

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE HUNGARIAN ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

Introduction

The current chapter in the history of adult education in Hungary began, following the regime change, in the early 1990s. This form of education by now has become institutionalized; on one hand all the involved educational bodies emerged and integrated themselves with their specific roles within the larger educational system of the country, while on the other the legal setting was also created which made it possible for both private and public actors to invest substantial resources for the furthering of this form of education. The existing legal framework comprehensively regulates the methods of functioning of adult education institutions including their financing and the set minimum curriculum that they have to follow. An additional development has been the elevated need to expand the scope of adult education programs depending on age groups and areas of interest, which the system initially was unable or only partially able to accommodate (programs catering for the elderly or the specific needs of young adults). Initially, all non-institutionalized training courses and programs, aiming at self-development to be achieved through purely personal initiative, were grouped into this area. The raising of elementary/basic skills for adults through night schooling, both at primary and secondary levels, is a form of training to be carried out in the adult education setting.

Areas of adult education in the Hungarian education system

The Hungarian education system encompasses *school-based adult education*, which includes programs aiming for primary, secondary, or higher education certification and/or vocational training programs. Additionally, *non-formal education* is also present, which in the past years increasingly caters for employment-based training programs. In either case the goal is to preserve the employment status of the participant or assist in his inclusion or re-absorption in the labour market. In these training programs the skills taught and the qualifications

achieved are necessarily those which gave tangible relevance to the expectations and needs of the labour market.

Besides the vocational segment of adult education schemes the general educational curricula and language training have also gained added emphasis in line with Act CI of 2001 on Adult Education.

It can be stated that *one of the basic functions* of Hungarian adult education institutions is the facilitation of the attainment of primary school or the first vocational training certificate. In developed societies this so-called gapfill function translates at least to the completion of primary school or successful graduation from a vocational training program. Here, primarily, the involved age group includes those between 16-29 years.¹⁸

Students from the age of 16 instead of the regular educational system can continue their education within the framework of adult education, usually as correspondent students or distance learners as this may better suit their work schedules, family situations or other pre-existing conditions, as well as their age and already attained knowledge and skill levels. For years the number of students at primary schools in the adult education system has hovered around 2,000. In the secondary programs during the 2012/2013 academic year there were nearly 86 thousand students, however, while the popularity of vocational schools showed a marked increase an opposite trend is discernible in those schools which only offer a traditional secondary school leaving certificate. In the past five years the number of students in vocational schools for adults has doubled, while in traditional secondary schools and vocational school with a traditional secondary school curriculum it has decreased by 10 thousand. In the adult education system in 2012 9,600 students successfully passed their secondary school leaving exams and almost 8,500 their vocational exams.¹⁹

The *second function* of adult education is the vocational and professional training of individuals throughout their active working life in order to enhance their employment prospects. In developed

18 Zachár 1998.

19 KSH 2013.

countries this task is usually undertaken by the employers who draw up training programs to suit their specific needs and requirements.

The *third main function* of adult education is to offer marketable skills and knowledge to people through employment incentive programs; such are the in-house, external or other training courses organized by employers.

Finally, the *fourth function of adult education* in Hungary is that through so-called supplementary courses it should assist the effectiveness of vocational training, augment employment opportunities for participants, and safeguard the already existing jobs and positions.²⁰

The institutional structure of the Hungarian lifelong learning system

In Hungary non-formal education is based on four pillars: the network of public institutions, private entities involved in adult education, non-profit organizations, and the internal training schemes of companies.

Public education, institutions of higher learning, training centres, and other public bodies

In Hungary the significance of *elementary schools in adult education* has decreased significantly mainly because 96-98% of students complete the eight grades of elementary schooling by the end of their compulsory school attendance age. A portion of secondary vocational schools offers, besides the basic curriculum, additional training programs, which seemingly add to the popularity and importance of such schools.

In all likelihood the training and educational function of *institutions of higher learning and adult education bodies* will continue to increase in the future.

