

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54937/ssf.2023.22.5.43-51>

## **Edukačný proces v kontexte pandemického dosahu**

### **Educational process in the context of pandemic impact**

Lenka Pasternáková

#### **Abstract**

In today's society, there are many factors that influence our life, upbringing, and education. Today, we are meeting with factors that we did not even know about until now, or we preferred not to know. One of these factors that greatly affected the educational process, its implementation and management was the period of the pandemic. The recent pandemic situation changed the basic direction of the school, which the school management had to manage both in relation to internal management processes and external processes. In this context, we carried out research, the most important findings of which we present in our paper. The goal of the research was to investigate and analyze how the school management dealt with the demands of the school's long-term mission in response to the presence of the Covid19 pandemic situation.

**Keywords:** School. Education. Education process. Isolation. Online education.

#### **Introduction**

When the news came that we have the first case of COVID-19 in Slovakia, we were all dumbfounded that this new disease affects us as well. At that moment, we must have all experienced a feeling of uncertainty and fear. Many of us asked ourselves questions related to their working life, related to the upbringing and education of their children, also to the provision of their family.

Not only our country had to "stop". All of a sudden we had to stay at home to protect ourselves from the spread of the disease. Probably, many pupils were pleased with this situation. The pleasure must have grown when their vacation was extended by another week. Adults perceived this situation differently. In this context, they asked themselves many questions: Where do I leave my children when I am at work? What if I stay home with them? If I don't go to work, will I lose it? How much longer will it take?

#### **The educational process and its management**

The pandemic also affected the education process and its management to a great extent. Even the school could not be stopped. It continued, however, in a different mode than we were used to until now. Pupils and students were educated from their homes. We all eagerly awaited news not only about the pandemic, but news from teachers who were instructing students and their parents on the next steps related to their children's education. Another factor that parents and all of us had to deal with was the deterioration of children's physical activity. Pupils and students sat behind a computer screen all day. The online world was suddenly their essential and only world. Distance learning was a way out in this difficult situation. It was a very difficult time not only for parents and teachers. Currently, when the

impact of the pandemic period is already partly known, we are trying to deal with its consequences also in the field of education and its management.

The mission of the school should determine the basic direction of its long-term development and the specifics by which it will differ from other schools of a similar type. Mission means defining the purpose, meaning and basic functions of the organization. On a general level, today the functions of the school are elaborated both in school laws and in professional literature dealing with this issue (Emmerová, Jablonský, 2020).

At school, or however, it is up to its management to specify and concretize this mission. Only on the basis of awareness of the school's mission do we think about strategic development. At the same time, it is also appropriate to define the profile of the student of the given school and the possibility of its application in practice (Porubčanová, Zapletal, 2020, Gold, 1998).

We can use the following elements in creating the mission of the school:

1. History, traditions of the given school, its development so far, mistakes, strategies, positives, negatives.

2. Identify your obvious abilities. Each school can choose from several curricula, courses or fields of study to make its offer more attractive. It is a question of how well it can ensure their implementation in the educational process (material resources, personnel resources, financial resources). It is therefore more effective to identify its own abilities, which will enable it to ensure educational processes in and outside of classes at least as good or even better than other comparable schools. It is therefore about defining those advantages that will ensure their competitive advantage and prosperity.

3. Environment. It is important to consider the school's environment when characterizing the school's mission, that is, to identify opportunities, limitations and potential threats. For example the arrival of a foreign investor in the region and the strengthening of production in a certain area will require a certain type of specific training of employees, the strengthening of tourism in the locality, the development of services or, on the contrary, a long-term outage, upcoming legislative changes, etc. A number of these external factors also play a role in determining the future development of the school and its focus (Šuťáková, 2017).

The activity of a leading pedagogical employee and the activity of a leading professional employee can be performed by a person who meets:

a) qualification prerequisites for the performance of work activities in the relevant category and subcategory of pedagogical employee or in the relevant category of professional employee;

b) the conditions for inclusion in the career level independent pedagogical employee or independent professional employee;

c) conditions for obtaining the professional competences necessary for the performance of the activities of a leading pedagogical employee or a leading professional employee.

