

State of Shorthand-Writing and Teaching in Hungary

Report to Intersteno Education Meeting by Marta Danko - 8th June 2010

In Hungary shorthand-writing was taught at high level in the period between **1960 and 1998**. Pupils could learn it in vocational secondary schools in 5-6 lessons a week for 3 years. The pupils sat for the final exam in this subject: They had to take down a dictate of 5 minutes in shorthand by the rate of 200 syllables/minute, then to extend shorthand by typing, and to compile minutes from a dictate of 7 minutes by the rate of 150 syllables/minute. Thanks to the high-level educational methods a lot of pupils reached even the speed of 300 syllables per minute. Among these pupils there are yet several who still work in Parliament.

After the system's change, in **1994** vocational training was considerably transformed. The acquiring of the certificate of qualifications was separated from the final examination. In accordance with preliminary training the certificates of qualifications could be acquired at four levels (basic, medium and enhanced level, as well as higher level). Learning with the aim of acquiring the certificate of qualification including also shorthand-writing skills could be begun only after the final examination, and all of these skills provided medium-level qualifications. These were as follows: bureau assistant (shorthand-writer and typist), office-management assistant (keeper of minutes), and shorthand-writer taking down speeches. From these vocational qualifications bureau assistant was most in demand, first of all due to the shorter study time and the general type of knowledge. In the school system no shorthand-writer to take down speeches was trained in the past 10 years in Hungary.

In **2006** Hungarian vocational education system was again subject to a major transformation. The **vocational training on modular and competence base** was introduced. In this system the role of shorthand-writing drastically decreased even compared to the previous period. Shorthand can (could) be learned under the vocational trainings of „Keeper of Minutes” and „Shorthand for taking down speeches”. Conditions of both vocational qualifications are: the certificate of final examination and the acquiring of the qualification of Bureau assistant (2 years of training). Thus the learning of shorthand can be begun at the age of 18 at the earliest as part of the vocational training of “Keeper of Minutes” and „Shorthand for taking down speeches”; the duration of training is 2 years each. This way, if somebody wanted to learn shorthand in an organised form and acquire the vocational qualifications as “Keeper of Minutes” or „Shorthand for taking down speeches”, he/she would have to learn for four years, which would take a longer time than reaching the basic level in upper education (3 years).

Both professions could be organised both within the school system (between 18 and 26 years) and beyond it (in adult education). In our latest system of vocational education however, according to our knowledge, no training was launched in these professions since 2006.

The Hungarian upper education system was transformed in the spirit of the **Bologna** system where shorthand is taught in the „**office management**” field of study within the Hungarian language and literature basic field of study (see BA training). Beyond the main fields of study Hungarian language and literature students can take office management as a 1/3 part of study (i.e. equal to 50 credits) where they learn shorthand for three years in 2 lessons per week. The requirement is to reach the speed of 150 syllables per minute. Here the students do not have to sit for an examination but beyond shorthand they also learn subjects as electronic typing technique (typing), informatics (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint and the use of the Internet, etc.), business communication, office management, correspondence and taking minutes skills, negotiation technique, conflict management, etc.

With the introduction of the Bologna education system in Hungary in 2006 also teacher training changed. Previously, for four years, teachers of shorthand and typewriting were trained, and then teachers of business management were trained. These studies lasted for 4 years, where in addition to practical subjects as shorthand and typewriting students could learn also such vocational subjects as informatics, correspondence and minute-taking skills, secretary and business management skills, the history of shorthand, the theory of typewriting and shorthand, as well as pedagogical, psychological and teaching methodological subjects. In order to earn a degree, students had to draw up a diploma work and to take part in a teaching exercise, a final teaching.

This kind of teacher training took place between 1975 and 2006 at one single college of Hungary, in Nyíregyháza. Some 20 to 40 teachers earned degree this way annually who dispose of not only professional but also pedagogical knowledge at high level.

Since 2006 students studying in the basic field of study “Hungarian language and literature /business management” have the opportunity to learn the methodology of teaching shorthand and typewriting in the framework of the master training of business management teachers (see MA training). This field of training teachers did not start yet however in Hungary due to the very strict and high scientific qualification requirements.

It is highly unfortunate that in spite of the almost one and a half century’s efforts, acknowledgements and successes of the Hungarian shorthand-writers the future of Hungarian shorthand is not secured in the lack of replacement training.