In Hungary the National Employment Service Centres possess a significant training function. There are altogether nine county-level human resource development and training centres. These were established during the 1990s by following Western-European examples with the goal of offering beyond their primary mandate also support in adult education. Currently such centres provide training to roughly 25 thousand people nationwide.

Additionally, the remaining institutions of the old public educational and culture centres also fulfil adult education functions.

Besides the public bodies in Hungary there exist a number of private enterprises active in adult vocational training; in the year 2013 there were 1,571 such ventures. A part of them can be traced back to the pre-regime change further training and management schools that were run as part of the regional public administration system, while others are either micro or small sized companies focusing on adult education, vocational training or language teaching. The latter often can be traced back to the old state-run corporations own training centres. The third type of training institutions consist of those private companies, established during the 1990s, which partially also set up their own institutional networks or became involved in higher education, while others, due to their complex, wide array of activities, engage in consulting and coaching as well.

Hungarian figures

The proportion of students in the higher education system out of all those engaged in any school-based education cannot be considered high; among the above 45 year age group it is in fact quite low. A more positive picture is gained by viewing the non-formal and informal learning categories. In the second the involvement of older age groups is exceptionally high (85.2% of those aged between 55-64 and 95.7% of those aged between 65-74 participate in informal learning).

In 2011 the Hungarian Central Statistical Office conducted an independent survey about education and forms of training among those aged 25-64 years. The number of respondents, living in private households in Hungary, exceeded 7,000.

According to the survey in the year before (2010) 27.2% of the 25-64 year age group participated in some form of school-based and non-formal learning; institutionalized training courses were most popular among young adults – while nearly 40% of those aged between 25-34 years were involved in some form of training in the preceding twelve months, this figure barely reached 15% for those above 55. In line with international trends education and training courses are more popular among the active working age population and especially those who are actually employed. Among the active population the

20 Bajusz 2009.

Table 1.
Participation rates in education depending on the form of learning and the age of learners

| Age group | School-based learning | Non-formal learning | Informal learning |
|------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 15-24 | 92,5 | 9,5 | 18,9 |
| 25-34 | 40,7 | 36,8 | 41,0 |
| 35-44 | 17,9 | 48,6 | 51,8 |
| 45-54 | 6,6 | 44,3 | 64,1 |
| 55-64 | 1,1 | 29,9 | 85,2 |
| 65-74 | 0,0 | 7,6 | 95,7 |
| Total | 63,3 | 22,1 | 33,3 |

Central Statistical Institute KSH: Lifelong learning, 2004.

participation rate exceeded 30%, at the same time for the unemployed it remained around 15% with an even smaller rate in the inactive segment. Participation rates are highly uneven among the different regions of Hungary: in Central Hungary and Central Transdanubia above average, in Southern Transdanubia, Western Transdanubia, and the Northern Great Plain regions close to average and in the Southern Great Plain and Northern Hungary below average attendance rates were registered among the inhabitants.²¹

School-based education

In 2011 3.2% of the population aged between 25–64 years participated in school-based learning. They primarily worked toward the attainment of college/university level qualifications: more than two-thirds were enrolled in bachelor's or master's programs and over 6% in doctoral (PhD, DLA) or post-doctoral programs. Of this age group more than 10% learnt according to traditional secondary school curriculum, while less than 8% participated in school-based higher level vocational/technical training courses.

Nearly a third of the courses pursued were in the fields of social sciences, economics, and law. Additionally, education, healthcare, social care, mathematics, computer science, and natural sciences were also popular. More than 28% of learning women but less than one-fourth of men can be included here. The level of prior educational background was the most significant factor in the willingness for participation in continued education. Barely 10% of those who only attended elementary school were involved in any form of further education/training.

