching in practice, open space, or the open space method, supervision, forum for the exchange of experiences and good practices, team development of solutions, organisation of open lessons.

Individual teacher support opportunities offered by Training School teachers are very important A proven form of support is individual consultations, where a teacher has the opportunity to share his or her problem and receive advice from an experienced practitioner. Long-term support is much more valuable, such as coaching, tutoring or mentoring. A Training School teacher can be a mentor for students just taking their first steps in school, but also for other teachers (not just beginners). Even those who have already gained a fair amount of knowledge still need support in developing their competencies, realising their potential and determining directions for further development. An interesting form of work could be to solve case studies together with students on any school problem situation.

The perspective of preparation for the teaching profession as an extremely important element of cooperation between schools and teacher training universities. The main goal is to bring academia closer to the school; surrounding gifted students and teachers who implement pedagogical innovations or original curricula with support and care.

The following methods and forms can be introduced within the framework of cooperation between Training Schools and Universities: problem lectures for teachers of the Training School, conferences with the participation of academic teachers, teachers from the Training School and cooperating schools, employees of supporting institutions, students of teaching specialisation, study visits of academic teachers and students of teaching specialisation to supporting institutions, e.g. pedagogical library, teacher training institutions, educational projects for gifted students of teaching specialisation (e.g., members of learning circles, members of study circles), educational projects for particularly gifted students from practical schools, patronage/academic classes, conducted by academics and students of teaching specialisation, experimental research projects with the participation of academics and teachers from Training Schools, courses for teachers of Training Schools, e.g. in the field of tutoring, coaching, formative assessment, creation of educational e-tools, creative thinking, interpersonal communication, motivating students to learn, seminars conducted by an academic teacher with the participation of a teacher from the Training School (Grzymkowska, 2012).

Cooporation of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan with a Training School

In the Faculty of Educational Studies at AMU, as part of the master's degree and Postgraduate Programs, we offer studies in Educational Management. This study programme is dedicated to graduates wishing to take up future work as managers in education, but also in other public institutions. The programme confers qualifications to work as a school leader. Very importantly, after graduation, we provide our graduates with expert support (supervision). In addition, for those interested, as part of the studies we offer a programme of managerial internships in different types of schools and educational institutions.

The study program includes, but is not limited to, the following topics:
- Education financing
- Professional development of the headteacher and teachers
- Marketing of educational services
- Methodology of building educational strategies
- Educational and administrative law
- Pedagogical supervision
- Educational policy of local governments
- Work planning in an educational institution
- Quality management of an educational institution
- Organisational structure of educational institutions
- Conflict management in educational institutions
- Management of educational institutions - good practices
- Leadership and human resource management in education
- Psychology in the management of educational institutions.

As part of the specialisation of Educational Management, students participate in the following projects conducted by the Department of Educational Policy and Civic Education at UAM: Wągrowiec Training School, supporting staff of local government units in education management, PUK PUK programme in the field of promotion of equal educational opportunities, Mental Health Prevention Program for children and adolescents in educa-

tional institutions (international project in cooperation with Prof. Louise Hayes, Australia), School Leaders Academy AMU.

The following are the tasks for students of Educational Management (under supervision of the school leader, school teachers, academic tutor): diagnosis and evaluation of teaching and support process, dossier preparation, participation in discussions with parents and students about their difficulties and proposing ways to solve the problems, preparation and delivery of lessons under the supervision of the school leader / teachers, familiarisation with the school's documentation, cooperation in school activities with the local government, assistance in conducting and analysing scientific research, assistance in the organisation of scientific conferences, participation in support networks and training for teachers.

