



Hungary

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Principles and general objectives of education

As it is stated in the Preamble, in 1993 the Parliament enacted the Public Education Act: “in order to ensure exercise of the right to education based on equality of opportunity, a right laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary; in order to achieve freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and the nurturing of patriotism in public education; in order to make good the right of national and ethnic minorities to education in their mother tongue; in order to realize freedom of education and freedom of teaching; in order to define the rights and duties of children, students, parents and those of employed in public education; and also in order to direct and operate a public education system that ensures up-to-date knowledge.”

Current educational priorities and concerns

In recent years Hungary underwent profound changes. The basic institutions of democracy have been set up and consolidated after the changes of 1989/90; free multi-party elections took place in April 1990, and an irreversible progress has taken place in the building of the free market economy. At the same time, a serious economic crisis evolved in the early 1990s; after the change in the political system, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by about 19% and the average real income per capita declined by about 10%. Income inequality increased, with a relative increase in poverty. The substantial fall of agricultural and industrial production, massive unemployment and the decline of economic activity have directly affected education.

The Hungarian economy has left behind the deepest point of economic crisis. However, the achievement of lasting economic growth, promoting financial stability as well, requires sustained efforts over a long period. An even longer period of time is required for the development of the culture of democracy.

Public education has experienced large-scale changes generally related to the modernization of the system, its adaptation to the changing social and economic environment, and the encouragement of innovation. It is important to stress, that in the sense of the way this concept is generally used, the changes may not be regarded as a comprehensive educational reform. Significant parts were connected to local-institutional level initiatives more or less supported by governmental policy, which may result in more than trivial divergences. It is more useful to talk about reform-oriented changes since the size and the more or less coherent nature of the changes provide them with the characteristics of a reform, yet still we cannot talk about a series of carefully planned state measures enjoying significant social and political support, aiming at comprehensive, systematic transformation. The most significant reform-oriented changes include: (i) the reorganization of the structure of governance and financing; (ii) content reform; (iii) reforms of the examination and qualification



system; (iv) changes in the school structure; (v) the reform of teacher training and in-service training; and (vi) professional support, programmes and funds for development and innovation.

The problems and challenges that the education system needs to face at the beginning of the twenty-first century greatly resemble those that other similarly developed countries must face. These challenges, however, show up in different forms and sizes because of the specific attributes of the country. A large part of the problems is related to the difficult economic crisis that struck the country at the beginning of the 1990s (in a similar way to the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe) as well as to the dramatic social and economic transformations taking place during the decade. The most significant problems can be summarized as follows: (a) the strengthening of the role of education in improving economic competitiveness and solving unemployment; (b) making the role of education more effective in strengthening social cohesion; (c) the pedagogical handling of the increasingly diverse learning population and making the fight against school failure more effective; (d) the renewal of educational content and facilitating the methodological development of teaching and learning; (e) guaranteeing educational quality and the development of the evaluation function; (f) more effective management of resources; and (g) making educational supervision and management more successful. (National Institute for Public Education, 2001).

The Medium-term Strategy of Public Education was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2004 and considers the following main priorities: laying down the foundations for lifelong learning by developing key competencies; reducing the inequalities in education; improving the quality of education; supporting the development of the teaching profession; promoting the use of ICT tools; improving the physical conditions of education; and improving the cost-effectiveness and management of public education (National Institute for Public Education, 2004). The strategy addresses the development of the administrative system as a separate topic: (a) the development of the system of financing education; (b) development of planning systems at local and county level; (c) support for and development of multi-functional associations of local governments (MALGO), partnerships between towns/villages and institutions; and (d) the development of the information and statistical system of public education. (National Institute for Public Education, 2006).

A concept paper for the development of a National Qualifications Framework has been prepared by a network of experts. It is to be an umbrella-type framework that provides a common framework to the qualification systems of the various sub-sectors of education (public education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education), using an outcome-based approach. An interdepartmental/ministerial committee will work out the details of the framework before the draft proposal is submitted to the government in the autumn of 2007. The framework's implementation is planned to be financed under the new Hungary Development Plan 2007-2013. (Eurydice, 2007).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Until 1990, basic education was carried out almost exclusively by the eight-year general school, where children normally enrolled at the age of 7. Nearly 90% of the



children aged 3-6 years attended kindergarten for one year or more. There have been three main types of secondary institutions: the four-year general academic school (gymnasium), the four-year secondary vocational school, and the three-year skilled worker training vocational school.

The **Education Act No. 79** of 1993 (amended in 1995, 1996, 1999, 2002 and 2003) established a uniform framework for the education system. Asserting the principle of the freedom of education, it has eliminated the State monopoly on schools and has attempted to dissolve the former rigid structure of the school system in a regulated way. The Act guarantees the right of every natural and legal person to establish and maintain schools. However, the burden and tasks of maintenance are primarily the responsibility of local governments, and their limited material resources are compensated by the state budget. This subsidy extends to churches and other entities maintaining schools and thus sharing the tasks of the state.

The Act prescribes compulsory education for a duration of ten years as was the earlier practice, but has linked its completion to an exam. It has made primary school, expanded to ten years, the basis of the school system, from which one may move to a secondary school of eight, six, or four years after the completion of the fourth, sixth, or eighth form. After the completion of the tenth year (that is at age 16), a student may move from any of the institutions of general education to the system of institutions of vocational training, which is also under transformation. The Act has linked the regulation of content to the evolving autonomy of schools: a two-tier system of national and local regulation has been developed. The compulsory application of central programmes has been abandoned, and the control of the teaching process is ensured through regulations issued at the local level.

Recent changes have made it imperative to amend the 1993 Education Act in order to establish a predictable, stable and lasting system of public education, capable of self-correction and renewal. The relevant Parliamentary decisions were preceded by extended professional debates. The **1995 Amendment of the Education Act** has limited the hidden possibilities of state intervention, and has further strengthened the professional autonomy of the educational and teaching institutions and the role of the local governments. The modification has made the approval of the National Core Curriculum the task of the government, along with the elaboration of the pedagogical programmes and local curricula.

The Amendment stipulates that the eight-year primary school and the four-year general secondary school are the basic institutions of the Hungarian educational system. Any divergence from them is only possible in the case of exceptionally specified conditions. However, documents pertaining to the content of public education (National Core Curriculum, the requirements of basic education and those of secondary school leaving examinations) ensure both the streamlining and internal transition of other organizational arrangements as well. What used to be a rigid and uniform structure may thus be gradually replaced by a more differentiated one, postulating a greater degree of autonomy and professional independence for schools and teaching staff.

The Amendment makes in-service training of teachers compulsory and their career development conditional on the results of in-service training. This system, to be



introduced gradually, will be governed by the quality principle, and financed by the fund defined by the Central Budget Act. Central funds available for research, development and innovation shall be regulated under the Law in a similar way. With the aim of making the system of public education more stable and predictable, the Amendment introduces an innovation in terms of financing by defining a mandatory annual rate of budgetary contribution in order to maintain and operate the institutions of public education.

The **Act No. 76 on Vocational Training** of 1993 is aimed at adjusting the system of institutions of vocational training to the ten-year general education. It has necessarily retained the earlier institutions: the three-year industrial school which trains skilled workers and the four-year vocational secondary school which gives a secondary school final certificate. However, general training has emerged at the forefront for the first year and the focus of attention regarding special vocational training was shifted to the final year(s).

The Act No. 80 on Higher Education of 1993 has expanded the autonomy of the individual institutions. National independent bodies were set up with the view of strengthening the autonomy of higher education as follows: the **Scientific Council of Higher Education** deals with issues related to development and finance; and the **National Accreditation Committee** serves the purpose of quality control. After the entry into the European Union (May 2004), and within the framework of the Bologna process, the higher education system is regulated by the **Act No. 139 on Higher Education** of 2005.

Other important laws must be mentioned, such as: the **Law on Self-Government** (1990), which conferred wide-ranging autonomy to local authorities and transferred to them the ownership of schools; the **Law on Public Employees** (1992), which classified teachers as public employees paid in accordance with a fixed salary scale and introduced more rigorous employment regulations; the **1991 Act on the Return to Churches of their Properties** nationalized after the Second World War; and the **1993 Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities**.

Article 70(f) of the **Constitution** of 1997 states that: “(i) The Republic of Hungary guarantees the right of education to its citizens. (ii) The Republic of Hungary shall implement this right through the dissemination and general access to culture, free compulsory primary schooling, through secondary and higher education available to all persons on the basis of their ability, and furthermore through financial support for students.”

