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Development of Institutional Leadership in the Hungarian Education System

Introduction

The understanding and research of the phenomenon of leadership in human systems gained its place in the system of sciences about a century ago as an independent branch of social science. Beforehand, it was mainly birth privileges and property relations that determined who became a leader. For centuries, the collection and transmission of leadership experience and training were carried out in a narrow circle, only about specific, privileged individuals and social groups. The industrial revolution brought about a decisive change in this situation, as the development of the economy and technology transformed organizations and made their processes more complex. This also necessitated a review of managerial preparedness, which led, among other things, to the conclusion that an adequate theoretical basis was essential for leadership (Czuprák-Kovács, 2017; Dobák, 2006; Bakacsi, 1999; Taylor, 1911). In Hungary, research on leadership started in the middle of the last century. In the 1950s, management and organization studies were taught at the Technical University of Budapest, the University of Economics and then in Miskolc, and scientific associations were established (Management Science Committee, Organisation Science Committee). From the 1970s, management conferences were organized regularly, and in 1980 the Hungarian Academy of Sciences established the Management and Organisation Committee. The names of István Harsányi, János Susánszky, László Ladó, János Czabán and László Szabó are certainly noteworthy among the thinkers of the period who were concerned with management science (Farkas, 1997). The need to train managers also emerged at about the same time, first in the business sector and then in the public sector (Vereckei, 2022; Halász, 1996). Different forms of training are developed in different fields of the public sector; for public employees, the general picture is that the skills needed for management can be acquired not only as part of basic training but also in further training and higher education. These training prepare professionals to meet leadership responsibilities and, in most cases, are a precondition of being appointed to a management post. This form of higher education training is built directly on management practice developed in leadership training in 1993. Close connection to the leader activities also appeared in the fact that leaders' further training became a system element in public education institutions. After a decade, from 2002 on, completing a specialized training course in public education management became an advantage for candidates applying for institutional leader positions and became a prerequisite for reappointment in 2005 and already for a first appointment in 2013 (Vereckei, 2022). The present descriptive paper reviews this process, describing the evolution of the current leadership training system over the past three decades. It then goes on to describe the content and organizational characteristics of the training courses offering the qualification of the leader of an institution, showing how preparation and leadership are interrelated. In the final part of the study, the need for training elements following managers' preparation and current development trends are discussed.

Evolution of the current system of leader training in education

The beginnings of the development of leadership training in the Hungarian education system can be traced back to the second half of the 1970s, and the reasons for its organization were related to the formation of the independent role of the director (Vereckei, 2021a). During this period, training still happened in the form of courses; then, in 1993, the Budapest University of Technology launched the current version of the training operating with a higher education institutional background, under the name of public education leadership training (Benedek, 2018; Halász, 1994). "No one disputed that leadership is an activity requiring independent skills and competences, but the realization that it should be acquired in higher education training providing professional qualification came from our University

in 1993", writes Márta Bosch, a participant in the launching and later the organization of the training (Bosch, 2014, 33). The fields of study and the requirements for the training of public school leaders, which were later adopted in the legislation on qualification requirements in the MKM Decree 8/1997 (18.II.), were developed in the Department of Technical Pedagogy of the University.

The training has been a specialized in-service training course, a vocational further training course since the beginning. In the international classification system, vocational training is assigned to ISCED 5 and classification levels 6 and 7 in the Hungarian Qualifications Framework (MKKR) as practice-oriented specialized pieces of training that deepen or broaden the professional knowledge certified by the primary degree (Loboda-Szlamka-Tót, 2017). Thus, according to both the previous and current legal provisions, in the framework of further vocational training, a new qualification, building on the existing level of qualification and corresponding to the specialization of the qualification acquired in the basic training, can be obtained; in our case, qualification as an institution leader (Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education, § 15).