A fundamental change in the position of the teacher is required by the requirements for upbringing and education, which result from the development of society. According to the modern view of experts, the teacher should represent a "guide" to education and be an empathetic partner of the pupils. The teacher was traditionally considered the main subject of education, who passed on knowledge to students in the classroom.

Changing the teacher's role in teaching creates the prerequisites for his new functions (Maňák, 1994):

- a) the teacher as the organizer of the teaching process;
- b) the teacher as the student's partner and advisor;
- c) teacher as programmer;
- d) teacher as technologist of teaching aids;
- e) a teacher as a researcher in the field of didactics, or didactics of the subject.

We consider the management of schools and the school system to be one of the key prerequisites for optimizing a pupil's upbringing and education. For decades, the dogmatic idea was applied in our education and economy that all activities can be planned in detail, precisely defined and unified through regulations, regulations, uniform curricula, everything in schools can be controlled by pressure from the outside, and anti-human bureaucratic school management can be applied. A new trend came after 1989, which tried to eliminate the mentioned shortcomings. It was often based on spontaneity, a simplified assessment, according to which the market mechanism will solve all existing problems even in education, and often overestimated the boundless liberalism, trivialized the target categories that play an important role in education and upbringing and to ensure which it is necessary to orient the management of schools and education and education. The representatives of this trend were convinced that only this approach leads to the authenticity, independence and creativity of students and teachers. Currently, there are legitimate tendencies to call the management activity of the school administration the term "school management", which compared to the term administration, or to the old understanding of management, emphasizes dynamic elements of organization and management instead of static elements, emphasizes elements of self-governance, self-regulation and self-organization instead of external management (Obdržálek, Horváthová, 2004; Barnová, Krásna, 2020).

It puts the democratization process in the foreground. This changes the nature of the school administration from a predominantly operational body to a system characterized by considerable responsibility and independence. The priority focus of school administration does not focus on narrowly understood economic and administrative activities, but mainly on creating a complex balanced relationship between the school and its surroundings (Miština, Jurinová, Hrmo, 2018). One of the most important activities is management, which directs the running of the company in both the production and non-production spheres, and which is based on guiding people to achieve a common goal.

By the very term management we understand the achievement of goals through other people. School management represents a specific management system in which the achievement of educational goals is concerned. It includes the following areas:

- management of the pedagogical process,
- management of material and financial needs,
- determining the need for educational services,
- the legal framework of education,
- personnel policy,
- leading of people.

Socio-political changes reflected in the nature of the educational system also find their logical application in the school itself. The school ensures the fulfillment of social requirements with regard to the process of upbringing and education, at the same time a huge

amount of information and stimuli flows into it, which makes the management work very demanding. The director can only manage it at a high-quality professional level in cooperation with other teachers of the school (Ďuriš, Lengyelfalussy, 2019).

The principal manages the school and school facilities. It is responsible for compliance with the curriculum, compliance with curriculum, compliance with educational standards, further education of teaching and non-teaching staff, professional and pedagogical level of educational work of the school or school facility (Dravecký, 2011).

Creating a "good school" is a process of permanent change, building a supportive environment for learning and growth. The results depend on the efforts and interest of all participating individuals and teams. In these efforts, according to Barnová and Krásná (2020), leadership, school management and the application of the principles of the learning organization play a key role. According to experts, in the context of the topic of the learning organization, it is for management, or the leadership of such an organization is characterized by:

1. Active support of learning of all its members - learning of individuals, teams and the organization as a whole, support of efforts to achieve personal mastery, mutual learning how to learn and integration of learning of all individuals within the organization. Learning is seen as a permanent and strategic process parallel to the work process, supported by systems that monitor learning and allow it to be shared.