Compulsory schooling lasts ten years for pupils 6-16 years old. The beginning of school depends on the physiological, mental and social development of the child and may vary. If necessary, the time of entry to school is determined within the framework of a special procedure (examination of school maturity). The committees of transfer have a role in the special schooling of children with physical and mental disabilities. Pupils may meet the requirement of the ten-year compulsory education in various types of schools. Young people not continuing their studies after having attended school for ten years, complete their studies (usually after their sixteenth year) by passing a basic examination. The 1996 Amendment to the Public Education Act

extended the end of compulsory schooling to the age of 18, but only starting with those who enter primary school in the 1998/99 school year.

Administration and management of the education system

Public education in Hungary is characterized by shared responsibilities, divided vertically into central, local and institutional levels, and horizontally among the different ministries. Overall responsibility for public education is assigned to the **Ministry of Education** (formerly the Ministry of Culture and Education). However, in the majority of fundamental issues affecting public education several ministries are concerned.

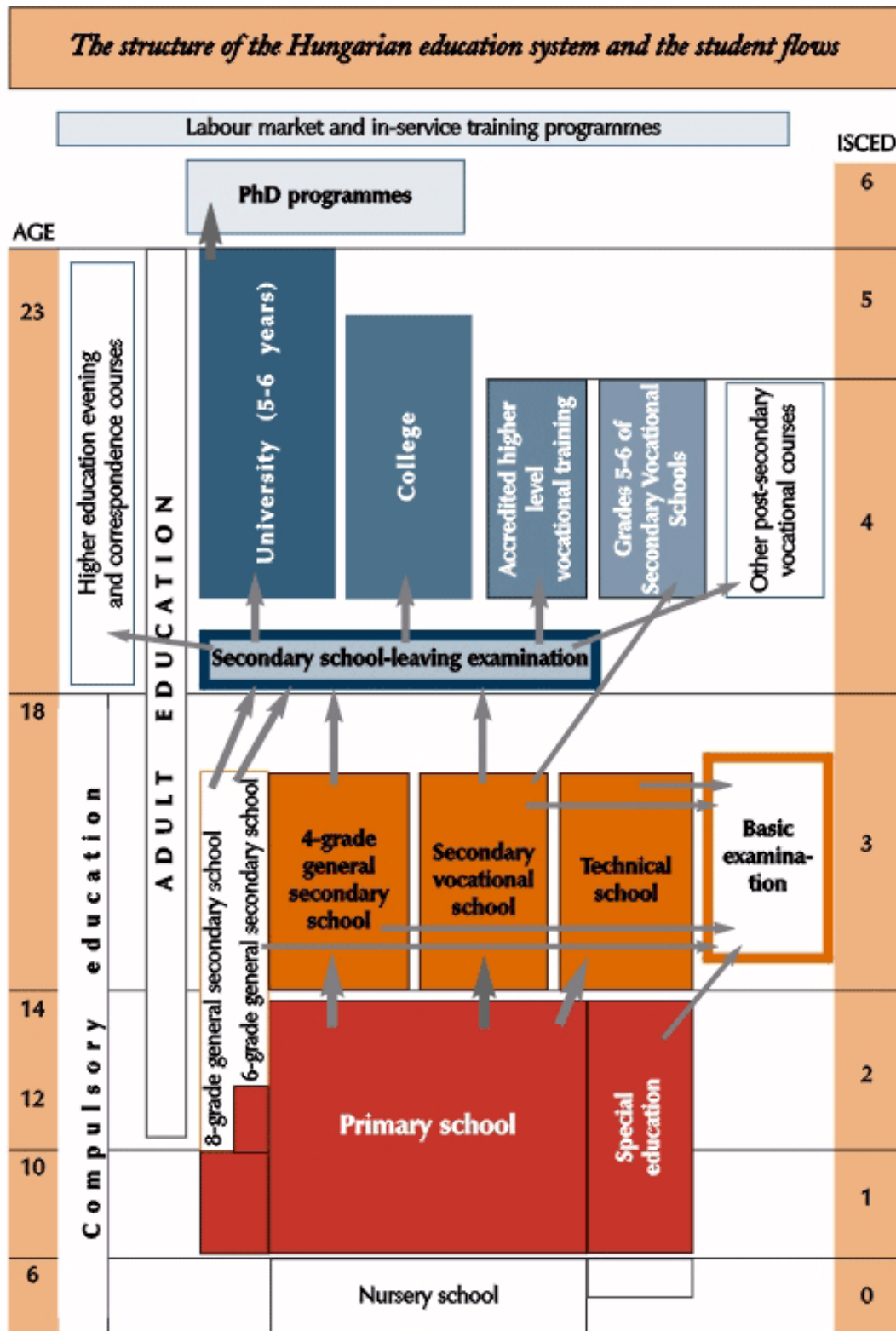
Public administration, comprising also public education, is the domain of competency of the **Ministry of the Interior**, together with the distribution of state support given to the local governments. The **Ministry of Finance** presents the estimates regarding the financing of education as part of the bill on the state budget. The **Ministry of Labour** is responsible for the management of vocational education if it is not at the higher level, and for forecasting the demand for labour. Finally, all ministries are responsible for the content of vocational education in their respective field of competence. Institutions providing care to children up to the age of 3 years are not part of the public education system and are supervised by the **Ministry of Health, Social, and Family Affairs**.

Responsibility over education is shared among four levels: national, regional, local, and institutional. The regional category includes three levels: regions, the counties and micro-regions, each having different administrative functions and institutional systems. Primary schools and secondary education establishments mostly fall within the competency of the **local governments**, which also function as educational and administrative authorities. Due to the specificity of the settlement structure, their number is extremely high. It is the duty of the local educational authorities to provide primary and secondary education for all children living in their areas. The responsibilities and rights of local governments are wide-ranging. They decide the budget, appoint the heads of institutions, specify the profile of the school and define the vertical and horizontal structure of schooling. Rules of organization and operation, as well as pedagogical programmes, must be approved by these authorities. At the local level, **school boards** carry out advisory tasks. They consist of members elected from the teaching staff, the parents' organization, and the municipality.

The **Educational Committee of the National Assembly** co-ordinates the legislative work at the parliamentary level, and the **National Council for Public Educational Policy** gathers the opinions of professional and social organizations interested in education, including all the concerned ministries, in order to support the work of the minister of education and culture. Other relevant bodies should also be mentioned, such as: the **National Training Council**, the **Hungarian Institute for Educational Research**, the **National Institute for Public Education**, the **National Institute of Public Education Services** and the **National Institute of Vocational Education**.

Structure and organization of the education system

Hungary: structure of the education system



Source: National Institute for Public Education, 2000.



Pre-school education

Pre-school education (kindergarten or nursery school) is provided by a dual function (social-health and educational) institution catering to children between the ages of 3 and 6. Attendance is voluntary, although the final year is generally compulsory.

Primary education

Children usually enter primary school at the age of 7, although starting school education is flexible and adjusted to their level of development. Primary education normally comprises eight years. Notwithstanding, after the completion of Grade IV or VI pupils may move to a general secondary school (eight- or six-year programme).

Secondary education

In past decades, the general secondary school (gymnasium) offered a four-year course. After the modifications approved in 1989, there are three main forms of this type of school covering different age groups. The eight-year general secondary school caters for pupils between 12 and 18 years of age; the six-year gymnasium covers the age group 12-18, while the four-year gymnasium is for pupils aged 14-18. The gymnasium offers a general education programme leading to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate examination. The duration of studies may take more years when a special preparatory course (the so-called 0 Form) or a vocational final course is introduced. Specialization makes it possible for students to obtain some kind of vocational qualification.

Vocational schools offering a programme leading to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate examination include: five-year technical secondary school (*technikum*), offering training in technical subjects; four- or five-year secondary vocational school, providing training mainly for the service industries; and four-year secondary vocational training school, awarding both upper secondary school-leaving and vocational certificates. Other types of vocational training can be regarded as part of the system of initial vocational training, which is shorter in duration and only qualifies for the practice of a profession, without entitling for entry to higher education. There are four types of initial vocational training institutions: three-year technical school for skilled workers; three-year medical school; two-year trade school for typists; and one- or two-year special trade school. The most important type is the three-year technical school, which still caters for a large proportion of pupils. Other types are less important.

