

Special Education Teacher Preparation in Hungary

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of general and special education in Hungary, including training and teacher preparation. We examine trends towards inclusion and the challenges of training general education teachers to support students with disabilities. We also outline the process of qualifying for special education and explore teacher preparation in Hungary, including the various paths to becoming a certified teacher and the ongoing professional development requirements. This article concludes by addressing the historical importance of public education in Hungary and the laws and policies pertaining to special education. We highlight current issues in special education and teacher preparation, such as the diagnosis process for autism and the need for improved support and pay for teachers. Overall, a comprehensive overview of special education in Hungary is provided, highlighting its challenges, progress, and areas for improvement.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive Education, Special Education, Students with Disabilities, Teacher Preparation

INTRODUCTION TO HUNGARY

Special education in Hungary has changed drastically over the years. In this article, we introduce Hungary as a country to better understand the circumstances surrounding the general and special education systems that are located there. The size of the population, the type of government, and the economic situation in Hungary all contribute to the type of education that students with and without disabilities are receiving. Also affecting the type of education that students receive, is the amount of preparation embedded into the teachers' training programs. Lastly, we will discuss the issues around special education in Hungary and offer some topics for future research that might benefit the community and inform special education practices.

Demographics

Hungary is one of the oldest countries in Europe. Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia border Hungary. Of the 9.7 million people who reside there, over 93% are Hungarian, with some of the ethnic minorities being Roma, Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Romanians, Serbs, Poles, Slovenians, Rusyns, Greeks, and Armenians (Vardy et al., 2023). With majority of the population being Hungarian, the most common language spoken is also Hungarian. Hungarian is one of the only languages in Europe that is not related to any other major European language, which could make it difficult for students there to learn a second language. The country is currently divided into 19 counties with 174 different districts. However, this has not always been the case, and Hungary has changed significantly over the last century.

Hungary's borders changed after World War II, causing the population in Hungary to decrease severely. After the war, Hungary lost 71% of its land mass because of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 (Vardy et al., 2023). Hungary's population slowly started to recover in the early 70's and 80's but then began to decrease and is still low today (Vardy et al., 2023). Hungary is currently facing a negative natural increase rate,

meaning the number of deaths outweigh the number of births. It is important to note this decline in population when considering the number of students and teachers that are in the schools and what laws the government has created for this population.

Government

Hungary had a functioning parliament for about 80 years before the communists took over in 1948, creating a Soviet-style political system for the next 40 years (Vardy et al., 2023). Now the current political system in Hungary functions under a multiparty parliamentary democracy. They elect a president every five years who can only serve for two terms total. However, unlike the United States, their president only has power over the military, whereas it is the prime minister who has power in other areas of the country and duties over the government (Vardy et al., 2023). This is important to note because the government has a significant effect on the education system in Hungary, especially in relation to the laws around education and what that means for teachers and students. Not only that, but the government also significantly impacts the economy, which also influences the types of jobs and education that are available for students.

Economy

Before 1948, agriculture employed more than half of Hungary's population, but that decreased to about one eighth of the population by 1990 (Vardy et al., 2023). Hungary is self-sufficient in their food production, which is in large part due to a climate that is ideal for most crops. Because farming and agriculture are so important to Hungary's history and economy, private farms occupy roughly one-eighth of the land mass in Hungary. Despite agriculture employing most of the Hungarian population for

many years, it is not the only economic opportunity.

In 1948, Hungary introduced a centrally planned economy which opened millions of new jobs in industry and service. Hungary controlled the wages and the prices for consumer goods, keeping wages low to create these opportunities and prices high for everything beyond staples in order to encourage saving. The government then used this money how they saw fit. The purpose of this new economy was to create economic growth for Hungary, which continued throughout the years with several more changes. This expanded Hungary's economy to include machinery, transport, export, and tourism (Vardy et al., 2023).