2. Introduction and support of gradual improvement processes - stimulation of continuous improvement of the ability of the teams and schools that make up it, to create their future, to create and improve the school educational program. Creating and actively using the opportunity to get to know yourself and your way of functioning (individual, team and school as a whole), identifying and overcoming barriers to change (getting to know thought patterns and assumptions using reflection and open dialogue and searching for optimal paths in the discussion).

3. Perception of the school as a living organism that lives in a specific environment, active support and guidance of its development by involving all interested parties.

In order to actively create a learning community, the school management needs:

- Create a common vision.
- Use strategic planning procedures.
- Gain an understanding of how the school functions as a system, how its activities and activities are interconnected and where a specific action will have the greatest positive impact (Petlák, 2019).

Given that we are interested in the field of educational process management in the context of contemporary society, it is also important to mention the pandemic period, which significantly affected the educational process and its management. In 2020, we all experienced the isolation, feelings of uncertainty and stress caused by the beginning of the Covid-19 epidemic.

No one knew what awaited us, what needed to be done and how best to protect people's health. The pandemic also affected the teaching process. Both students and teachers remained dependent on a new way of teaching from day to day - online teaching. The computer and the home environment have replaced classmates, school classes and teachers. Many pupils and students initially liked teaching at home. The daily routine changed into something better, more positive, at least for a while. Long months at home, without friends,

classmates and even without teachers and rules, gradually took their toll. Schools reopened after the pandemic-related situation calmed down. Their "closing" and "opening" was chaotic, which resulted in even longer online classes and exclusion from the school environment.

The return of pupils and students to school was embarrassing. Their opinions on the teaching method were also diverse. One group would prefer to stay at home and continue online education. The second group wished to be at school and in the collective. They lacked social contact. The government's decisions were often inconsistent, which had a bad effect not only on the psyche of parents, teachers, pupils, students... Everyone was exhausted by wearing masks during daily activities, including those at school.

### **The educational process and the mission of the school in research**

In the context of the analyzed issue, we conducted an interview with the principal of the elementary school. We were interested in the specifics of its management in the context of the pandemic impact. The subject of qualitative research is the basic theoretical context of the school's mission, which should determine the basic direction of its long-term development and the specifics by which it will differ from other schools of a similar type. Mission means defining the meaning, purpose and basic functions of the organization. Today, the functions of the school are generally elaborated both in the school laws and in the professional literature that deals with this issue. However, he is at school, or to its management to specify and concretize this mission. Only on the basis of awareness of the school's mission do we think about the strategic development of the school. The pandemic situation of Covid19 changed the basic direction of the school, which the school management had to manage both in relation to internal management processes and external processes.

The aim of the research was to investigate and analyze how the school management dealt with the demands of the school's long-term mission in response to the presence of the Covid19 pandemic situation. For the implementation of the research, we chose a qualitative strategy, applied in a selected school with a specific mission, where the interview method was implemented with the research object. Qualitative research can be perceived as research that does not achieve results using statistical procedures, or another way of quantification (Strauss, Corbinová, 1999).

Hendl (2016, p. 50) defines qualitative research as a process of seeking understanding based on different methodological traditions of investigating a given social or human problem. The researcher creates a complex, holistic picture, analyzes various types of texts, informs about the opinions of research participants and conducts research in natural conditions." Within this research, any information is sought and analyzed, which subsequently contributes to clarifying the selected research questions, while also implementing deductive and inductive conclusions.

#### **The object of the research is:**

**a) management system – the subject of management (it consists of those who manage) – in our research it is the school principal;**

**b) managed system – the object of management (it consists of those who are managed) – the object is the employees, students of the school.**

**We focused on an elementary school with a kindergarten located in the Prešov district in Eastern Slovakia.**

An unstructured interview with open questions was used as part of the research. The primary object of the research was the school principal.

The basic areas of research on the management of the educational process in the context of pandemic impacts were incorporated into open questions.

Since school management represents a specific management system in which the achievement of educational goals is concerned. It includes the following areas - which make up the areas of research selected by us - these are:

- management of the pedagogical process,
- management of material and financial needs,
- determining the need for educational services,
- the legal framework of education,
- personnel policy,
- leading of people.