Institutions of higher education include colleges and universities. The period of study for college undergraduate education is three or four years, and further specialized college postgraduate education can take a minimum of one year. The period of studies to gain the first level of qualification may be followed by postgraduate education in a certain special field at the colleges. In some cases the college programmes can be followed by university complementary studies to gain university level degree. The minimum period of study for university undergraduate education is four years, although it usually lasts five years (six years in the case of medicine). One year is the minimum period of study for specialized post-graduate education, although generally this stage lasts two years and in some cases three years.



The duration of programmes leading to a doctorate is usually three years. In the framework of the Bologna process, the new three-cycle degree structure was adopted in December 2004. Bachelor's degree programmes last three to four years, and master's degree programmes take one to two years to complete. Doctoral degree programmes last three years. Some long single-cycle programmes lasting five to six years (medicine, pharmacy, architecture, dental and veterinary studies) will be retained.

The school year normally consists of 185 working days (thirty-seven working weeks), divided into two semesters. At the higher education level (colleges and universities) the academic year usually consists of two semesters, each lasting five months, of which thirteen to fourteen weeks are dedicated to teaching, and one month each (January, June) to the examination period. In some universities the academic year consists of three trimesters, with obligatory exams at the end of each.

The financing of education

The basic principles of financing public education did not change considerably throughout the 1990s. The Public Education Act and its subsequent amendments, however, meant major improvements to the system (i.e. stronger state guarantees and the independence of financial support) and introduced a more sophisticated system of additional grants and earmarked funds for high professional and political priorities in education. Budget expenditure on education as the percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased in the early 1990s, then slowly began to diminish. A sudden fall began in the mid-1990s: the percentage decreased from 4.98% in 1994 to 3.64% in 1998. This trend stopped in 1999: expenditure on public education that year was the same as in the previous year, i.e. 3.64%. Total spending on public education is shown only by an indicator that includes expenditures by households, corporations and the non-profit sector, which is based on estimates for lack of available data. Taking all these elements into consideration, Hungary spent an estimated 5.27% of its GDP on education in 1998.

In the first 'crisis period' between 1990 and 1994 there was a dramatic fall in the GDP, whereas expenditures on public education (up to 1992) increased significantly and then temporarily stabilized at a relatively high percentage of GDP (up to 1994). From 1993 onwards, public education norms were frozen, indicating budgetary limits on the one hand, and the fact that the educational administration was unwilling to finance further expansion of capacities on the other, while the number of students (especially in primary schools) kept decreasing. A growing financial involvement of local governments practically compensated for the real value loss of support from the state budget.

The GDP stopped decreasing in the stabilization period of the economy (1995-1996), however, the position of education in the budget did change. The austerity measures of the budget and financial difficulties of local governments resulted in a decreasing proportion of educational expenditures. Austerity measures were not followed by much rationalization: the number of employees did not drop and the institutional structure was not altered. A rather high inflation devalued the income of teachers, and material expenses were reduced to the minimum. The joint effect of demographic trends (namely a drop in the number of school children), normative



support and high inflation made curtailment of resources possible and, technically speaking, easy in the field of public education. In the 1997-1999 period there was a dynamic boom in the economy with an annual GDP growth of 4-5%. Public education expenditures of the budget increased in real value, but not as fast as the GDP. Although the absolute position of education improved, its relative position became somewhat worse than before 1998.

The principles to fund Hungarian public education follow from the 1990 Local Government Act. According to the provisions of the Act, primary and secondary education is provided by local governments, but the overall responsibility remains with the State. Financial guarantees are given jointly by the state and the local governments. Financial coverage of public education is provided primarily by the budget with contributions by the school maintainer, optionally augmented by tuition fees paid by students and other revenues of the school. Financial support of public education by the state is defined in the annual budget. State support appears primarily in the budget of the Ministry of Interior. This chapter contains the normative support of local governments as well as some of the centralized allocations earmarked for public education. State support covers an average of 50-70% of public education expenditures of local governments.

There are two types of state support: normative and earmarked subsidies. Local governments receive normative subsidies automatically, whereas they have to individually apply for earmarked subsidies. Normative support is generally calculated according to the number of pupils. Local governments may freely spend the normative support. Maintainers of schools are also free to plan the school budget, the only restriction being that this budget has to cover the tasks of the school as defined in the relevant legal provisions. Local governments control the expenditures of schools by approving school budgets.

According to the principle of sector independence, the normative support given to school maintainers other than local governments and the state can not be less than the same normative support given to local governments. Church-affiliated schools are also entitled to additional support on the basis of their contract with the state. Additional school maintainers (other than local governments) are also entitled to further support if they make a contract with the local government to provide the task of public education.

The 1996 amendment to the funding provisions of the Public Education Act introduced new guarantees. The annual normative support given to local governments was calculated on the basis of public education expenditures of the local government in the previous year (at the time this amount was 80%). An additional, earmarked support was introduced for the nursery and school education of children belonging to ethnic minorities and also for schools with two languages of instruction. A new element in the system is the centrally-allocated amounts that are earmarked for the development and renewal of public education, the establishment of a computer network, in-service teacher training, the new system of post-professional examination and pedagogical services and pedagogical service providers.

In 2000, the minimal normative support given to local governments was increased from 80% to 90% of the expenditure of the previous year, which meant a



new, stronger guarantee of the budget. At the same time, the amount of subsidies earmarked for professional development and quality improvement of local and regional services also increased. In order to compensate for social inequalities a new normative support was introduced to cover the costs of extra-care taken of underprivileged students, encouraging compensation classes.

Between 1992 and 1999 the normative state support of public education institutions maintained by other organizations (which are not local governments or the state) increased more than tenfold. The 1999 Amendment to the Public Education Act considerably transformed the system of subsidies for public education institutions maintained by other organizations than local governments or the state. The majority of expenses is covered by the budget in a sector-independent manner. The situation is even better in the case of church-affiliated schools, since they are reimbursed for the total average amount spent on public education by local governments in the previous year.

In 1999 local governments spent more than a quarter of their current expenditure on education. Another recent characteristic is the increased proportion of centralized subsidies: this form of support did not exist in the early 1990s, while its proportion in 1999 was as high as 8.4% of all public education expenditures by local governments. Local governments had to find other sources to pay for the difference between the amount of normative support and the actual expenditure. As a result, the situation of education in terms of the budget was more and more dependent on the financial situation of individual local governments. (National Institute for Public Education, 2000).

The expenditure on public education as percentage of the GDP increased in the period 2000-2004: the share of spending on pre-school institutions increased from 0.7% to 0.8%, and expenditures on primary and secondary education institutions grew from 2.71% to 3.13%. The total amount of public education spending on state-maintained institutions and state funding of non-state maintained (local government) institutions increased from 3.64% to 4.27% of GDP in the period 2000-2004. (National Institute for Public Education, 2006).

According to Eurostat, the total public expenditure on education represented 5.43% of GDP in 2004.

The educational process

The introduction of the National Core Curriculum (NCC) in 1995 and the following curriculum designing process at school level have been a key element of the reform of Hungarian public education. As a result, the basic framework in the regulation of the teaching content adjusted to the previously reformed administrative relations, i.e. the former central curriculum was replaced by a two-level regulation. Essentially, it provides for a frame-type state control over educational content, whereas the key document regulating classroom processes is the school level curriculum. Each school has to create such a curriculum as part of their pedagogical programme or adopt one elaborated by others. The NCC defines the compulsory requirements common in every school, regardless of the type of the institution, for the first ten years of



education. For the secondary education the common and compulsory requirements in Grades XI and XII are included in the subsequently passed Secondary School-leaving Examination Regulations. What was new, however, was that these requirements were formulated according to ten comprehensive cultural domains or fields of knowledge rather than for individual subjects. (National Institute for Public Education, 2000).

The development of the National Core Curriculum (NCC) began in 1989 and the government adopted the document in 1995. The preparation of the framework curricula was much shorter: the process started in 1998 and the Ministry of Education published the curricula in 2000. The introduction of the new system of curricular regulation was accompanied by a long professional and political debate. Professional bodies established by the Ministry of Education and which consist of numerous experts created the new national documents. The Ministry of Education was coordinating the process of development of both the NCC and the framework curricula. In both cases the work began with the drafting of a strategic concept, on the basis of which the committees, organized in accordance with the structure of subjects or fields of knowledge, could begin working. The work of these committees was in all cases supervised by an integrative body. In the case of the framework curricula the committees were organized according to school-types and subjects operated simultaneously. A number of versions were prepared for both the NCC and the framework curricula. Together with the strategic concept these versions were sent to schools and professional organizations so that they could formulate their opinion on the documents. In both cases, a way to do so was through data collection with the help of questionnaires. Thus, the documents were prepared in the framework of intensive communication between the decision makers and the schools.