As R. Michalak (Michalak, 2022) notes, since growing up to be a teacher requires practical learning of the profession, properly prepared practical training is an integral and very important part of the teacher education system. The concept of educating future teachers involves organising a permanent dialogue between trainees and other participants in the process of professional education (teachers, lecturers, methodologists, parents of students, school pedagogue etc.). In terms of educating future teachers, student participation in all project activities of the Training School should be as dynamic and active as possible. Both students and their supervisors should to

Table 1.: Michalak R., *The Training School as a Community of Mutual Learning Between Teachers and Students. A Research Perspective, Prima Educatione, 2021. Points range: high: 14–32, medium: 33–51, low: 52–70.*

Detailed variables	Points
Organisation of workshops	26
Organisation of demonstration lessons	24
Improvement of personal competence in the field of organisation of the educational process	18
The content of workshops and demonstration lessons	22
Competences of teachers conducting classes	24
Quality of the materials obtained	14
Meeting personal expectations	30
Increase in understanding of the content of academic education	38
Increase in self-awareness of the resources necessary to fulfill the role of a professional teacher	32
Increased motivation to improve teaching competences	22
Total	250

a greater extent be creators and not just recipients of the offerings provided in the Training School model (Michalak, 2022).

In view of the fact that in the Training School model, the participation of universities in both the training of students and the improvement of headteachers and practicing teachers should be strengthened; and the fact that the model itself needs to be more popularised among those academics who are involved in the professional professionalisation of teachers at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; the School Leader Academy initiative was created. University staff are more intensively involved in creating and conducting various forms of training and preparing methodological materials. In practice, this involves the creation of an integral model of cooperation between institutions with responsibility and potential for teacher education. Our aim is to develop, prepare and conduct of a series of meetings (lectures, trainings, workshops, conferences) in the field of leadership, theory and practice of modern management, educational law, pedagogical supervision procedures, interpersonal communication, information technology and support in crisis management. The tutors engaged are education practitioners, university lecturers, directors of schools and educational institutions, employees of the Department of Education, the Board of Education, and psychotherapists. The institutions cooperating with the project are: the Faculty of Educational Studies of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the Board of Education in Poznań, the Department of Education of the City of Poznań, local governments, partner schools and institutions/educational institutions, Poznań Science and Technology Park of the UAM Foundation, the Chamber of Committed Business. The Program Objectives are strengthening the competencies of education managers, supporting headteachers in crisis management, professionalisation of the management staff in the field of knowledge of the theory and practice of educational law, strengthening the competence of managers in the use of modern information technology, development of managerial proficiency in interpersonal communication, strengthening the leadership competence of headteachers, support for graduates of the second degree (Master's) and postgraduate studies of Educational Management in the new role of headteacher – leader.

Implications for schools, headteachers and teachers

The strategic goal of the Training School model is to optimise the system of student education and teacher training by developing and promoting innovative and effective activities, solutions, strategies for constructing a rich and diverse educational environment and development based on a culture of mutual learning. Creating a mutual learning community of students, students and teachers with diverse competences and experiences is the greatest asset of the Training School model and determines its identity and innovation. In the Training School model, the role of the school leader should be emphasised and described in terms of multifaceted leadership. The role of the school leader is expressed above all, in the skilful management of the community learning processes involved in the implementation of the model. The model of a learning organisation imposes a lot of tasks and responsibilities on the school leader. In its creation key components should be noticed, such as:

- a common and coherent vision that sets the organisation's strategic goals and ways achieving them, as well as noticing positive changes;

- a stimulating structure that facilitates mutual, interactive learning of partners and those involved;

- supportive culture motivating people to modify reality in context, diagnose possibilities and needs, question obvious truths and principles, and plan innovative, individualised change procedures;

- a management team which shares powers, which is expressed in delegation of powers to make decisions and building trust in shared effort, leads to better quality and upward development;

- motivated staff that strive for continuous development and self-improvement;

- inciting, facilitating learning through the encouragement and motivation for continuous learning, enriching personal competences (Michalak, 2022).

The above-mentioned components determine the scope and content of the tasks to be performed by the leader of an organisation among mutual learning entities. Modern management of a learning organisation in a culture of reciprocity requires team problem solving through negotiation and focus

on its conditions. Identification is extremely important in determining and reasoning for its successful solution. These problems should be relevant and concern the functioning of a given community. A school team can be treated as: a learning organism with a life of its own, where there is room for collective analysis of experiences and to learn from them. So it's about an organisation in which the learner creates a natural environment in which everyone undertakes teamwork effort to enrich and improve their professional competences, according to individual needs and possibilities. In a learning organisation there is a place for everyone and the opportunity to invest in oneself and one's own development.