In the following part of the post, we present the questions from the interview we conducted and the director's answer to the given questions.

*1. How did the management of the pedagogical process change during the Covid19 pandemic?*

"Since I have been managing the pedagogical process for several years as a director, I know how to plan and foresee phenomena that repeat themselves cyclically. Of course, some unexpected situations can also arise, but this pandemic situation brought new phenomena for which we were not prepared. Just the decision to close the school, the creation of conditions for the remote form, meant significant changes in the management of the school".

*2. Has the management of material and financial needs changed?*

"Even though we had experience with e-learning activities, the new form of distance learning required a new management of material and financial needs. The material conditions consisted in high-quality material and technical equipment of ICT, Wi-Fi connection, provision of software equipment, either Teams or Zoom. The steps of teacher training followed. Communication with students, setting them up, also in communication with parents..."

*3. Has the assessment of the need for educational services changed during the Covid19 pandemic?*

"Even though the teaching process has its requirements to respect the curriculum, at the beginning of the pandemic, we also chose a form of freer education with respect and identification of needs, which aimed to alleviate the fear of the pandemic, sometimes dealing with the deaths of family members. Later, we intensively investigated the needs of education also in relation to the founder ...".

4. *Were there changes in the legal framework of education during the Covid19 pandemic?*  
"Every day we monitored legislative measures, the decisions of the chief hygienist, and later monitored the traffic lights that controlled and regulated the form of education. At the beginning in distance learning, later in face-to-face learning with restrictions, or combined form in selected classes..."

5. *What changes did personnel policy undergo during the Covid19 pandemic?*  
"The pandemic brought a complete change in management and that was the work of a teacher from home, which we were not prepared for at all. We decided whether the teaching should take place from the school environment to the students' homes, or whether the teacher should teach from home. Many personnel measures regulating labor-legal relations came spontaneously, unexpectedly. As a manager, I was often faced with deciding how to ensure teaching when up to 80% of teachers were unable to work. We also encountered situations where workers abused the pandemic to ensure their absence from the workplace."

6. *Do you perceive changes in the leadership of people during the Covid19 pandemic?*  
"The pandemic has taught me to look at the leadership of people differently than before it. While in the past, more authoritative decisions were perceived as a negative aspect of management, this way of leadership was necessary during the pandemic. After the end, I choose a combination of democratic and authoritative leadership, with an emphasis on the decision-making processes of the workers themselves, so that the mission of the school is respected".

The results of the interview with the school's management - the director - brought confirming results that school management represents a specific management system in which the achievement of educational goals is concerned, and this includes the following areas:

- management of the pedagogical process,
- management of material and financial needs,
- determining the need for educational services,
- the legal framework of education,
- personnel policy,
- leading of people.

All these areas have undergone fundamental changes in management. The pandemic situation tested the principal's ability to fulfill the basic mission of the school. Since the school director fulfills several functions within his profession and the tasks and activities resulting from them. Their adequate and high-quality implementation requires not only formal qualifications obtained through school and further professional education, but also a certain level of knowledge, skills, abilities, or also experiences, motives and character traits, for which the term competence (ability) is collectively used. During the pandemic, the director acted as the school manager on a daily basis and performed basic tasks:

1. Managed work in the organization;
2. Directed the workers;
3. Manage the educational process in the school.

The fulfillment of these tasks required from the director a complex of knowledge, abilities and skills in the field of management, legislation, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, professional-subject area, etc., which created the required means for the performance of his

function and the fulfillment of pandemic tasks and activities connected with the function of the director.

Decision-making became a daily part of the work of the managing director, also in the position of a school teacher, but it was part of the activity of the director as an individual at different levels and in all areas of the school - as an organization at risk. He faced the task - What educational goals to define, which methods or forms to use in teaching, how to motivate students, how to make the educational process more efficient, improve behavior and conditions. These are just some of the questions to which the director sought answers during the pandemic and chose from several possible alternatives. In essence, it was a permanent decision-making process that was influenced by many factors, but also by the decision-making subject himself.