The preparation of school-based programmes was a completely new phenomenon in public education: neither teacher training nor in-service training had prepared teachers for either the local planning of pedagogical work or the earlier preparation of curricula. Therefore, in the process of the implementation of the NCC the central governance of education had to take a significant role in developing the teachers' competence in this respect as well.

After the introduction of the NCC in 1995, the first task was to make the most important target groups (i.e. the teachers and the maintainers) acquainted with this completely new system of content regulation and the core curriculum itself, and to create the conditions of its utilization. Implementation required significant financial support, primarily because less than 10% of schools had earlier individualized programmes, and institutions which were not familiar with the preparation process of curricular documents required a great deal of professional assistance. In the period of the implementation of the NCC, schools spent the largest share of this financial support on participation in training courses on programme planning and the preparation of local curricula and on in-service training programs, which analyzed individual fields of knowledge of the NCC. Most of these courses were organized by providers of professional services and pedagogical institutes operating in the counties, but schools, universities and private companies provided such training programmes as well. Educational experts evaluating the pedagogical programmes of schools before the approval of those (schools were obliged to request such evaluations) also required training during the three-year period provided for the preparation of local curricula. By the time of approval, maintainers could select from amongst almost 4,000 experts.



One of the main problems was caused by the fact that the pedagogical cycles defined by the NCC did not fit into the school structure of the former system. Conforming to the age limit of compulsory education (which was extended to 16 years of age), the NCC regulated educational content until Grade X (where most students are 16 years old), however, there was no school in Hungary where the tenth grade constituted the final year. In a curricular sense, this regulation “split in two” the upper secondary phase of the 8+4 school structure: the NCC contained no guidelines for the final two years (Grades XI and XII), so general and vocational secondary schools had to plan the local curriculum for these two grades on the basis of requirements defined for the school-leaving examination.

The period of the elaboration of the new central curricular documents, and especially the introduction of the NCC, was accompanied by professional and political debates of varying intensity. According to opinion poll data, the acceptance of the NCC amongst teachers was about 60%. Whilst only a smaller part of the criticism concerned the document itself, many teachers criticized the process of implementation.

The second phase of the implementation of curricular reform started with the publication of the framework curricula. The framework curricula were issued on 30 August 2000 by a ministerial decree. In the course of professional discussions, the framework curricula were well received in most cases. The Ministry sent the basic principles of the framework curricula and the first lesson plans to all schools and professional pedagogical organizations, requesting their opinions in the form of a questionnaire and informally as well. The opinions show that teachers generally support the concept of framework curricula, they agree with its subject structure and believe that their local curriculum will be adjustable to the framework curriculum proposed for their type of school. With the exception of mathematics and natural science subjects, relatively few teachers criticized the compulsory number of hours of instruction defined by the proposed lesson plans. At the same time most schools requested that the subject "technology" not included in the framework curricula be restored for all grades. Similar to that of the NCC, the introduction of the framework curricula puts the greatest burden on vocational schools (especially for Grades IX and X). (National Institute for Public Education, 2001).

Pre-primary education

The main type of establishment at this level is the kindergarten (or nursery school), which is an independent educational institution. Activities in kindergartens are regulated by the National Core Programme for Kindergarten Education and the Decree No. 137 of 1996. Kindergartens admit children in the age group 3-6 years.

Children up to 3 years of age may attend day nurseries, which are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Welfare.

The fundamental aim of kindergarten education is to ensure harmonic personal development, according to children's personal characteristics. According to legislation, all 5-year-olds must attend kindergarten in order to prepare for school. However, it must be noted that the pre-school preparatory exercises do not constitute



a separate pedagogical entity in the integrated educational programme concerning the development of personality.

In 1999/2000, 87.3% of children aged 3-5 attended kindergarten (92% in the case of children of kindergarten age). In the same school year, there were 4,643 kindergartens with about 365,700 children and 31,409 teachers. The children-teacher ratio was 11.6:1. (National Institute for Public Education, 2001).

Primary education (basic education)

The principal type of establishment at this level is the eight-year general basic school. The modernization of the content of public education is outlined in the National Core Curriculum (NCC) introduced in 1995.

The NCC establishes common educational objectives, compulsory for Grades I-X in every school. This new instrument breaks away from the central curriculum regulation which used to determine in detail the ideological and educational goals, tasks and teaching materials, teaching subjects and the number of lessons. Instead, the NCC is a framework and a foundation upon which local curricula and educational programmes can be built. Parents, students and school leaders are allowed to express their interests and needs, and there is strong consideration of prevailing conditions, circumstances and opportunities. Schools and students have enough time to process and complete the material, to meet objectives and satisfy individual needs.

To accomplish these goals, the NCC: establishes unified objectives that, under normal conditions, could be met in 50 to 70% of the time resource allotted to the different levels of school education by the Education Act; formulates content and objectives according to ten comprehensive cultural domains instead of school subjects, enabling schools to choose, establish and group subjects according to their particular situation; lays down stages of objectives to be met by the end of certain grades (rather than determine objectives for each grade). Comprehensive and general objectives of the cultural domains should be met at the end of Grade VI and X. Detailed objectives, on the other hand, should be fulfilled in Grades IV, VI, VIII and X. In this way, the NCC promotes the adoption of teaching-learning methods adjusted to pupils' needs.

Objectives are divided into three main categories: (a) knowledge vital to the acquisition and development of skills, abilities and aptitudes, such as notions, facts, data, concepts, generalizations, reasoning, etc.; (b) skills including basic skills necessary to perform efficiently in different areas; (c) minimum competency, that is the lowest acceptable level of performance essential for students to continue their studies.

The NCC covers the entire spectrum of ten-year compulsory education, and it includes the following cultural domains or fields of knowledge: Mother language and literature (Hungarian language and literature, minority language and literature); modern foreign language; mathematics; man and society (social studies, civics, economics; humanities; history); man and nature (natural sciences; physics; chemistry; biology and health studies); our earth and environment; art (singing and music; dance and drama; visual arts; motion picture and media studies); informatics

(computer studies; library use); life management and practical knowledge (technology; home economics; career orientation); physical education and sports.

The NCC sets up proportions for the cultural domains and their areas that indicate their relative weight within the curriculum, in accordance with the characteristics of the pedagogical stages of development. These proportions are also meant to present guidelines for alternative and school-based curricula. Proportions of the cultural domains and their areas can not be expressed in number of classroom lessons but only in approximate percentages, because cultural domains and their areas can be transformed into teaching subjects in several ways. The schools determine the exact proportions of cultural domains taking into account the resource of compulsory and alternative lessons available.

First cycle of primary education: teaching subjects and suggested time allocation as defined in the Framework Curriculum (2000)

Subject	Annual number of teaching periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Hungarian language and literature	296	296	296	259
Foreign language	–	–	–	111
Mathematics	148	148	148	111
Environmental studies	37	37	74	74
Music	37	37	74	56
Drawing and visual arts	56	55	74	55
Technology and 'Way of life'	37	37	37	37
Physical education and sports	92	92	92	92
Total prescribed annual periods	703	702	795	795
Elective subjects	37	38	37	37
Total compulsory annual periods	740	740	832	832

Source: National Institute for Public Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Second cycle of primary education: teaching subjects and suggested time allocation as defined in the Framework Curriculum (2000)

Subject	Annual number of teaching periods in each grade			
	V	VI	VII	VIII
Hungarian language and literature	148	148	148	148
History and civic education	74	74	74	74
Foreign language	111	111	111	111
Mathematics	148	111	111	111
Information technology	–	–	37	37
Natural sciences	74	74	–	–
Physics	–	–	74	55
Biology	–	–	55	55
Chemistry	–	–	55	56
'Our earth and environment'	–	–	56	55
Music	37	37	37	37
Drawing and visual arts	55	55	37	37
Technology and 'Way of life'	37	37	37	37
Physical education and sports	93	92	74	74
'Tutorial class'	37	37	37	37
Curricular modules:				
Dance and drama	18	18	–	–
'National and folk education'	18	18	–	–
Information technology	–	18	–	–
Human and social education, ethics	–	–	37	–
Film and media education	–	–	–	37
Health education	–	18	–	18
Total prescribed annual periods	850	848	980	979
Elective subjects	74	74	37	37
Total compulsory annual periods	924	922	1,017	1,016

Source: National Institute for Public Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Pupils' performance and progress are regularly assessed during the school year. End-of-term marks as well as final (end-of-year) marks are given in each subject. End-of-term and final marks are based on continuous assessment. Pupils may be assessed in written or oral form, sometimes through tests. A staff meeting is held to review the final marks, which are given to each pupil by the subject teachers and the class teacher at the end of the school year. The regulations introduced in 2004 serve to change the traditional system and assure equal opportunities to pupils for progressing in their studies. As main rule pupils in the first three years cannot repeat the year even if they failed to meet the prescribed requirements prescribed. Repeating the year can be decided only in case long absence or if the parents ask for it. On completion of the basic education programme pupils are not required to sit an examination, nor do they receive a leaving certificate. As compulsory education lasts twelve years, pupils must attend the secondary school for a minimum of four years. The basic examination certificate is awarded upon successful completion of compulsory education.