A very important condition for effective teacher learning is the opportunity for experience reinforcement and support, mainly from the school leader and representative institutions involved in the process of implementing the Training School model. Their role results from the specificity of a given institution and the essence of tasks defined in the model. However, it is extremely important to provide teachers with multi-faceted support, both psychological and material. Teacher psychological support is particularly invaluable. It allows them to build a sense of agency and competence, mainly through obtaining systematic and current feedback. This creates opportunities to discover their strengths, strengthening their faith in the resources at hand, and at the same time inspiring them to improve. What's more, it allows them to identify needs and not fully perfected areas of their functioning and obtaining adequate support from professionals. This support should also be of a procedural nature, well-thought-out, holistic and interactive, based on task engagement and personal to each party. At the same time, it should motivate the setting and achievement of substantive and targeted goals in the short and long term, at the same time providing help and encouragement to put effort in and not give up despite difficulties experienced over time. Below is a prediction of problems and challenges that may stand in the way of development yet are crucial for building a sense of agency and psychological safety. Cooperation of all entities understood as involved in the implementation of the Training School model, based on mutual support, transforms a closed, hermetic and isolated culture into an open and networked culture, in which each element has an autotelic value (Michalak, 2021).

A learning organisation with a life of its own, where there is space for collective analysis of experiences, can learn from them. So it's about an organisation in which the learner creates a natural environment in which every-

one undertakes a teamwork effort to enrich and improve their professional competences, according to individual needs and possibilities. In a learning organisation there is a place for everyone and the opportunity to invest in oneself and one's own development. In the Training School model, it is worth placing much emphasis on improvement of educational competences. This aspect of the school's work requires a great deal of support, but also a different approach – focused on the individual student and the conditions of his development, without losing sight of the team - especially in the present era of extremely complex and unpredictable changes. This reality creates many problems and difficult situations, which students experience in everyday life and which they often feel they can't handle.

In some cases, teachers do not cope well enough with educational work both with a group and with an individual student. Sometimes they can't provide students with adequate and useful support and material help. Also, the sphere of cooperation with parents, which is an integral element of educational work, should gain a more important place in the concept of the model. Professionalisation of teachers must therefore cover all spheres of their functioning, so that, as a result, they feel aware and competent in reflective practices that are able to manage not only the process of educating students, but also their holistic development.

Moreover, in the Training School model, the participation of both universities and schools should be strengthened in the education of students and in the training of practising teachers. The model itself requires greater popularisation among those academics who deal with the professionalisation of teachers. The participation of students in all project activities should be more dynamic and active. Both students and academic teachers to a greater extent should be the creators, and not only the recipients of the offerings provided for in the Training School model. Academic teachers could become more involved in creating and running various forms of training and preparation of methodological materials. In practice this would consist of creating an integral model of cooperation between the responsible institutions, and has potential for teacher education (Michalak, 2022).

Since growing up to be a teacher requires hands-on learning about the profession, thus appropriately prepared practical education constitutes an integral and very important element of the teacher education system. The concept of the training of future teachers is about organising a permanent dialogue between trainees with other participan ts in the vocational education process (teachers, lecturers, methodologists, parents of students, school

pedagogue etc.). This dialogue is aimed at diagnosing the degree of development of their teaching competences, as well as the multidimensionality of school life, which becomes a source of reconstruction of their knowledge and skills. The dialogue should take place in different ways and situations of practice, both at school with the student's tutor, and with lecturers from the university and other trainees. Learning by doing and the theory integrated with it allows for the disclosure and active redefinition of the personal knowledge and resulting attitudes and skills, and it also creates a context to present the student with various formal theories.

Conclusion

A model for educating candidates as teachers requires, apart from academic education, their active participation and learning in practice (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, Perry 1991). The Training School becomes a space for gaining new and authentic experiences and for confronting academic theoretical knowledge, personal ideas, experiences, and resources. In addition, it creates various opportunities for the construction of the image of the educational reality, the role of the teacher and the student.

Through the peer-learning strategy, they explore, experience, search, discover, verify, negotiate, and, thus, have many opportunities to reconstruct their philosophy of education. Both teaching candidates, and in-service teachers who practise education based on intuition, common theories and passive copying of someone else's solutions, have the chance to become reflective, autonomous, self-aware participants in the education process, making paradigmatic choices and focusing on continuous improvement.

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