1998 was a milestone in the history of public school leader training as it was certified as a teacher specialized qualification and was included in the system of teachers' further training regulated by the Government Decree no. 277/1997 (XII. 22.). This had several advantages: on the one hand, under the government mentioned above decree, the seven-yearly teacher further training obligation can be fulfilled using a specialized examination, and once the teacher has passed it, he/she is also exempt from the obligation to undergo the next seven-year cycle of further training. (The original intention was to require a professional examination for all teaching posts after the tenth year following graduation (Gönczöl, 2011).) On the other hand, until 2011, the professional examination meant financial advantage, as well, as the concerned person was upgraded to one step higher on the civil service pay scale, and the employer could financially support his/her training as part of the system of in-service teacher training, i.e. reimbursement of costs (Vereckei, 2021b; Bosch, 2014). Although it no longer entails a higher salary grade, possessing a specialized teacher qualification is still a requirement for those working in the specialized pedagogical service. For other teaching posts, it is an advantage in terms of progression between the grades of the teacher career model and for reaching levels in a teacher's career, such as being an expert, subject adviser or chair of the examination committee.

Introduction of the trainings offering institution leader qualification

Of the 78 higher education institutions in Hungary, there are 31 offering a teaching qualification, and more than two-thirds (22 institutions) have a licence to launch a university course offering specialized teacher qualification as a leader of an institution. Six of these courses are currently registered with the Education Office.

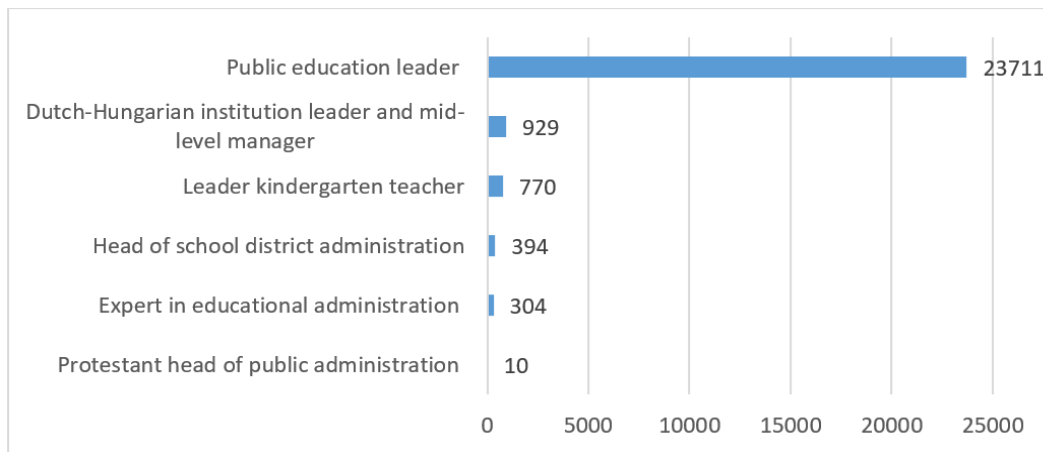
Table 1.: Number of courses preparing for specialization exams giving institutional leader qualification and of institutions certified to launch a university course

| | Name of the specialization | Start of the possibility to be announced | Number of institutions certified to launch a university course | Number of the institutions currently offering the training |
|----|--|---|---|---|
| 1. | Public education leader | 1993 | 18 | 16 |
| 2. | Leader kindergarten teacher | 1993 | 6 | 3 |
| 3. | Expert in educational administration | 1993 | 3 | 1 |
| 4. | Dutch-Hungarian institution leader and mid-level manager | 2009 | 3 | 2 |
| 5. | Head of school district administration | 2013 | 5 | 0 |
| 6. | Protestant head of public administration | 2021 | 1 | 1 |

Source: own edition

Based on the number of the institutions in the table, it can be assumed, and according to the statistics of the Education Office, it can be factually verified that most, precisely 90 per cent of the persons studying in further professional education offer some institutional leader qualification enrol to the public education leader training.