Students with good achievement scores usually continue their studies in the general secondary school (*gimnázium*), while students whose results are not so good



choose vocational education. Those who do not qualify for entrance to general secondary or vocational education may enrol in trade schools. These schools offer a two-year training course in some professions. Although no certificate is given, they provide pupils with better prospects for entry to the labour market. According to the 1996 Amendment to the Public Education Act, pupils who do not wish to continue their studies must sit the national standardized basic examinations at the end the tenth year of education. (Ministry of Education, 2000).

In 1999/2000, there were 3,696 primary schools; there were about 960,000 pupils enrolled with 82,829 teachers. The average number of pupils per class was 21.4 and the pupils-teacher ratio was 13.6:1. The overall drop-out rate was estimated at 2.4%, and the transition rate to further studies was 95.9%. About 90% of schools were run by local governments. (National Institute for Public Education, 2001).

Secondary education

Secondary education institutions can be differentiated on two grounds: firstly, whether they provide general or professional/vocational courses; secondly, whether they prepare for the upper secondary school-leaving (maturity) examination or not.

The general secondary school (gymnasium) offers a general education programme leading to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate. There are three main forms of this type of school covering different age groups. The eight-year general secondary school caters for pupils between 12 and 18 years of age; the six-year gymnasium covers the age group 12-18, while the four-year gymnasium is for pupils aged 14-18. The majority of general secondary schools, like the other types of schools, are co-educational. Their main traditional role has been to prepare students for higher education, but preparation for entering the labour market has gained in importance too. There are also general secondary schools attached to teacher-training institutions of higher education where the standard of education is usually high.

Studies are completed with the upper secondary school-leaving examination, which is taken at the end of the twelfth or thirteenth year of education. This examination held in the school and is administered by an examining board made up of teachers from the school and chaired by a delegate from the educational authority. The examination consists of a written and an oral part. Tests and essays are corrected and marked by teachers from the school. The upper secondary school-leaving certificate allows for but does not guarantee admission to higher education, since colleges and universities have their own entrance examination requirements.

The three-year technical school provides vocational-technical courses without leading to the maturity examination. Despite recent significant drops in the number of students enrolled in this type of school, it still takes the majority of school leavers at the end of Grade VIII. In 1990 a new type of school emerged, the special apprenticeship school, which is a unique combination of special schools and vocational-technical courses.

General secondary education (high school): teaching subjects and suggested time allocation as defined in the Framework Curriculum (2000)

Subject	Annual number of teaching periods in each grade			
	IX	X	XI	XII
Hungarian language and literature	148	148	148	148
History	74	74	111	96
'Behavioural science' and ethics	–	–	37	–
First foreign language	111	111	111	96
Second foreign language	111	111	111	96
Mathematics	111	111	111	128
Information technology(*)	74	–	–	–
Introduction to philosophy	–	–	–	32
Physics	56	92	74	–
Biology	–	56	74	64
Chemistry	74	74	–	–
'Our earth and environment'	74	74	–	–
Music(*)	37	37	–	–
Drawing and visual arts(*)	37	37	–	–
Physical education and sports	74	74	74	64
Tutorial class	37	37	37	32
<u>Curricular modules:</u>				
Social education	18	18	18	16
Dance and drama(*)	18	18	–	–
Film and media education	–	–	18	16
Fine arts	–	–	37	32
Total prescribed annual periods	1,054	1,072	961	820
Elective subjects	55	37	148	160
Total compulsory annual periods	1,109	1,109	1,109	980

Source: National Institute for Public Education, 2001. (*) The number of teaching periods may be distributed in a different way in the local curricula. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

General secondary education (high school): teaching subjects and suggested time allocation as defined in the Framework Curriculum (as revised in 2003)

Subject	Annual number of teaching periods in each grade			
	IX	X	XI	XII
Hungarian language and literature	148	148	148	128
History, citizenship education	74	55.5	111	96
Anthropology, sociology and ethics	–	–	37	–
First foreign language	111	111	111	96
Second foreign language	111	111	111	96
Mathematics	111	111	111	128
Information technology, library	55.5	–	–	–
Introduction to philosophy	–	–	–	32
Physics	55.5	74	74	–
Biology	–	37	74	64
Chemistry	55.5	74	–	–
Geography	74	74	–	–
Singing and music	37	37	–	–
Drawing and visual culture	37	37	–	–
Physical education and sports	74	74	74	64
Tutorial class	37	37	37	32
Curricular modules:				
Sociology	18.5	18.5	18.5	16
Dance and drama	18.5	18.5	–	–
Media education	–	–	18.5	16
Arts (content decided by individual schools)	–	–	37	32
Available for school's purposes	55	37	148	160
Total compulsory annual periods	1,017.5	1,017.5	1,110	960

Source: Minister of Education Decree 10/2003. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

General secondary education (high school): teaching subjects and suggested time allocation as defined in the Framework Curriculum (as revised in 2003)

Subject	Annual number of teaching periods in each grade			
	IX	X	XI	XII
Hungarian language and literature	148	148	148	128
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Anthropology, sociology and ethics	–	–	37	–
First foreign language	111	111	111	96
Second foreign language	111	111	111	96
Mathematics	111	111	111	128
Information technology, library	55.5	–	–	–
Introduction to philosophy	–	–	–	32
Physics	55.5	74	74	–
Biology	–	37	74	64
Chemistry	55.5	74	–	–
Geography	74	74	–	–
Singing and music	37	37	–	–
Drawing and visual culture	37	37	–	–
Physical education and sports	74	74	74	64
Tutorial class	37	37	37	32
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Source: Minister of Education Decree 10/2003. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Vocational schools offering a programme leading to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate include: five-year technical secondary school (*technikum*) offering training in technical subjects; four- or five-year secondary vocational school providing training mainly for the service industries; and four-year secondary vocational training school awarding both upper secondary school-leaving and vocational certificates.

The vocational secondary school offers both general and vocational education and prepares for entry to higher education. It has three main aims: education for intermediate-level skilled workers and technicians; education for skilled workers who have become eligible for higher education by passing both the vocational and the upper secondary-school leaving examinations; and education on a large scale for a less specialized, more flexible labour force. The 1996 Amendment to the Public Education Act on defines the secondary vocational school as a four-year school providing basic education following which there is a specialized year of vocational education. During this year, the school prepares pupils for examinations in the occupations listed in the National List of Qualifications. Vocational schools have



close economic links with local industries. Some 1.5% of companies' wage costs have to be spent on vocational education. Companies transfer this amount either to the Vocational Educational Fund or, in many cases, directly to the school. Companies prefer direct transfers, since this enables close contact to be made with the school and makes feedback easier.

Other types of vocational training can be regarded as part of the system of initial vocational training. This type of training is shorter in duration, and only qualifies for the practice of a profession, without entitling for entry to higher education. According to legislation, there are four types of initial vocational training institutions: three-year technical school for skilled workers; three-year medical school; two-year trade school for typists; and one- or two-year special trade school.

The most important type is the three-year technical school, which still caters for a large proportion of pupils. The technical school provides vocational and practical skills and prepares pupils for the vocational examination. In vocational schools following the course duration specified in National List Qualifications, a dual system operates. Theoretical and practical education is provided in, say, two-week alternation. Pupils who have successfully completed their studies and taken the vocational examination can obtain further educational qualifications complementing their vocational qualifications enrolling in a two- or three-year course in the form of evening or correspondence classes or within the framework of the adult educational system. The trade school plays a significant role in the transition from basic education to secondary vocational education. (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Secondary education has witnessed a rapid and dynamic increase in recent years. Between 1988 and 1995 the number of general secondary schools increased by 43%, secondary schools with mixed (general and professional) courses grown by 97%, the number of vocational schools increased by 20%, and the number of technical schools by 13%.