## Conclusion

In Slovakia, we currently have many pupils and students who have lost many months of full-fledged education. Every school should at least partially deal with mitigating the consequences of the distance form of education and provide pupils and students with sufficient psychological support and opportunities to "catch up" on missed lessons. We cannot undo the arrival of the coronavirus and the pandemic associated with it and the various measures taken, but we can focus on mitigating the negative consequences (Gabrhelová, 2020). Each school should create plans to mitigate the negative consequences caused by missed school attendance in the interest of its pupils and students who did not have access to distance education for various reasons. Online education has largely opened up questions regarding the monitoring of the effectiveness of different teaching methods and the degree of engagement of pupils or students, i.e. how to spread knowledge among pupils most effectively and also which teaching methods can hold the interest and attention of pupils for the longest time.

## Bibliography

- Barnová, S., Krásna, S. (2020). *Manažment a organizácia škôl*. Dubnica nad Váhom: Vysoká škola DTI, 133 s. ISBN 978-80-89732-96-8.
- Dravecký, J. (2011). *Školský manažment*. Ružomberok: Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku Pedagogická fakulta, 228 s. ISBN 978-80-558-0001-1.
- Ďuriš, V., Lengyelfalussy, T. (2019). *Notes on Discrete Mathematics*. Karlsruhe: Ste-Con. 163 s. ISBN 978-3-945862-33-9.
- Emmerová, I., Jablonský, T. (2020) Cooperation of school and family in prevention of and dealing with problem behaviour of pupils in the Slovak Republic. In: *AD ALTA: journal of interdisciplinary research*. 2020, č. 2., s. 64 – 68. ISSN 1804-7890. – ISSN (online) 2464-6733.
- Hendl, J. (2016). *Kvalitatívni výzkum: základní teorie, metody a aplikace*. Praha: Portál, 408 s. ISBN 80-7367-040-2.
- Gabhelová, G. (2020) Stress – analyse im lehrerberuf. Karlsruhe: Ste-Con., s. 88. ISBN 978-3-945862-36-0.
- Gold, A. (1998). *Řízení současné školy*. Žďár nad Sázavou: Fakta, 172 s. ISBN 978-80-240-4499-9.
- Maňák, J. (1994). *Nárys didaktiky*. Brno: Vydavatelství Masarykovy univerzity, 111 s. ISBN 80-210-0210-741.

- Mišťina, J., Jurinová, J., Hrmó, R. et al. (2018) Design, development and implementation of e-learning course for secondary Technical and vocational school of electrical engineering in Slovakia. In *Advances in intelligent systems and computing*, ISSN 2194-5357. 2018, vol. 715, s. 915-925. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73210-7\\_104](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73210-7_104)
- Obdržálek, Z., Horváthová, K. (2004). *Organizácia a manažment školstva*. Bratislava: SPN, 419 s. ISBN 80-10-00022-1.
- Petlák, E. (2019). *Motivácia v edukačnom procese*. Bratislava: Wolters Kluwer, 104 s. ISBN 978-80-571-0150-5.
- Porubčanová, D., Zapletal, L. (2022). *Pedagogická diagnostika*. České Budějovice: Nová Forma, 165 s. ISBN 978-80-7612-396-0.
- Strauss, A., Corbinová, J. (1999). *Základy kvalitativního výzkumu. Postupy a techniky metody zakotvené teorie*. Boskovice: Albert, 196 s. ISBN 80-85834-60-X.
- Šuťáková, V. a kol. (2017). *Sociálna a didaktická komunikácia*. Bratislava: Wolters Kluwer, 208 s. ISBN 978-80-8168-548-4.

**Prof. PaedDr. Lenka Pasternáková, PhD., MBA**

Ústav pedagogiky, andragogiky a psychológie

Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, Fakulta humanitných a prírodných vied

Ul. 17. novembra, 081 16 Prešov

*lenka.pasternakova@unipo.sk*