Figure 1.: Number of students between 2013 and 2021

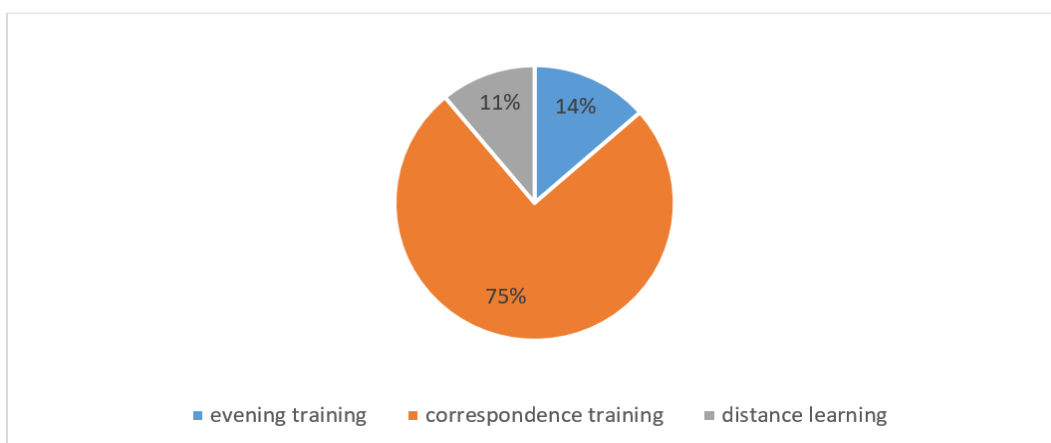


Source: own edition

The higher education institutions concerned generally offer courses at their headquarters, it is only one fifth of the institutions that offer a course in several locations. Among these, the Budapest University of Technology and Economics stands out as it has developed a distance learning model that includes several rural training sites outside the capital (Benedek, 2018), with 20 consultancy centres in operation in 2022.

In terms of the way it is organised, correspondence courses are the dominant form, accounting for three quarters of the courses, with the remaining quarter being almost equally divided between evening and distance learning.

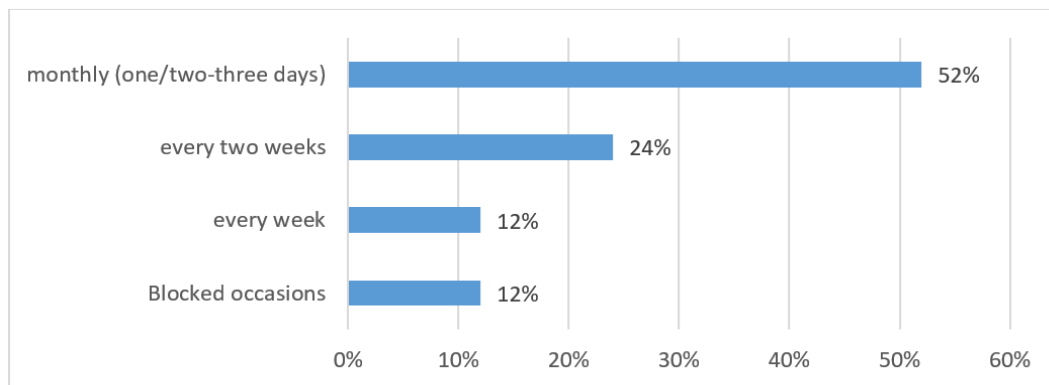
Figure 2.: Distribution of training forms



Source: own edition

In terms of attendance, once-a-month training is the dominant method. Less frequent in the case of block teaching and more frequent when weekly or fortnightly sessions are held.

Figure 3.: Frequency of presence



Source: own edition

All six training types are structured similarly: the 120-credit courses consist of 4 semesters and culminate in a diploma after writing and defending a thesis.