However, during the global recession, many economies failed and created an economic crisis for several years that eventually sent Hungary into a recession. In 2010, Viktor Orbán, the current prime minister in Hungary, came to power and brought a drastic change to the economic policy (Vardy et al., 2023). He put into place *Orbanomics* which allowed many menial jobs to be created, dropping the unemployment rate to 3.8% in 2022 (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2022b). The population of Hungary, the government, and the economy all contribute to the number of students who attend school and what types of schools they attend for both students with or without disabilities because of the laws, policies, and traditions that are in place.

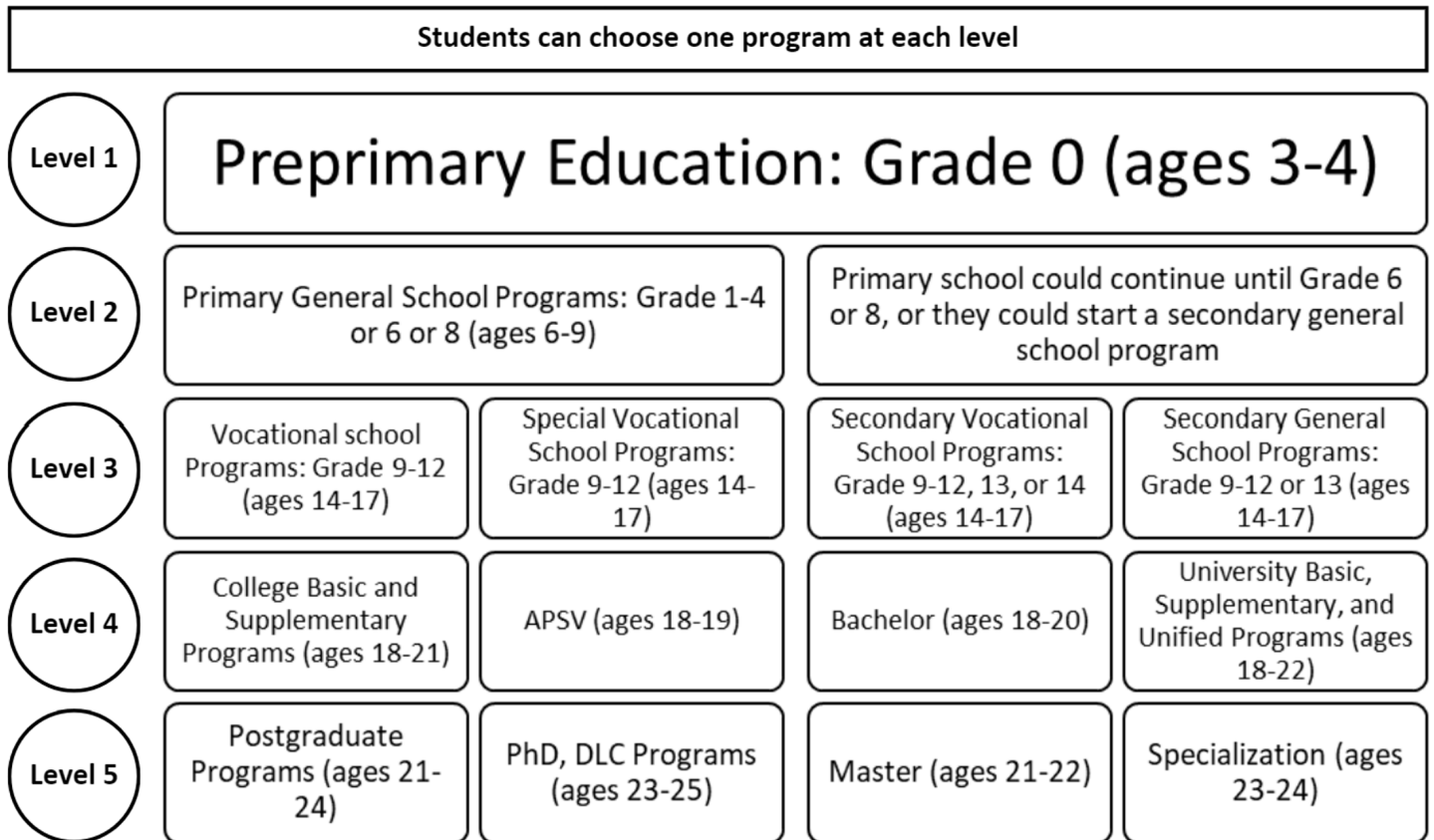
GENERAL EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

Public education in Hungary dates to the eighteenth century, but the first modern education act, put into place in 1868, was called The Education Act (Monostori, 2014). This act required compulsory education, meaning that that all children ages six to twelve would be required by law to attend school.