In principle, the upper secondary school-leaving certificate grants access to further studies at the higher education level; however, the limited possibilities of intake and the special requirements of higher education institutions has prolonged the practice of entrance examinations functioning as filters. In recent years, a significant liberalization has been observed in this field as well.

In 1999/2000, there were 503,617 students in secondary education, of whom 145,210 students in general secondary schools. The total number of teachers was 40,667 (of whom 14,155 in general secondary schools). The average number of students per class was 27.8 and the student-teacher ratio was 12.4:1. In 1999, about 54% of schools were run by local governments and 22% by county self-governments. (National Institute for Public Education, 2001).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The aim to improve quality appeared in the election campaigns in 1998, and the new government programme, passed in 1998, explicitly drew up plans to establish a system of quality assurance. The issue received special attention in the 1999 amendment to the Public Education Act. On the basis of this amendment, the Ministry



of Education has created its own administrative authority, the National Public Education Evaluation and Examination Centre. The organization's competence includes: (a) managing the national control of education, measurement, evaluation and quality assurance; (b) acting as an authority with respect to matters within the Minister's scope; (c) organizing state exams and deciding about requests for remedy; (d) editing the national list of experts and examiners; (e) contributing to regional development in educational matters; (f) running the public education information system and tasks incurring therein.

The Ministry of Education initiated an independent quality assurance development scheme called 'Comenius 2000' in 1999. The scheme is based on a detailed professional concept, which differentiates between three models of quality assurance and quality development on both the institutional and local governmental levels. The first involves co-operative work models, and the ability of providing the entailing self-evaluation and self-analysis. The second involves local-institutional adaptation of existing quality assurance systems and the improvement of structural-development abilities. The third involves the diffusion of ideas to other institutions.

Surveys on student performance based on standardized testing methods have been conducted in several examination centres for years. Data gathered from surveys based on sampling procedures are available retrospectively for several years, which makes it possible to analyze changes and trends, and also allows for conclusions to be drawn in relation to the development of school-gained knowledge. Previously, surveys using standardized testing primarily gave information on the degree to which students had mastered the body of knowledge in a subject. Recent investigations, however, tend to target the sizing up of general competence, i.e. they put the emphasis on instrumental instead of factual knowledge. Such series of surveys, called "Monitor", have taken place on a regular two-year basis since 1986.

The most important conclusion of the 1999 Monitor survey, as already indicated by 1997 data, is that the steady fall of reading comprehension results since 1986 has stopped. The overall results, denoted in standard scores and calculated together for both years, were similar in 1995 and 1999. As far as text-types are concerned, findings show that results were somewhat lower with document-type texts, and higher with the other two types and with general cognitive abilities. The favourable and unfavourable changes thus compensate each other, and overall reading comprehension performance is basically identical with the results from four years ago.

In the case of mathematical abilities the 1995 and 1999 Monitor surveys make comparison relevant in two domain parts, both in connection with applied mathematics: in performing algebraic-calculation and text-based tasks. In contrast with reading comprehension results, the 1999 results in this domain fell behind the 1995 results. Although the difference is little, statistically speaking, the trend raises concern. The spread of performance grew in mathematics as well. In the case of ICTs, the 1999 survey makes 1995 data comparable in two domain parts: in software-related and applied knowledge. Both domains present a significant improvement in performance: the standard scores of 1999 are 62.8 points higher on average than the 1995 scores. This reflects the effect of regular computer use and the widespread use of certain programmes and appliances. It also shows that interest in information technology has shifted to younger age groups, and that attitudes towards ICTs have



clearly changed in a positive way. For example, the average eighth grader (12-13 year olds) spends 5.5 hours a week in front of the computer.

The knowledge level of students in natural sciences (biology, physics, and geology) has dropped to a smaller, yet significant degree. The decrease was larger in the case of biology and geology, which fell almost similarly, while this drop was somewhat smaller in the case of physics.

Civic education and attitudes have been surveyed for the first time in the 1999 Monitor samples. The survey conducted with 14-year-old students included 202 multiple choice questions. Of all the items, there were 38 cognitive questions on democracy and the economy, and 164 attitude questions on democracy and politics, national identity, social cohesion and divergence. Of all cognitive items, 26 were based on factual knowledge (correct answers spread between 40.1 to 88.9%) and 12 measured abilities (correct answers showed a smaller spread: 46.3 to 74.8%). It is typical feature that the majority of cognitive items where correct answers were below 50% were somehow related to the operation of the economy.

Student performance largely depends on non-institutional factors, such as the place of residence, family background and the socio-economic features of the students' environment. The effect of these is particularly significant. Therefore the surveys pay increasing attention to gathering and analysing background variables which might influence student performance. Of these variables, the settlement-type variable has received special attention in the 1990s, since its analysis reflects the fact that the gap between urban and rural schools is widening. The results of the 1999 Monitor survey indicated that the discrepancies between different settlement types have grown further towards the end of the decade. The previous distance between the capital and county cities seems to be closing, however, the falling of rural schools behind urban schools is continuing. Apart from this, the differences between the performance of student groups may be primarily explained by the qualification of parents. The difference between the performance of eighth-graders with parents of the lowest and the highest qualifications, measured in standard scores, reaches 20%. (National Institute for Public Education, 2000).

Several national and international performance assessment studies were carried out between 2003 and 2006. These surveys identified the same major problems regardless of the area studied: (i) 20-40% of pupils lack or barely have the fundamental skills necessary for orienting themselves in everyday matters, i.e. their achievements are weakest at level 1 or below in the various grades and cultural domains; (ii) PISA test results indicated that the achievement of pupils in mathematical literacy and in reading literacy was below the international average, whilst they scored at around the international average in natural sciences and problem solving; (iii) Hungary ranked second after Turkey from among the countries participating in the PISA survey in terms of the size of the difference between the achievements of schools; (iv) it is in Hungary that the qualification of parents and other features of family background have the largest impact on a pupil's educational achievement at school. (National Institute for Public Education, 2006).



Higher education

The overwhelming majority of the institutions of the Hungarian system of higher education are State institutions. The former system of higher education governance shared among various ministries was abolished in 1993, and the overall supervision is now assigned to the Ministry of Education. In recent years several institutions of higher education run by the churches, foundations and private resources have been set up. The Act on Higher Education of 1993 (amended in 2005) guaranteed the autonomy of institutions of higher education (universities and colleges). It has transferred every essential issue pertaining to the organization and operation of the institution, the curricula, the regulations of study and examinations, etc., to the college and university councils and to the leadership of the institutions. Centrally approved, uniform requirements are intended to secure the professional autonomy of institutions. The National Committee of Accreditation was set up after 1993 as a means to secure institutional autonomy, control quality, and assess and certify the institutions and the different programmes.

The Ministry conducts strategic planning and preparatory work on education policy, approves the creation and abolition of new faculties on the advice of the National Accreditation Committee together with the Higher Education and Scientific Council, and monitors the efficient use of central resources. A very important role is also played by the Ministry of Finance, which prepares the guidelines of the annual State budget.

The government provides the resources required to maintain the higher education system, determines general educational requirements, sets the conditions which have to be met for the starting up of doctoral programmes, lays down the regulations for the National Accreditation Committee and the Higher Education and Scientific Council, and sets the regulations for the establishment, licensing and termination of higher educational institutions, as well as for the recognition of foreign degrees. To co-ordinate the activities of the different ministerial portfolios, and to work out a coherent central policy, a Cabinet of Human Resource Policies was created. The Cabinet consists of the Ministers of social portfolios (Education, Health and Social Welfare, Environment), the Minister of Finance and the representatives of some key institutions (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, National Committee for Technical Development).

Prior to 1993, higher education was free of charge, and its funding was the duty of the State. The 1993 Act prescribes the introduction of tuition fees and determines methods of student compensation in the form of direct state support of (some) students, a student loan scheme, and tax allowances. In order to increase enrolment, institutions have become interested in offering more flexible and diversified educational programmes. To cater for applicants who would rather choose shorter and non-traditional forms of higher education, several management and business schools have been established, as well as remote educational networks, post-secondary courses and folk high schools. Parallel to these initiatives, the Ministry of Labour has expended considerable effort to create a post-secondary education sector as a prolongation of the vocational secondary training.



