



YETI Teacher Pathway Report

Country Report Hungary

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Institutions of teacher training in Hungary

The Hungarian teacher training is constantly being reformed. The general structure of the trainings has changed radically three times in the last twenty years. But even so, it can be concluded that there are currently too many teacher training institutions in too many places compared to the size of the country (*Csapó, Bodorkós and Bús, 2015*). The total number of institutions providing teacher training is 42, of which only 22 have independent faculties. 61 departments of the 22 institutions with faculty structure are involved in teacher training. From the Hungarian educational statistics, it is also clear that students enrolled in teacher training programmes are extremely disproportionately distributed among the institutions. The vast majority of teacher training students are accepted and trained by some major universities. In some training places, mainly in rural and small towns, the number of teaching training students is too low to provide the infrastructure and the staff of specially qualified instructors for high-quality training economically.

The situation in Hungary is further nuanced by the phenomenon – which is still observed more or less in Central and Eastern European countries and inherited from the past – that colleges were basically preparing students for teaching in primary schools and the teaching skill-based classes (such as drawing and visual culture, technology, physical education, singing and music), while universities were institutions responsible for secondary school teacher training, scientific research and the education of the prospective young researchers and scholars. This kind of distinction? of training places for teacher training at a college level and a university level can be attributed to deeper sociological and scientific policy reasons, but this kind of duality still lives on and is present in institutional cultures.

General prestige of the teaching career

The teaching career in Hungary has never been one of the well-paid professions. This is illustrated quite well by the so-called "day laborers of the nation", which was formed in the late 1850s to characterize the teaching community and has since become widespread and has been passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, the general perception of the teaching career has not been more favorable among the population since then.

The lack of social esteem is not only a Hungarian phenomenon. Unfortunately, it is generally present among teachers and educators worldwide. Internationally, the proportion of teachers who report a sense of low social esteem is also very low (26%), but in Hungary the figure is less than half the international average, as it is only 12% (OECD *TALIS*, 2018).

For nearly a decade after the change of regime, high school graduates still looked forward to pursuing teaching careers. At that time, even the most talented high school students chose teacher training courses in large proportions, but nowadays, the most talented students tend to orient towards engineering, law, and medical careers. Teachers' low social prestige and the abnormally low wages are the main influences against the choice of teaching careers. Those who graduate from college or university are most likely not to enter the teaching career, since the salary is equal to the minimum wage of skilled workers. In the past seven years, the government has frozen teachers' wages, and tied their salaries to the 2014 minimum wage in Hungary. Hungarian teacher salaries are also abnormally low if compared to international standards. It always performs among the last ones in the OECD countries' comparison. In 2019, a Hungarian teacher's salary was only higher than Slovak teachers' salaries and in 2020 it was only a bit higher than that of Brazilian teachers (OECD 2020, 2021). In the light of such wage perspectives, it is not surprising that the most talented young people tend to pursue other intellectual fields (e.g.: law, medicine, economics, engineering) when they continue their education.

Out of the measures taken by the government in case of teacher training, only the Klebelsberg Training Scholarship Program can be emphasized, as it supports the employment of young people starting their careers in the field of teacher training.

Training scholarship program

The aim of the Klebelsberg Training Scholarship Program is to motivate students who choose a teaching or special education career to find a job after graduation and to provide them with a position after obtaining the diploma. Those students can apply for the program, who have either been admitted to concurrent teacher training (or special education undergraduate) programs or who are already studying at the time of submitting the application in Hungary. Applicants must undertake to work as full-time teachers, starting no later than 6 months after graduation and working for at least as long as they have received scholarships during their studies. When choosing a place for future employment, the basic principle is that the scholarship center makes a job offer to the scholarship holder and offers them employment in any of the three counties designated by the scholarship holder. They are always trying to take it into account, which county the student chose first. In particular, they try to assign those institutions that are maintained by the school district center belonging to the place where the scholarship holder newly graduated teacher resides. If there are vacancies in more than one institution, more than one institution is offered.

The amount of scholarships awarded during the studies depends on the average of the student credit index, but overall, it is quite small, 25,000, 50,000 or 75,000 HUF (about 70 to 210 EUR/month) depending on the academic results. For highly supported study programmes (in which there is a teacher shortage) (e.g.: informatics, mathematics, physical education, biology, physics, chemistry) if an average of 2.8 credit index is reached, the student may be eligible for the 25,000 HUF scholarship, but for the other teaching professions an average of at least 3.5 is needed for the same amount of scholarship (*Klebelsberg Center, 2020*). In the autumn of 2021, nearly 700 newly graduated teachers receiving Klebelsberg Scholarships will start their work at the schools offered by the Klebelsberg Center.