Currently, the requirement is ages six to sixteen (Monostori, 2014).

Schooling is a main priority in the country of Hungary, and in 2020, about 82% of the three to twenty-two-year-old age group attended formal education (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2022a). This education includes learning a second language in the fourth grade, which is typically English, and a third language in secondary school. Throughout a child's time in school, they will attend pre-primary school or kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, and post-secondary education (see Figure 1; Laposa et al., 2015). Because Hungary has a free choice of school policy, families must decide where to send their children. Any child who attends a public school must apply and be accepted to that school (Radó, 2020). Hungary also has one of the highest percentages (15.4%) in Europe of primary school pupils attending private school. Radó (2019) claims that the percentage is large enough to impact the economy in Hungary and produce a systemic effect. However, each primary school will not accept all the students who apply and will instead decide which students to accept based on desirable traits, including family background (Hegedűs & Sebestyén, 2023; Radó, 2020).

Secondary general education is a more challenging process and is mainly based on primary school performance, which many feel is unfair in its selection process (Radó, 2020). The schools' acceptance and admission procedures are highly rigorous and require a strong resume (European Commission, 2023a). There are typically entrance examinations on mathematics and Hungarian that the student must submit to their schools of choice. Some schools require written and oral examinations as well (European Commission, 2023a). Similar to applying to secondary general education, graduating secondary school is a rigor-

FIGURE 1: Hungary School Structure

ous process in Hungary. During their upper secondary education, students in Hungary must complete at least 50 hours of community service (European Commission, 2023a), and complete a school-leaving examination. The state regulated the secondary school-leaving examination, and it became part of the entrance examination to higher education institutions. To prepare for the language portion of the leaving exam, some schools will teach subjects in a foreign language, such as history, mathematics, or physics (Hegedűs & Sebestyén, 2023). Once students finish public education, they can continue their education if they desire through college, university, or a specialization program (see Figure 1; Laposa et al., 2015). The students will receive scholarships and college acceptance based on how high of a score they achieved on the school leaving examination (European Commission, 2023a). If a student decides to

attend vocational school instead of secondary school, they will go straight into the labor market following graduation and a competence assessment (Hegedűs & Sebestyén, 2023).

There are different types of universities in Hungary, including public and private institutions. The state runs public institutions whereas religions, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations run private institutions (Bacsikai et al., 2020). “In 2015, 7 of 27 universities in Hungary were private, and 30 of 40 colleges were private” as well (Bacsikai et al., 2020). In 2015, different church denominations ran five of the seven private universities, and churches also ran 21 of the 30 private colleges, while nonprofit and for-profit organizations managed the remaining institutions (Bacsikai et al., 2020). These different types of universities have different outcomes in terms of teacher retention, with most teachers from church-led

training programs planning to stay in the profession. For institutions to properly prepare students for higher education, they need to have a well-trained staff of teachers who are determined to help their students achieve greatness.

General Education Teacher Preparation

To become a teacher in Hungary, there are different options in which one could specialize, including which type of school at which they would like to teach and which subject (Symeonidis, 2019). To become qualified to teach preschool, future teachers must have three years of theoretical training and one year of practical training, which is the equivalent to a bachelor’s degree (Böddi & Serfőző, 2019). Kindergarten and primary school teachers require a bachelor’s degree as well (Bacsikai et al., 2020). Bacsikai and colleagues (2020) describe the Hungarian education system for teachers.

They said that teachers obtain degrees in primary education, including first and second primary, through a four-year college program with only 15-20% of the time dedicated to practical training. Secondary teacher training typically lasts about six years; however, it is a different process because the number of years their degree lasts depends on their subject (Bacsikai et al., 2020). However, there were some recent changes for teacher's preparation in Hungary.