College education intends to prepare students for more practical tasks in such areas as technology, business administration, health services, teaching etc. The period of study for college undergraduate education is three or four years, and further specialized college post-graduate education can take a minimum of one year. The period of studies to gain the first level of qualification may be followed by post-graduate education in a certain special field at the colleges. In some cases the college programmes can be followed by university complementary studies to gain university level degree. University higher education is intended to train highly qualified specialists and research workers to occupy posts including research and development, management, etc., which require deep and extended theoretical knowledge. Until 2004, the minimum period of study for university undergraduate education was four years, although it usually lasted five years (six years in the case of medicine). One year was the minimum period of study for specialized postgraduate education, although generally this stage lasted two years and in some cases three years. The duration of programmes leading to a doctorate was usually three years (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The higher education system is now regulated by the **Act No. 139 on Higher Education** of 2005. In the framework of the Bologna process, the new three-cycle degree structure was adopted in December 2004. Bachelor's degree programmes last three to four years, and master's degree programmes take one to two years to complete. Doctoral degree programmes last three year. Some long single-cycle programmes lasting five to six years (medicine, pharmacy, architecture, dental and veterinary studies) will be retained.

In 1999/2000, there were 89 higher education institutions (HEI) in the country; the total number of full-time students was about 171,500, and the total number of teachers was 21,138. In 2004, the higher education network consisted of 71 HEI, including: 18 public universities, six private universities (of which five denominational), 13 public colleges, and 34 private colleges (of which 22 denominational). In 2003/04, the total number of students was 409,572 (including 12,605 foreign students), of whom 217,905 on full-time basis, 153,139 part-time, and 39,338 on distance-learning modalities. There were 7,219 students enrolled in tertiary-level institutions, 233,948 were enrolled in colleges, 133,827 in universities, 7,875 in doctoral degree programmes, and 26,703 in postgraduate courses. (*National Report of Hungary on the Bologna Process, 2004-2005*).

Special education

Special education for children with physical and sensory disabilities and with learning difficulties is offered by several institutions dealing with the various disabilities (blind and visual impairment, deafness, children with disabilities in speech and movement, children with mild and medium-grave learning difficulties). Successful efforts have been made towards the integrated education of disabled children, but the main obstacle remains the shortage of professional means.

In 1998/99, there were 199 special education institutions as well as 481 sections operating in primary schools. The number of teachers was 7,031 (of whom 4,256 teachers with special qualifications). The total number of students enrolled was



44,339 (1,268 in kindergarten, 38,651 in primary school and 4,420 in secondary school).

Private education

The 1990 Amendment of the 1985 Act on Public Education put an end to the state monopoly of education, and made it possible for individuals and legal entities to take part in the provision of educational services. Two markedly distinct groups of schools not maintained by either the state or local governments have evolved reflecting historical traditions and the social environment: church-maintained schools on the one hand, and schools maintained by foundations and private schools on the other.

The percentage of these schools varies from school-type to school-type. While in pre-primary and primary education their proportion is not more than 4-5%, in secondary education and other educational levels they are represented in a higher proportion. Church-maintained schools are represented in a higher proportion in primary and general secondary education, whereas the same is true for schools maintained by foundations and private schools in pre-primary and vocational education.

Before establishing a private school, the educational plan of the institution has to be authorized. The educational plans have to be in agreement with the National Core Curriculum or the training requirements set forth in the National List of Qualifications. During the licensing procedure, the availability of adequate staff and facilities must also be considered.

The operation of private educational institutions is in many respects identical to the institutions maintained by local governments. The most important difference is that the educational work may bear commitment to a particular religion or philosophical school. Financing of such institutions is similar to that of institutions that are maintained by the local governments.

The amount of normative State contribution has to be complemented by the maintainer. A possible means of doing this is to charge fees for education and training. Assessment and certification are the same as in public schools.

Church-maintained schools can be established by dioceses, church districts, other church-related administrative districts or monastic orders. Over 60% of all schools maintained by historical religious denominations are Catholic, 20% of them are Calvinist, 10% of them are Lutheran and around 1% are Jewish. An overwhelming majority (76%) of private schools operate as foundations. A group of schools maintained by foundations strive to implement 'alternative' educational goals and methods (such as Waldorf, Rogers, Montessori), others promote various interests, such as the integrated education of handicapped children, compensatory education for disadvantaged children; Gypsy organizations have also established schools. Private schools and schools maintained by foundations are unanimously based on market conditions. Such institutions aim at complementing the provision offered by the State. (Ministry of Education, 2000).



Number of teachers and students in schools operated by foundations and other maintainers (1999/2000)

Type of institution	Institutions	Students	Teachers
Kindergarten	172	7,080	748
Primary school	87	8,943	1,066
Special education institution	13	950	305
Vocational training school	19	1,375	57
Vocational apprentice school	26	3,832	169
Secondary school	133	21,675	1,432
University, college	6	7,582	1,675

Source: National Institute for Public Education, 2001.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

A well-regulated (and lately somewhat crowded) market for public education textbooks has been functioning for a decade in Hungary. Of all registered publishers 10% are engaged in publishing textbooks and teaching aids. A prerequisite for the admission to the textbook market is an official textbook qualification. The related licensing process is regulated by the Minister of Education. The Ministry issues a list of the approved textbooks and aids every year, which is mailed to the schools in printed and electronic forms. The list consists of approximately 5,000 publications.

Teachers have the right, after consultations with the body of teachers teaching the same subject in their school, to select textbooks, teaching aids and school equipment. A school usually orders the necessary textbooks from approximately 8-15 publishers. The textbook packages for the students consist of these textbooks and reference books. According to relevant statistics, one student had to obtain an average of 11.2 books for the school year of 1999/2000. Most textbooks have been replaced since the change of regime. Having tried a whole range of new products, teachers seem to have become tired of innovation by the end of the past decade and remained loyal to old, well-established textbooks.

Competition amongst publishers has become increasingly fierce in the 1990s. Although a total of 17 million copies of textbooks are published by 183 publishers, merely 12 of them gained at least a 1% share of the profit in the market. These are the companies which publish 95.9% of public education textbooks; with a market share of 91.6% in 1999 in publishing textbooks and reference books used in teaching. In 1999, nearly 17 million books were sold in public education, for a total of approximately 6.7 billion HUF. Over a third of this amount (2.4 billion HUF) was financed by the State through a textbook allowance given to every student. There is no available data on textbook allowance given by local governments, nevertheless, this form of support



affects a high proportion of students, though sometimes only through symbolic amounts.

The market for school equipment is far less regulated than that of the textbooks. A system of measurement, a qualifying procedure similar to the endorsement of textbooks and the limitation on products' prices have not been established. Neither is there a dominant governmental equipment producer present on the market aside from foreign and domestic private companies.

The temporary recession of school equipment production after the change of regime stopped by the end of the 1990s, yet on the whole, market supplies could be considered to be sufficient. The real problem is the lack of solvent buyers. From 1998, the Decree on the Compulsory (Minimal) Equipment Supplies for Educational Institutions has played a key role in regulating and improving the school equipment provision of public education institutions. It specified the necessary premises, furniture, educational aids and equipment for special education, nursery schools, and dormitories; and defined the exact numbers needed by each institute, site, group or child. The 1999 Amendment to the Public Education Act declares that all items included in the Register of Compulsory School Equipment should be applied for after five years in the case of functioning public education institutions and immediately at the initiation of new ones. In addition to forming a legal framework, the improvement of equipment provisions for schools and nursery schools also needs central financial resources for the development.

Public education institutions set only a minimal percentage of their budget on replacing their stocks and purchasing new, up-to-date equipment in the recession period of the 1990s. Only after the indispensable computer acquisitions could the renewal and purchase of school equipment take place, financed mainly by the private revenues of the schools or by parental support. Due to the lack of available central funds, considerable differences have appeared among schools concerning school equipment provisions. The results of a representative 1996/97 survey revealed that only the traditional audio-visual equipment supplies were completely covered. Due to the major developments of the late 1990s, secondary schools are well equipped with computers. However, in the field of equipment major discrepancies can be observed among the schools according to their size. While the supplies of classical school equipment are fairly unified, the more modern the items are, the more noticeable the drawbacks of small schools become. (National Institute for Public Education, 2000).