The 120 credits are divided into two large groups according to the implementing decree of the Law on National Higher Education (from now on referred to as The). 55 credits are compulsory courses preparing for the teacher qualification examination, and the other 55 credits are specific courses preparing for a management function, the so-called compulsory electives (The. 21/B. §). The table below lists the subjects prescribed by The, those included in the training and outcome requirements (TOR), and the most frequently encountered knowledge/subjects in the curricula drawn up by the institutions.

Table 2: Knowledge fields and subjects of trainings Source: own edition

| Trainings | Compulsory knowledge field (Idhe/TOR) | Subject taught in the compulsory knowledge fields (curriculum) | Compulsory electives: knowledge field/subject (TOR/curriculum) |
|--|--|--|---|
| Public education leader | Management skills in public administration | Public administration, state administration | Knowledge for leaders of educational institutions School management Leadership theory Elective: Educational Governance, Vocational Education and Training Administration, Quality Management, Assessment and Measurement, Adult Education, Organisational Techniques, Curriculum Fundamentals, Advocacy Training Practice |
| Leader kindergarten teacher | Organisation of the institution | European union The educational system, Levels, responsibilities and authority of education management | |
| Educational administration expert | Environment of the institution | Law in education/education administration | |
| Dutch-Hungarian institution leader and mid-level manager | Efficiency of the institution | Operation and management of the institution Management theory | |
| Head of school-district administration | Teacher in the educational institution | Analysation, development and innovation at the organisational level | |
| | Issues of integration and segregation | Communication Conflict management | Head Kindergarten Teacher/ General foundation subjects: leadership, leadership psychology, educational systems, alternative pedagogy, |
| | Use of specific pedagogical and | Cooperation within and among sectors, partnership relations | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Protestant head of public administration | psychological knowledge and methods | <p>measurement, evaluation and performance assessment</p> <p>Quality, quality assurance</p> <p>Equal chances, integration, segregation compensation of disadvantages, talent development</p> <p>Teacher roles, work activities, teachers' ethics</p> <p>Career and evaluation system</p> <p>Mental hygiene</p> <p>Children with specific education needs</p> <p>Health education and development</p> <p>National and ethnic minorities</p> <p>Life-long learning, adult education</p> | <p>personality development, family pedagogy</p> <p>Professional foundation subjects: application writing, professional management, kindergarten administration and management</p> <p>Practical training and skills development: measurement, evaluation, human resource development, communication, organisational development</p> <p>Expert knowledge in public education/</p> <p>Theoretical and methodological foundations of expertise</p> <p>Methodology of document analysis and expert analysis</p> <p>Curriculum and programme development</p> <p>Knowledge of educational management/</p> <p>Project management, school marketing</p> <p>Adaptive education, organisational development, quality development</p> <p>Pedagogical programme, local curriculum</p> <p>Measurement and evaluation, quality management</p> <p>Personal and social relations</p> <p>Competence development</p> <p>Leadership roles, conflict, self-development</p> <p>Pedagogical leadership, strategy development,</p> |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | | management of human and material resources Administrative management skills in school districts System design and operation Maintainer's tasks Strategic management, project management Teachers' further training Leadership and decision psychology Professional supervision system, teacher career model Practice in public educational leadership Protestant public education leadership skills Legal knowledge (family, data management, employment, child protection) Budget and management of a church-run institution Applying for grants The essence of Christian leadership The raison d'être of Christian education Value-based leadership Leadership ethics in denominational education Balancing religious and financial issues Christian financial management Biblical approach to organisational development Godly excellence |
|--|--|--|---|

It follows from the above and from the legal requirements that the subjects and knowledge taught in the first group are roughly the same in the six courses, with the major differences being in the second credit group, since the subjects taught in this group prepare students for specific tasks that correspond to the name of the course - e.g., for expert tasks or for the management of a church-run institution or a kindergarten. A closer look at this specific credit group reveals common points though: on the one

hand, all courses contain practical and/or training elements, and there are key terms that can be found in the subjects of the chosen field of knowledge in almost all courses:

- leadership, leadership theory, organisational development, communication;
- quality, quality management, marketing;
- professional direction, administration, management (of material and human resources);
- curriculum;
- projects, tenders.