In 2013, Hungary reintroduced undivided teacher education with some changes (Bacsikai et al., 2020; Symeonidis, 2019). This meant that primary school teachers received five years of training and secondary school teachers received six years of training, where both completed the same number of credits. The last year for both programs consisted of the teaching practice. With this practice, there is more emphasis placed on pedagogical-psychological training and disciplinary education. Those have become more important in Hungary's education system because the interdisciplinary nature of university education was weakened and instead focused on courses in pedagogy and psychology to strengthen the competition between disciplinary and teacher training for teachers (Bacsikai et al., 2020).

While completing the courses required to become a certified teacher, students in the program can complete student teaching and practicum hours before graduation (Bacsikai et al., 2020). The practicum hours and student teaching take place during the last year of the student's higher education program. Universities assign an infield mentor to the students, who they shadow during their last semester of teacher training (Bacsikai et al., 2020; Symeonidis, 2019). The number of practicum hours spent, and the content learned depends on their area of specialization, including Hungarian, mathematics, science, etc. During those

hours, the student will have time to teach lessons, assist in group work, and work one on one with students in the mentor teacher's classroom. The universities grade their students through observations and assignments which students complete in the mentor's classroom.

During teacher training at a university or college, teachers can join the secondary teacher program after one year of education in their field(s) of specialization (Bacsikai et al., 2020). Each teacher chooses the subjects and areas of specialization that they would like to teach. The teachers learn how to create tailor-made instructions for each individual student, thus creating their own curriculum. However, in secondary general education, teachers will often prepare students for their school-leaving examinations and create the curriculum based on those requirements (European Commission, 2023a).

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

Hungary has led the way for changes across Europe in relation to special education. Hungary started the first separated school for deaf students in 1802, which was also the year that they established the special education system (Toth, 2014). Though it has its flaws, Hungary has a long history of separate special needs schools in an attempt to best help these students. The also first and only special education college for teachers in Hungary was founded in 1906 (Toth, 2014). Since that time, there have been many pieces of legislation that have changed the course of special education history in Hungary. This is important because Hungary has also seen a growing trend of students with disabilities relating to physical disabilities, speech impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, emotional and behavioral disabilities, learning disabilities, and visual impairment (Magyar et

al., 2020; Toth, 2014).

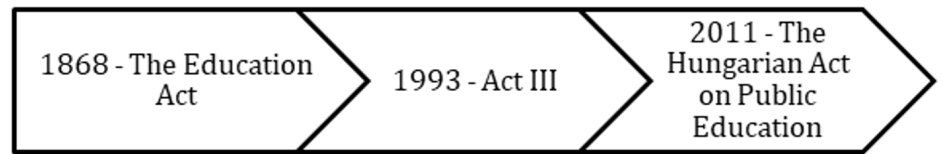
When a child is diagnosed with a disability in Hungary, it is decided by a committee of educators, special education needs professionals, and physicians (Czerwińska et al., 2020). This committee of professionals will recommend placement; however, the final decision about where to place the child is up to the parents. According to the Hungarian Act on Public Education of 2011, students with special educational needs are those who require special treatment, have physical, sensory (visual or auditory), intellectual or speech impairments, autism spectrum disorders, psychological development disorders, developmental disorders (severe learning difficulties, attention deficits or behavior issues), or multiple disabilities (Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education, 2011). This committee is responsible for recommending if a student should be transferred to a different school and if they need early intervention, specialized care, or tutoring. There are also many supports available to students with special needs in Hungary, including counseling, early development and care, development support and training, speech therapy, pedagogical care, conductive care, gifted education, and special physical education (Czerwińska et al., 2020). Schools stress the importance of socialization to help acclimate the child to daily routines, expected behaviors, and social skills. In Hungary, parents have the right to choose if their children with disabilities are instructed in a special institution due to the Hungarian Act on Public Education of 2011 (Act CXC, 2011). One of the large reasons that Hungary has special institutions for students with disabilities is because of how many students there are and how much easier it is to help them in a specialized institution.