21 KSH 2010.

Non-formal learning

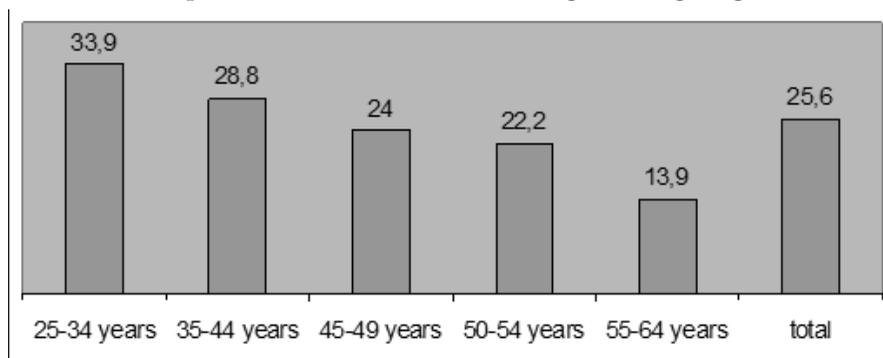
At the time of the survey a quarter of the adult population participated in non-formal learning courses with only insignificant differences among genders. With aging participation rates tended to fall off here as well: for those between 25–34 years more than a third, however, among the 55–64 year age group only 14% were involved in this form of learning.

Attendance rates, similarly to all other forms of education, are highly dependent on previous schooling: non-formal learning programs are most popular among those with some form of higher education qualification, with a 47% participation rate. Whereas only a quarter of those with secondary school diplomas and barely 10% of those with only elementary school education engaged in any type of training program. The variety of types on non-formal learning exhibited a much greater diversity than what is available in the traditional school-based system. Those courses which did not offer any type qualification or certificate upon completion proved to be the most popular among the Hungarian adult population with a more than 10% participation for the 25–64 year age group.²²

The second most popular type of training was participation at conferences and seminars. These were most popular among those with higher education qualifications; furthermore, they frequented teambuilding trainings, language courses, and public interest lectures far in excess of their proportion in the general public.

22 KSH 2013.

Diagram 1.
Participation rates in some form of learning according to age



Based on Central Statistical Office (KSH) data

The legal regulation of adult education in Hungary following the regime change

The independent legal regulation of adult education in Hungary was completed in 2001 under the auspices of Act CI of 2001 on *Adult Education*. The primary aim of the law was to establish general rules for the protection of the consumer rights of learners, for the outlining of modalities and transparency of adult education, and for the organisation of public financing of such programs. It regulates the scope of activities and services to be covered under the aegis of adult education as well as the framework for subsidizing both institutions involved and programs supported. This law allows everyone to partake in adult education upon the fulfilment of prerequisites set for the specific programs or by institutions to be attended.

The jurisdiction of the law encompasses a number of education providers permitted to engage in the provision of adult education services. In line with this in Hungary adult education service providers may be schools in the public education system, vocational schools, institutions of higher learning, non-profit companies, associations, public bodies, private and public foundations, and businesses with or without legal entities. A new amended version of the law was prepared this year (2013), however, still pending enactment.

Good practices in the area of adult education especially in the teaching of the elderly

For the 60 years and above age group there are no elementary and secondary schooling opportunities in Hungary. In a formal education setting programmes to address specifically the needs of this age group were established only in higher education. The Budapest based King Sigismund College operates at 4 locations in and around Budapest the *Óbuda Open University for the Elderly*. Anyone over 50 years of age can sign up for the courses offered, which encompass topics like botany, education and the elderly, social problems in old age etc. This initiative commenced in the autumn of 2011 and at the end of each course the participants receive a certificate of attendance.

The Győr based Széchenyi István University set up a similar programme for those over 50 years of age in various disciplines following the Open University format. Attendees upon the conclusion of their courses also receive certificates. This programme began towards the end of the previous decade.

In both occasions the course fees are kept at relatively modest sums taking into consideration the financial means of the elderly. The venues of the courses in the case of both schools are on-site to optimize costs.

In Hungary we cannot talk about a uniform system of education for the elderly. In every case, the previous two illustrate it quite well, what we see are independent initiatives where the instruction and the location are provided by a school, but not in the form of an independent teaching centre for the elderly.

So far in Hungary there have not been educational institutions to serve exclusively the needs of students with special needs; the *Óbuda Open University for the Elderly* also rather fills an existing demands than serve as a full-fledged institution for students with special needs.²³

By viewing the history of adult education and especially those programs catering specifically for the interests of the elderly it can be said that in Hungary the emphasis has traditionally been on public lectures series (see Table 1.).