In addition to the 110 credits listed in the tables, each course also includes a 10-credit thesis, for which a preparatory course is also included in the subjects.

Consistency between preparation and leadership

An analytical presentation of the training system for heads of institutions naturally includes an assessment of its adequacy, as it is essential whether it provides prospective heads with the practical knowledge to carry out their tasks. The tasks of leaders of institutions are detailed in paragraph (1) in Article 69 of Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education. The most critical leadership activities to be assessed are listed in the section on leadership supervision in the Handbook on Supervision of Teaching, which is based on the Central5 framework of school leadership competencies developed in the framework of the International Co-operation for School Leadership project supported by the European Commission (Révai-Kirkham, 2013). Comparing the two documents, the following groups of leadership tasks and activities can be identified:

- I. Legal and legitimate management of the institution
 - drawing up and ensuring compliance with the institutional documents governing its operation;
 - taking decisions concerning the operation of the institution and the children and pupils;
 - ensuring the adequacy of the administration of educational management;
 - ensuring sound and cost-effective management of the institution.
- II. Ensuring staff and material conditions
 - ensuring, analyzing and making efficient use of institutional resources;
 - exercising special or other rights of employment;
 - the definition of decision-making powers and competences;
 - enforcing ethical standards for teachers;
 - ensuring material (and financial) conditions;
 - creating healthy and safe conditions for teaching and learning;
 - organizing regular health checks for children and pupils, accident prevention.
- III. Management of professional-pedagogical work/processes
 - preparing and implementing the pedagogical programme and the local curriculum, ensuring consistency with the management programme, the curricula and the in-service training programme;
 - organizing effective pedagogical work for student achievement (incorporation of assessment results, developmental assessment, differentiation, adaptiveness etc...);
 - management, effective information and involvement of the teaching staff in the institutional processes;
 - development of staff and their professional cooperation.
- IV. Quality improvement, organizational development, innovation
 - shaping the vision and strategic objectives of the institution, defining professional and institutional development directions and areas;
 - establishing the system of internal control;
 - setting up a system of self-evaluation;
 - managing institutional changes;

- developing a positive and supportive organizational culture;
- creating an environment open to innovation and learning.
- V. Representation of the institution, tasks related to its environment and partners
 - representing the institution;
 - ensuring the publicity of the institution's activities;
 - maintaining contacts with parents, advocacy groups, the student council, the maintainer of the institution and other partners;
 - liaising with the child protection referral system.

If the list is compared with the fields of knowledge set in the legal regulations for leadership training, it can clearly be matched with at least one or more of the leadership activity groups.

Table 3.: Comparison of the knowledge fields and management activities

| Knowledge field | Management activity group |
|---|---|
| Public administration leadership knowledge | I. Legal and legitimate management of the institution |
| The organisation of the institution | III. Management of professional-pedagogical work/processes IV. Quality improvement, organisational development, innovation |
| Environment of the institution | V. Representation of the institution, tasks related to its environment and partners |
| Effectiveness of the institution | IV. Quality improvement, organisational development, innovation |
| Teacher in the educational institution | II. Ensuring staff and material conditions |
| Issues of integration and segregation | III. Management of professional-pedagogical work/processes |
| Use of specific pedagogical and psychological knowledge and methods | III. Management of professional-pedagogical work/processes IV. Quality improvement, organisational development, innovation |

Source: own edition

The second set of credits focuses on different areas of management activity groups in the different courses. In this respect, the training of experts in educational administration should be treated separately, since the subjects to be covered prepare them more for the tasks of experts and less for those of heads of institutions.