In 2019, there were more than 88,000 special education needs students in the education system in Hungary (Magyar

et al., 2020). Magyar and colleagues (2020) found that 60% of the special needs students were educated in an inclusive environment. This means that separated schools are becoming less common now than they ever were, despite the rise in individuals with disabilities. This could be due, in part, to how Hungary views students with disabilities. Hungary is part of the European Union and they have eight guiding principles in how to view individuals with disabilities: 1) respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons, 2) non-discrimination, 3) full and effective participation and inclusion in society, 4) respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, 5) equality of opportunity, 6) accessibility, 7) equality between men and women, 8) respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006). These principles help guide schools to know what supports and help to offer students with disabilities and how to treat them within the education system.

Hungary is currently striving to create a more inclusive school system where only students with severe disabilities attend specialized schools. However, the problem that Hungary is currently facing is how to train general education teachers to properly instruct students with disabilities. Currently, general education teachers receive very little instruction or training on how to teach individuals with disabilities. Despite this, an incredible example of training and inclusion was found at a primary school called, *Gyermekek Háza Alternatív Általános Iskola és Gimnázium* (Czerwińska et al., 2020). This school specializes in inclusion and completely mainstreams

FIGURE 2: Timeline of Education Laws in Hungary



children with disabilities into every classroom. Students with disabilities at this school never leave their classroom, and a special educator comes to them to give them more modified instruction when needed. One of the reasons that this school's model is successful is because every general education teacher is trained properly on collaboration and how to teach children with disabilities (Czerwińska et al., 2020). This is a good example of how Hungary is beginning to increase its inclusion practices in the schools, and this can be furthered by teacher preparation.

Special Education Teacher Preparation

A special education teacher commits to a specialized four-year university program for their training (Bacsikai et al., 2020). Like general education teachers, special education teachers will choose one (or two) of eight specialties. Those areas consist of education for persons with autism spectrum disorder, emotional and behavior disorder, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, visual disabilities, and speech therapy (Perlusz et al., 2014). The purpose of specializing in one of these areas is to offer the best support possible for that specific group of students. After future teachers receive a general introduction to special education and related topics, they will then continue their studies in the one or two areas of specialization that they chose. Once students graduate from their higher education teaching program with their specialization, schools hire them as full-time teachers. Before a

school hires a special education teacher fully, the school wants to know that they are competent in their abilities, which primarily comes from participating in the career model.

The first two years as a teacher are considered a compulsory traineeship period in which the teachers are examined and trained, like an internship in the United States (Sápi, 2019). They are similar because both the traineeship and internship consist of the student teacher shadowing a current teacher to gain experience and practice in the field before becoming a full teacher. At the end of the two years, the teachers are given an evaluation exam and are asked to create a written portfolio of all that they have completed in the two years. If they pass, then they will continue as teachers. The teacher career model of 2013 created this two year program (Sápi, 2019). In this model, the following categories were defined: novice teacher, teacher I, teacher II, master teacher, and researcher teacher. At the same time certification and evaluation systems were launched for this model (Sápi, 2019). However, training for special education teachers does not stop there.

Even after certification is awarded, teacher training is continuous in Hungary. Every six years, teachers can increase their salary if they have completed the necessary in-service teacher training depending on the school where they work (Nagy, 2020). Teachers are trained even after they graduate university to focus on competency, expanding frameworks, linking theory and practice, and developing their profession (Nagy, 2020). Teachers are encouraged to continue

learning for these purposes, including helping the students that they work with. However, teachers also must work within the framework of the laws and policies in place and must understand how those work and how they impact their students, especially their students with disabilities.

Laws and Policies for Education

Over time, many laws and policies have been put into place to help give people with disabilities more rights and more freedom (see Figure 2). We have already mentioned some of these, like The Education Act of 1868 (Monostori, 2014) and the Hungarian Act on Public Education of 2011 (Act CXC, 2011). Another important act that impacted education in Hungary was the Act III of 1993. This act gave the families of individuals with disabilities an allowance to help assist in the extra costs and needs of those with disabilities. This act also gave each family money to provide extra care from nurses as needed. Overall, it was a beneficial act that eased much of the stress and financial burden that comes with having a child with a disability. These acts set the stage for future laws and policies to follow, making it easier for students with disabilities to receive an education.