Teacher training programs

Reforms of teacher training over the last 15 years

Before the introduction of the Bologna system in 2006, teacher training in Hungary consisted of two parts. In traditional college and university education, this meant four and five years of studies, depending on whether someone wanted to obtain a bachelor's degree or a master's secondary school teacher's degree. In Hungary, the decision on the multi-cycle training structure was taken in 2004 (Bologna Process). The concept of bachelor's and master's degrees has been launched in the multicycle training system starting on 1 September 2006. From the previous college course, the kindergarten teacher and special education training courses became part of the bachelor's (BA) program, while teacher training preparing teachers for the primary and secondary school level was transferred to the level of the master's degree. Teacher qualifications could only be obtained if someone completed a bachelor's degree and then continued their studies on the master's level. That took five and a half years. With this step, teacher training has become unified, and instead of the previous 110 different teacher courses, a single master's degree was created. With the Bologna reform, Hungary's higher education has joined international trends, which fundamentally transformed the previous system (*EURYDICE*, 2019).

However, the Higher Education Act 2011 broke with the Bologna Process and defines teacher training in an undivided form at the school education stage, based on the "concurrent" type. Currently, teachers are trained according to concurrent teacher training in Hungary.

Structure of teacher training

In the undivided training system, you can apply for two teacher training courses. In the so-called public teacher training, teacher qualifications can be obtained in undivided, two-course (2-specialization) training. There are two forms of teacher training in Hungary at the moment: 4+1 years of studies for becoming a primary school teacher and 5+1 years of studies for becoming a secondary school teacher, in which the extra year accounts for a coherent school internship.

The public teacher training for primary and secondary schools is based on a joint training phase. In order to progress in both study programs (e.g.: mathematics and physics), at least 150 credits shall be collected in a proportionate distribution during the first three years of the training. If there is a primary and secondary teacher training available for the study program at hand (e.g.: in physics), the student must decide at the end of the joint three-year foundation phase whether he or she intends to complete all the two teacher qualifications as a primary school teacher, or as a secondary school teacher, or one as a primary school and one as secondary school teacher.

The fragmentation of teacher training in Hungary is well-illustrated by the fact that more than 600 pairs of teacher training programs (combining two different fields of specializations) can be formed at ELTE in Budapest. So, for example it is theoretically possible to study Chinese language and culture, and visual culture at the same time and specialize in them as a future teacher of both. The situation is similar at the University of Szeged, where more than 300 pairs of teacher training program pairs can be formed based on the offer of the university (existing pairs include becoming a religion teacher with a biology major).

In September 2021, there were additional significant changes in teacher training, as the latest government decree on the transformation of teacher training was published, which, among other things, standardizes the length of training of primary and secondary teachers. Until now, those who wanted to teach in secondary schools had to go to university for six years, but in the future, they can obtain their diploma after five years, i.e., the difference between primary and secondary teacher training will be eliminated (**Gov. Decree No. 538/2021 (IX. 15.)**). Education and economic experts say the government is trying to respond to the drastic labor shortage in the sector by shortening training time. According to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), in the second quarter of 2021 there were 6600 teacher vacancies in Hungary, a number which is 38% higher than that of the same period the previous year.

Practical preparation of students for teaching

In addition to specialty-related (disciplinary) and methodological knowledge, school practices play a decisive role in teacher training in Hungary. In the system of teacher training, it is an important principle that teacher training students meet their students as early as possible in their studies and prepare for an independent teaching career gradually, as the tasks and levels of responsibility to be carried out become more and more complicated. The system of the undivided teacher training strives for the gradual development of skills and competences; therefore, the successive semesters contain more and more complex internships. The training system distinguishes between three types of traineeships: (1) Community pedagogical practice, (2) group teaching practice and (3) coherent individual school practice.

Community pedagogical practice

Community pedagogical practice is an important element in the practical preparation for teaching careers. Its primary purpose is to provide an insight into the work of teachers and the life of the school. This community pedagogical practice takes place in the framework of a university course in the pedagogical-psychological module. The course allows students to learn about the extracurricular activities of pedagogical work. The practice makes students experience the fields of organization, management, program preparation and community building of the leisure activities of a given study group

(camps, special circles, interests, etc.). During the exercise, the teacher candidates learn to create pedagogical situations that help the development of students' social competences.