The oldest and most well-established institution of adult education is the Budapest based (TIT) József Attila Open University. Within the Open University operates the Senior Citizens' Open University, which mainly offers programs and events suitable for the above 60 audience. „Anybody can visit: *irrespective of level of education, occupation, age or gender. The Open University offers lectures in every field of science with a renowned group scientists and presenters aiming to satisfy every conceivable intellectual need of the interested public*.”²⁴

The Budapest based few week long course ‘Click on it Grandma!’ generated substantial interest nationwide among Hungarian adult education providers. The course provides computer literacy skills with a curriculum specifically designed for the elderly. The primary aims are to introduce the participants to the use of the internet and electronic mail services by giving user-friendly instruction. The course commenced in 2002 and since then more than 5,000 mostly above 50 participants have earned their certificates of attendance.²⁵

Summary

The institutional structure of the Hungarian adult education system is based on the legal framework and on the particular service providers present. The current system institutionally is based on multiple pillars. No independent structural framework exists; there is instead complete integration into the elementary, secondary and higher level education systems as well as into the various private profit oriented education providers. In Hungary the attendance rates in formal adult education, especially in the case of the elderly, is li-

imited (see Table 1.); the informal, non-school based type of education courses enjoy more popularity. In the area of adult education a prominent role is played by public lectures series and open universities, which have been traditionally popular in Hungary. Another important factor is that the education establishment, in light of an aging society, is just beginning to realize the significance of adult education for the future.

Felhasznált irodalom

- Bajusz Klára 2009 *Az időskori tanulás*. Letöltés helye: <http://www.ofi.hu/tudastar/bajusz-klara-idoskori>
- Jászberényi József 2011 *Geronto-educáció. Az időskoroktatás helyzete és perspektívái itthon és a nagyvilágban*. Budapest: PrintXBudavár Kiadó.
- Az élethosszig tartó tanulás* 2004 KSH. Letöltés helye: http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/pdf/lifelong_learning.pdf
- Statistikai tükör. 2010/87. *Részvétel a felnőttképzésben*. 2010. augusztus 5. Letöltés helye: <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/felnottkepzes0507.pdf>
- Statistikai tükör. 2013/7. *Felnőttoktatás, -képzés*. 2013. március 5. Letöltés helye: <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/felnottoktat.pdf>
- Zachár László 2008 *Az egész életen tartó tanulás tartalma és a hazai felnőttképzési rendszer*. In: HEFOP 3.5.1. „Korszerű felnőttképzési módszerek kidolgozása és alkalmazása. Budapest. Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttképzési Intézet.
- Kattints rá, Nagyi! Program*. Letöltés helye: <http://www.bmknet.hu/kattints-ra-nagyi-oroszagos-halozat>
- Kossuth Klub Szabadegyetem*. Letöltés helye: <http://www.kossuth-klub.hu/szabadegyetem>

Absztrakt

A jelen tanulmány a felnőttoktatás magyarországi rendszerét, kiemelten az időskoroktatást állítja középpontba. Magyarországon – hasonlóan más európai országokhoz – a társadalom előregedése jellemző. Ebből adódóan egyre hangsúlyosabb szerep hárul azokra a szociális, oktatási és kulturális intézményekre, oktatási formákra, amelyek az idősekkel foglalkoznak, segítik és tá-

23 Jászberényi 2011.

24 <http://www.kossuth-klub.hu/szabadegyetem>

25 <http://www.bmknet.hu/kattints-ra-nagyi-oroszagos-halozat>

mogatják egyéni és közösségi életterületet, integrációs esélyeiket.

Az összefoglalás egyfelől bemutatja a hazai felnőttoktatásban megjelenő oktatási formákat, típusokat, másfelől az adatokon keresztül láthatóvá teszi

a képzésben résztvevők, különös tekintettel az idősök oktatásban, képzésben való részvételét, és annak problematikáját, valamint egy-egy példán keresztül a hazai jó gyakorlatokat.