A couple of years later, Hungary established the Hungarian Act on Public Education of 2011 (Act CXC, 2011). This act changed the lives of students with disabilities. Because of this act, all children with disabilities reserve the right to a free and compulsory primary education, a free and generally accessible secondary education up to achieving their secondary-school certificate, and training for vocational school if that is desired (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021). This act also changed compulsory education from the age to three, which has helped close performance gaps and

to give more time to diagnose children with disabilities at an earlier age. The Hungarian Act on Public Education also helped to set an eligibility standard. For a student to receive special education services, they must have a physical disability, sensory disability, intellectual disability, speech impairment, multiple disabilities, or be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. If a child has one of those disabilities, then a committee will determine what services the child needs, based on their disability. Those services typically consist of inclusion practices, which is something that Hungarian schools focus on (Kovacs, 2020). Although Hungary has established laws, policies, and supports for students with disabilities within the education system, there are still some current issues that need to be addressed.

Current Issues in Special Education and Teacher Preparation

The education system in Hungary has come a long way, but there are still some current issues that research has found and that we would like to address. Because Hungary's education system is over 200 years old and is part of a country with rich cultural values, students in Hungary tend to follow the same patterns that were put into place in the past. It can be difficult for countries to adapt large systems like education; however, Hungary has done a good job of accounting for students with disabilities. Schools in Hungary are continually working on their diagnosis process for students with disabilities, building accessibility, inclusion, teacher training, and teacher's pay. We believe that as these things improve and are a focus in Hungary's education system, then students with disabilities will get more appropriate and equal treatment everywhere. We will discuss these topics in more detail and provide suggestions for

how educators can improve these things within their own schools, narrowing the issues into two topics: special education and teacher preparation.

Issues in Special Education

One of the most apparent issues in special education in Hungary is their diagnosis procedure. Strict legal regulations control the process of examination and diagnosis for students with disabilities (Varga-Estefán et al., 2007). In Hungary, a special education expert committee diagnoses students with disabilities by going over the following aspects of disabilities: diagnostic, psychological, special educational, and social. Varga-Estefán and colleagues (2007) found that it is difficult to diagnose autism and to distinguish between a learning disability and a learning difficulty through the diagnosis process in Hungary.

In a recent study, Lukácsné and colleagues (2018) found that there are about 60,000 people with autism of varying degrees in Hungary, however, only about 8% of them have an official diagnosis, meaning that it is hard for anyone, especially children, to obtain a diagnosis. This makes it difficult for students with disabilities to access early intervention help and the supports that they need. For example, Lukácsné and colleagues (2018) found that in a 2011 census, there were 5120 of diagnosed individuals with autism and 624 of the individuals never completed the first grade, with more individuals dropping out before graduation. Only 244 students with autism had a high school diploma and only 304 were employed at the time of the census (Lukácsné et al., 2018). To improve this statistic, we can look to the United States for some guidance to improve and increase the supports for these students. We suggest creating a referral system in each school for all disabilities, something educators can advocate for where they work. This will increase diagnoses

at an early age and increase the support they receive early on. We also suggest creating incentives for individuals to become trained in diagnosing autism, since it is a lengthy process and autism is growing internationally.

Another current issue in Hungarian schools is the accessibility to their buildings. Because many of their buildings were built hundreds of years ago, most of Hungary's public schools are not accessible for those with physical disabilities. They are missing important things like ramps, elevators, and accessible play equipment. This is one of the reasons why Hungary has so many specialized schools, and that is to accommodate for accessibility. Oni (2020) found that cobble-stone streets, tight spaces, and trams can be an issue for individuals with disabilities who are traveling through Hungary. The study also mentions that while Budapest is creating more ramps and necessary accessibility needs, there are still many places that are inaccessible for those with disabilities (Oni, 2020). This is especially a concern for students with disabilities who may not be able to attend a desired school because of the lack of accessibility. Educators can help increase accessibility at their schools by advocating for their schools and governments to create more ramps, elevators, and accessible transportation as needed in their area. This can improve special education opportunities for students with disabilities, increase inclusion, and enhance special education practice around the country.