Adult and non-formal education

There is no single law containing the regulation of adult education as a whole. The principles of the regulation in adult education within the school system are included in the Acts on Public Education, Vocational Education and Higher Education. A series of laws are involved in the regulation of the fields related to adult education linked to labour-market training. A separate law stipulates the conditions of training organized by labour force developmental and training centres, the nature of these services and the implementation of the training. The conditions of the system of educational, training and other special services provided for the unemployed and young people seeking employment are regulated by the Employment Act. Regulations concerning studies beside work, on-the-job training, in-service training, and contracts of studies



aiming at the development of the active labour force are covered by the Code of Labour Legislation. Training provided for the increasing numbers of unemployed have been in the focus of legislation related to the field of adult education since the 1990s. The Act on Adult Training of 2001 provided for the creation of the National Adult Training Institute.

Responsibilities related to the management of adult education and training are shared between state institutions and the actors involved in economy. The most important tasks fulfilled by the actors on behalf of the state are the articulation of rules for legislation and financing, supervision of compliance with these, and sanctioning in cases of violation. At state level, competence over activities related to adult education is shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs. Adult education within the school system and the organization of vocational examinations and control over the requirements related to the qualifications included in the National List of Qualifications belong to the authority of Ministry of Education. The fact that vocational examinations are separated from preparation as stipulated in the Act on Vocational Education guarantees that vocational qualifications granted in adult education have the same value as those obtained in the system of vocational education, and that the qualifications can be obtained outside the framework of the school system. Adult education activities taking place in public schools are constantly decreasing. While in the 1970s there were 451 such educational establishments with 21,000 adult learners, in 2001/02 the number of institutions was 57 and the number of adult learners was less than 2,800.

Besides training within the school system, the so-called labour market training is increasingly gaining ground. The network of county employment centres, supervised at state level by the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs, plays an important role in the organization and provision of training in this sector. County employment councils also take part in decision-making concerning the nature of the training. The National Council for Regional Development plays an important administrative role in the co-ordination of regional development and employment policies. The new focuses of the constitutional framework of labour-market training are the evolving regional labour force development and training centres.

Adult education is financed from three major sources: the central budget, a compulsory vocational training contribution by the employers to the Vocational Training Fund, and the so-called decentralized support by the central Employment Fund. The institutional system of adult education has three poles. Adult education within the school system consists of workers' schools, labour-market training comprises regional labour-force development and training centres and vocational training institutions providing training on a market basis, and the private sector offers training in private vocational training institutions organized on a profit-oriented or non-profit basis.

Educational programmes in the labour market offer training and retraining for adults and the young unemployed, as well as preventive training for those threatened by unemployment. About 80% of the training programmes aim at providing participants with qualifications in a variety of professions, others aim at giving the participants some specific skill required by the employers. In general, the employment centre recommends a training programme to the registered unemployed, but an



increasing number of people choose a training programme which they find suitable and is eligible for support by the employment centre. The training courses granting vocational qualifications are completed with an examination, in accordance with the general rules set by the Act on Vocational Education.

The regional labour force development and training centres, which were established in the beginning of the 1990, constitute a new type among the institutions of vocational training. In 1999 their national network consisted of nine units. Beside the organization and provision of training programmes on the basis of regional demands and requests from the enterprise sector, these institutions offer counselling as well as a variety of other services and function as methodological and examination centres. They establish contact with the technical schools and care for the unemployed in their regions.

Non-profit organizations also take a part in training for the unemployed, but the scope of their activity is relatively narrow. For employees, individual ventures also offer training programmes, which have been playing an important role. They are most typically specialized in language teaching and training in management, entrepreneurial and economic skills, office management and computers, and offer crash courses in some fashionable professions. (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Teaching staff

Teacher training programmes (kindergarten nurses, schoolmasters and teachers) are offered by the colleges and by different universities. The condition of admission, in addition to the required achievement in secondary education and the successful secondary final examination, is the successful entrance exam, supplemented by an aptitude and abilities test. Until recent years, the qualifications required to teach at different levels were as follows:

- Kindergarten: a kindergarten teacher (college) diploma (a secondary qualification obtained in earlier years qualifies only for jobs of subordinate kindergarten nurses and not for heads of kindergartens).
- Lower grades of primary school (beginning phase: Grades I-IV): schoolmaster (college) diploma. The four-year college training, launched in 1995, qualifies for teaching in Grade V and VI, as well as in a chosen field of education.
- Higher grades of primary school (Grades V-VIII): primary school teacher diploma (college degree), or secondary school teacher diploma (university degree).
- Secondary school, general subjects: secondary school teacher diploma (university degree).
- Secondary school vocational subjects: diploma obtained at the teacher-training faculty of a university specializing in the subject (technical, agricultural, economics).



- Special education: teacher diploma obtained at the teacher training college.
- Physical education, music and visual subjects: teacher qualifications for secondary and primary school can be obtained from specialized higher education institutions, such as the Hungarian University of Physical Education, the University of Music, and the University of Fine Arts.

Teacher education is now subject to a radical revamp as a result of the introduction of the two-cycle scheme of the Bologna process. The old and the new systems will continue to operate simultaneously for some time. The current structure of teacher training is complicated, fragmented and its components often lack coherence. Teacher training is operated in a dualistic structure, with some of the branches offering college-level education only without direct access to university training. Both colleges and universities offer training courses for subject teachers. Training in various disciplines and in education mostly runs parallel. Some teacher training courses only offer a degree in teaching, others offer an additional degree other than teaching. Some of the disciplines require students to major in two subjects, others do not. The duration of training is between three and five years. There are 33 higher education institutions with teacher training programmes, but none maintains a pure teacher training profile or covers all the branches of teacher training. Some institutions offer no more than a single teacher training course, while others list 25-30. Teacher training is normally conducted by a variety of faculties organized around a professional training discipline and is assigned to a department of education operated as part of the faculty. (National Institute for Public Education, 2006).

According to the new rules and regulations, becoming a lower and upper secondary school teacher requires a master's degree, awarded after five years of study (including the three-year bachelor's degree programme, defined as the first training cycle) and six months of teaching practice (30 credit points) considered as an integral part of the programme. Teachers of primary education require special training (both theoretical and practical in the fields of methodology and pedagogy) at the level of four-year programmes. (Eurydice, 2007).

The relative income position of teachers kept deteriorating each year between 1992 and 1998, except for a single year. Conditions improved between 1998 and 2000, but the salary of teachers in public employment rose only to half of the national average of the salaries of degree holders despite the improvement. The rise in basic salary in 2002 brought the payment of qualified teachers employed in general education to 80% of the average pay of degree holders, while the salaries of qualified teachers employed in secondary institutions surpassed the average income of degree holders. By 2004, teachers' salaries as compared to the salaries of degree holders had by and large replicated the levels seen in 1989. (National Institute for Public Education, 2006).

Educational research and information

The Hungarian Institute for Educational Research (HIER) is an academic institution dedicated to social research on education. It carries out economical, sociological and statistical researches on the education system at national, regional and institutional



levels. With empirical sociological research methods, statistical analysis and case studies HIER contributes to the development of the education system and offers policy analyses for decision makers.

The Institute is maintained by the Ministry of Education but its researches are also supported by national and international funds. The Institute keeps contact with a large number of national and international scientific institutions, societies and committees, journal editorial boards.

HIER is also one of the centres of postgraduate education for teachers together with Debrecen University it has a Ph.D. programme on higher educational research which is accredited by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. The Institute also hosts researchers, university lecturers and graduate students from Hungary and abroad in all fields related to education.

The library with over 20,000 volumes and national and international periodical resources supports the work of researchers, scholars and students. HIER maintains the publishing house *Educatio* Press which publishes a research monograph series *Society and Education*, a series of final reports of researches carried out at the Institute (*HIER Research Papers*) and the quarterly review *Educatio*.

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Web resources

Ministry of Education and Culture: <http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php> [In Hungarian and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Hungarian Accreditation Committee: <http://www.mab.hu/> [In Hungarian and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Hungarian Institute for Educational Research: <http://www.hier.iif.hu/hu/index.php> [In Hungarian; some information in English. Last checked: October 2007.]

National Institute for Public Education: <http://www.oki.hu/> [In Hungarian and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

National Institute of Vocational Education: <http://www.nive.hu/index.php> [In Hungarian; some information in English. Last checked: October 2007.]

EURYBASE, the information database on education systems in Europe: <http://www.eurydice.org/> [In several languages.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>