Need for post-training elements, directions for improvement

It has already been mentioned that in Hungary, completion of one of the management training courses described above is a compulsory condition for the appointment of a head of an institution in the public education system, regardless of the type of provider. At the same time, it is not possible to doubt without reference to legal provisions the legitimacy of the preparation of heads of institutions and the validity of the statement that the operation of a public education institution is fundamentally influenced by the activity and professional preparation of the head of the institution (Schratz et al, 2009, 2013; Johnson, 2008, Baráth, 2006; Kristóf, 2003; OECD, 2001; Halász, 1996). McKinsey's findings are also widely known: after examining the most successful national education systems, he included the training and further training of teachers among the factors determining the conditions for effectiveness (McKinsey, 2007).

The importance of training to prepare for the role of head of an institution is also increased by the fact that the selection of heads – with the exception of the conditions of education, professional

qualifications and professional experience – is not regulated by our public education system, there is no mandatory procedure to follow, so it is a matter of individual discretion how the appointing authority assesses the suitability of the candidate. Although the analytical presentation has established a clear correspondence between the managerial tasks to be performed and the knowledge content of the preparatory training, in addition to the identity of the scope of activities, the different perceptions of the managerial role in different models of maintenance (public and non-public) and the methodological approach to the challenges of the digital age must also be taken into account (Benedek, 2020). In addition to further examination of the preparatory training from this perspective, thinking must also shift in the direction of the need for development not only before but also after the start of the managerial work. In the system of in-service teacher training, there is no statutory continuation of training for heads of institutions during their career as a head. However, the handbook on supervision of teaching identifies the development of leadership competencies as a specific area to be monitored, with the following activities: monitoring the implementation of the leadership programme, identifying strengths and areas for improvement and improving leadership effectiveness.

Of the 1530 accredited teacher training programmes currently registered, 14, i.e. less than 1%, are designed to develop leaders, all in the form of courses and predominantly 30-hour courses. There is currently only one teacher qualification training for leadership development, the Master of Leadership training; the Budapest University of Technology and Economics had it authorized in 2014, and other higher education institutions have adopted it since then. This 2-semester course is open to leaders with an institutional leader qualification and at least 5 years of management experience. The training aims to optimize management activities, renew knowledge and deepen and develop management skills and abilities. It is structured in four main blocks: leadership identity, the coach approach to leadership, the life of public education institutions and digital media management (Kalicz, 2018).

To ensure that public education institutions are led by people who are competent, efficient and effective in leading an organization whose fundamental purpose is to educate and train the next generation, it is undoubtedly necessary that the three elements mentioned above – preparation for leadership, development throughout the leadership career and preparation for leadership monitoring (performance measurement) – are linked in a complex leadership development model. Furthermore, the fact that the training of heads of institutions is also a priority under the new public education strategy adopted in 2020 (Public Education Strategy 2020) should also be a hopeful sign for the future of such a model.

Summary

In summary, there are currently six two-year specialized further education courses offered by higher education institutions, which serve the purpose of preparing future leaders of Hungarian public education for leadership tasks. The courses fulfil their role in content and form, provide knowledge that is in line with the activities of principals/heads of institutions, and are designed to meet the training needs of adults and the expectations of the workplace. Our study, which undertakes a professional overview, ends with the conclusion, which is also worthy of consideration by researchers, that there is a need to analyze the system of training of leaders further and to undertake comparative research in a broader, international context: firstly, from the point of view of whether the content on offer can be adapted more emphatically to the different perceptions of the managerial role in different providers, and secondly, from the point of view of whether the training of public education leaders can be made more multilevel. An exciting question is how and to what extent development elements can be integrated into the system (even at the level of legislation, e.g. by requiring the acquisition of a master manager qualification for the third and subsequent managerial mandate) and linked to the preparation for measuring managerial performance. To further explore this issue, our further research will focus on the synchronicity of the content and methodology of training and on the possibilities for ensuring continuity of training throughout the leadership career.

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