Lastly, inclusion is another current issue that Hungary is actively striving towards but has not yet reached. In Hungary, it is very common for children who have a disability to attend a specialized school instead of going to their local or neighborhood school. This is especially true for students who have a physical disability, limiting the accessibility they have to certain buildings. Going to a

specialized school has many advantages for students with disabilities, including accessibility, trained staff, and specialized instruction. In specialized schools, all teachers are trained in that specific type of disability. For example, *Mozgásjavító Óvoda, Általános Iskola, Gimnázium, Kollégium, Egységes Gyógy Pedagógiai* is a specialized school and all the students who attend this school have some sort of physical impairment. All the teachers and staff at this school are trained in how to educate students with a physical impairment and know how to teach and accommodate their students. Many students who attend this school stay in dormitories because they travel from across the country to have access to a school that will provide them with the education that they deserve. This idea of a specialized school has many advantages but lacks inclusion and mainstreaming, which are goals that Hungary would like to incorporate within their education system. For Hungary to improve their inclusion practices, we suggest making all schools more accessible and training school staff on how to effectively work with and teach students with disabilities. This would help students gain more access to greater educational opportunities and help teachers grow in their knowledge of teaching a greater variety of students.

Issues in Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation is a critical issue to focus on because teachers need to be prepared to help the students with whom they are working. Hungary is continually working on improving teacher's training, pay, and happiness. However, Hungary is sometimes criticized for its frontal teaching methods, meaning that teachers are mostly lecturing with little to no individual or group work (Budapest Metropolitan University, 2022). Improving teaching methods to include more individual and group work and

being able to have a variety of impactful methods will increase student attention and performance at school. Not only should teachers be trained in a variety of teaching methods, but schools should also train teachers in how to work with students with disabilities. There are schools who have found the most success in inclusion when their teachers are properly trained on collaboration and how to teach children with disabilities (Czerwińska et al., 2020). Despite the success at this school, most teachers in Hungary are not being trained on special education topics. Improving teacher training has been shown to improve student outcomes (Czerwińska et al., 2020), and we recommend that this be a focus in Hungary.

Another prominent issue in Hungary is the low pay that teachers receive (Economic Research Institute, 2023). Local schools hire teachers in Hungary, but they are considered local government workers or public servants. Despite having lots of requirements to stay qualified, Hungarian teachers are the worst paid teachers in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Their pay is not just considered low internationally, but also in the Hungarian salary system (Economic Research Institute, 2023; National Institute of Public Education, 2003). Because teachers are public servants of the government, their pay is set by the legislature. Having low wages can discourage people from seeking out careers as teachers and can also cause high burnout and low retention rates. Additionally, if Hungary is not paying their teachers adequately, they might seek out more lucrative job opportunities in neighboring countries that have higher teacher salaries and more favorable working conditions. What's more is that these low wages do not only affect teachers, but also students. The fewer teachers that work in Hungary, the less effective

the education system is for students. To improve these conditions, we recommend that Hungary increase teacher's wages and provide more incentives for teachers to stay in the field. This will benefit general and special education because teachers will be more numerous, less stressed, and more prepared.

Lastly, teacher attrition is a problem in European education despite most university graduates planning to stay in the teaching profession (Bacsikai et al., 2020). One of the reasons is low wages, but there are many reasons for teachers to leave the profession. Other reasons may include a better job opportunity, family circumstances, or stress. However, Bacsikai and colleagues (2020) found that teacher retention is greater within private education compared to public education, with church-run schools having the greatest teacher retention. They found that church-run teacher education has different child-rearing values such as traditional, prosocial, collaborative, and community values, and this might create a more favorable school climate for the teachers. Perhaps this school climate supports them to preserve their professional calling as a teacher (Bacsikai et al., 2020). We recommend that Hungary look to the church-run universities to improve the retention of teachers across the country. This will benefit both the schools and the teachers as they feel more supported. When teachers feel more supported, they will be better able to assist their students with and without disabilities in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