Community pedagogical practice shall be completed before the start of a coherent individual practice. The school activities of the pedagogical practice are carried out by the student in an institution designated by the educator. The tasks are compiled by the leaders of the seminars, but the opportunities of the students are also discussed with the mentor teachers working at the school. The student compiles a list of practical activities with the mentor teacher, which he/she consults with the course instructor. At the end of the teaching practice, the mentor teacher confirms the individual activity logs of the students by signing them.

The teaching practice is worth 2 credits (60 hours). Students must spend a minimum of 20 working hours on school activities. The remaining 10 working hours include the visit to the university pedagogical course and individual preparation.

Group teaching practice

The aim of the group teaching practice, which takes place in parallel with the university training, is to familiarize the student with the teaching of the subject through the guidance of the head teacher, through independent tasks, and to gain experience in teaching the subject. The group teaching practice involves the observation and analysis of non-specialized classes and a shorter training course of 15 lessons. Group teaching practice is 2 credits per training program and is worth a total of 4 credits (2 training program specializations combined). In the 10 semesters of primary school teacher training, the group teaching practice is allocated for the 7th and 8th semesters, while in the 12-semester secondary teacher training, it is done in the 9th and 10th semesters. Previously, in the period preceding the Bologna reform of teacher training (until 2006), this form of teaching practice was present in teacher training, also known as teaching practice, except that it was previously considered a compulsory teaching practice (and sufficient) to obtain a diploma. The student tasks to be performed during the group teaching practice are extremely carefully developed.

The organization of group teaching practices and the positioning of students are carried out by the Teacher Training Centre, which operates in tandem with universities and performs administrative and official tasks, in cooperation with the training schools. The duration of the group teaching practice is at least 60 hours per semester per course, which includes at least 30 hours of visits (auditing), planning and preparation of lessons, holding at least 15 hours, and discussion, analysis, and evaluation of the lessons (also at least 15 hours).

The tasks to be carried out during group teaching practice can be summarized as follows:

- auditing, discussing classroom activities
- individual teaching, preparation of classes, discussion, and evaluation of lessons with the head teacher
- taking notes on class visits according to the criteria specified by the head teacher. The records of the lessons are signed by the teacher holding the class, and at the end of the semester the head teacher confirms the fulfilment of the 30 lessons of auditing obligation with their signature.
- Auditing details shall be written and kept in a table (auditing log) containing the exact time, location, title of the class and the name and signature of the teacher holding the lesson.
- During the student's practice, he/she holds a final course (exam teaching), for which he/she prepares independently. To do this, the student must prepare a draft of a teaching lesson completely independently.
- At the end of the teaching practice, the head teacher evaluates the student's work with a practical grade.

Coherent individual school practice

The aim of the coherent individual school practice is to combine theoretical and practical knowledge in pedagogical work. During the practice, the teacher candidate spends a longer period of time (2 semesters) in a public education institution or in a training school. At this time, the teacher candidate works with a mentor or mentors, teaches independently, but under the supervision of the mentor, and gets involved in other areas of schoolwork. The practice takes place in the last year of teacher training, with a total of 40 credits to be obtained (20-20 credits per semester). During the practice, the student typically teaches one of their subjects in one semester. The student completes the practice during the autumn semester between 1 September and 20 December, and in the spring semester between 1 February and 15 May. The practice can be completed in two different institutions.

Similarly to the group teaching practice, the coherent individual school practice and its rules are extremely detailed, and for the tasks to be carried out, the Teacher Training Centers have developed materials for the students.

During the interrelated individual school practice, the mentor determines the details of the tasks to be carried out in the educational institutions, but the following activities take place in any case:

- at least 40-45 hours of teaching in a weekly and even distribution every six months;
- 30 hours of auditing on the mentor teacher's and other teachers' classes;
- preparing for classes, self-analysis and self-evaluation after classes and meetings with the mentor;

- performing school tasks outside of school hours but closely related to the teaching of the subject.

The coherent individual school practice has a 2-2 credit special methodological seminar per semester and is complemented by 1-1 semesters of pedagogical and psychological seminars.

Experience gained from related individual school practices is processed at so called accompanying seminars. These seminars are organized by the training institution at the university. Their primary goal of these seminars is to help professional self-reflection and the learning of teacher candidates from each other in the framework of practical lessons related to methodology and pedagogical-psychological aspects. The experience gained during the coherent individual school practice of the students is discussed in the sessions, where problem-oriented and analytical processing takes place. In the lessons, students present their experiences in teaching practices and outline the problems that have arisen there. They aim to develop solutions and strategies for identified pedagogical problems.

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