Hungary has made many improvements to their education system over the last 200 years. It was also one of the first countries in Europe to focus on special education and create a post-secondary education program to train special education teachers. Since then, special education in Hungary has come a long

way and is continually improving and progressing. Over time, multiple acts and laws have been put into place to help individuals with disabilities succeed in all aspects of life. Through special schools, specialized teacher preparation training, and early intervention, the people of Hungary can help their children and other individuals with disabilities succeed in academics and independence. We recommend that Hungary focus on improving teacher training, especially when it comes to teaching students with disabilities, and that the country increases accessibility to their schools. As teacher training and accessibility increase, so will student outcomes. While there is still room for improvement when it comes to the diagnosis process for students with disabilities, building accessibility, inclusion, and teacher's training, pay, and retention; the laws and regulations that Hungary currently has for individuals with disabilities provides them with all the necessary rights needed for them to succeed.

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Dr. Ryan Kellems is an accomplished Associate Professor at Brigham Young University and Fulbright Scholar. With a rich academic background and extensive experience, he has made significant contributions in the field of education with over 50 published articles, particularly in supporting students with disabilities during their transition from school to post-school life. In his current role as Associate Professor, Ryan is actively engaged in teaching and research, specializing in technology-based interventions for individuals with autism. He has been recognized for his contributions to the field, including receiving the Fulbright Scholar Award for his project on improving the quality of life for Hungarians with autism through technology-based interventions.

Blake Hansen, Ph.D.

Dr. Blake Hansen is a professor at Brigham Young University who specializes in teaching courses on applied behavior analysis, language and literacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration. He received his PhD in Behavioral Psychology from the University of Kansas in 2010. Prior to that he received his MS in Special Education and BA in History from the University of Utah. His current research focuses on parenting children with disabilities. They utilize the processes and procedures found in acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), especially on the analysis of language and cognition associated with parenting. Blake is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (doctoral), and he engages in consultation and direct treatment of behavior challenges in individuals with autism in his research.

Macy Huckvale

Macy Huckvale is a passionate teacher who recently graduated with a degree in Special Education - Severe from Brigham Young University and is expected to start her journey as a full-time special education teacher at Provo High School in Provo, Utah. Macy is passionate about creating an inclusive and positive environment for students with special needs, where they can learn academics, life skills and grow socially surrounded by a supportive community of peers and professionals.

Agota Szekeres, Ph.D.

Dr. Agota Szekeres is an Associate Professor at the ELTE Bárczi Gusztáv Faculty of Special Needs Education and the leader of the 'Autism in Education' Research Group at the esteemed Hungarian Academy of Sciences. With a background rooted in special education and psychology, coupled with over two decades of teaching experience at this university, she is deeply committed to advancing knowledge and fostering inclusive educational practices. She has had the privilege of teaching a range of courses that reflect her passion for inclusive education. Agota's research endeavors primarily revolve around examining social dynamics within mainstreaming schools, particularly those involving children with mild intellectual disabilities. She has won several awards in her career: HAS János Bolyai Research Scholarship, the Bronze Medal of the Pro Universitate, and the Rector Special Award for Excellence.

Endre Horváth

Endre Horváth is an assistant lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University. He is known for his innovative approach to integrating technology in the classroom, which is evident in the courses he offers, such as "ICT and Web 2.0 in Special Education" and "The Methodology of Developing Cognitive Skills." These courses are designed to equip students with modern tools and methods to enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs. His main research area delves into the social relations in mainstreaming schools, focusing particularly on the inclusion of children with mild intellectual disabilities. This work seeks to improve integration strategies and promote an inclusive environment for all students. Currently, he is pursuing ongoing PhD research centered on teacher attunement, which promises to contribute significantly to our understanding of effective teaching practices and teacher-student dynamics in Hungarian special education settings.

Kaiya Dawson

Kaiya Dawson is a graduate student at Brigham Young University currently studying School Psychology and is on target to obtain her EdS degree in 2025. She has worked in multiple schools helping children with disabilities across Northern Utah and is passionate about helping students achieve everything they can through inclusion, self-determination, and high expectations.

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