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Theory and Practice of Inclusive Education in Hungary

Ágnes N. Tóth

Hungary as a Middle East European country

Hungary is a relatively small country in Middle Eastern part of Europe bordering with Austria, Slovak Republic, the Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Its population is nearly ten million.. A quarter of the population lives in the capital city, Budapest.

Hungarian membership of the European Union dates back to 2004. The most remarkable historical event of the country was the changing of the regime in 1989 when the impact of the Soviet policy including the philosophy of education came to an end. “

The new constitution paid tribute to the memory of the Revolution of 1956 by becoming effective on October 23, 1989 and Mátyás Szűrös, as a temporary president of the Parliament proclaimed the establishment of the Hungarian Republic from the balcony of the Houses of Parliament (Bayer 1996:181).

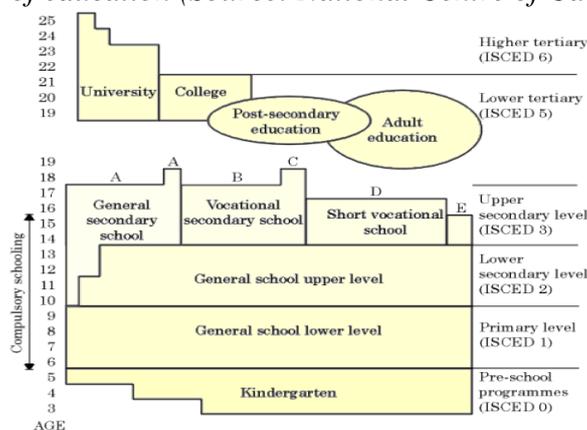
Due to its history, Hungary is regarded as a post-communist state with all the achievements and shortcomings in its economy and society.

Education system and its traditions

Before changing the political regime, Hungary was almost exclusively affected by the Soviet and Eastern- European communist countries whose impact was profound on Hungarian education system as well. Hungary had a traditionally separated schooling system for mainstream and disabled children due to the diagnose-based model of special needs pedagogy. Vygotsky was one of the most popular scientists in Moscow who developed ‘an area of scientific scholarship devoted to problems of diagnosing, educating and rehabilitating children with physical and mental handicap (known as ‘defects’)’ (Knox 1989, as cited in Ainscow & Memmenasha 1998:16).

The current structure of education has not have changed significantly since 1989 except for secondary vocational education which was formulated from a short type (three- year- long) to a regular four- year- long variety (See Figure 1). The Act of 1993 (LXXIX) introduced matriculation after finishing vocational studies.

Figure 1 Current system of education (Source: National Centre of Career Information, 2002)



- A. matriculation exam (school-leaving exam)
- B. matriculation exam and vocational qualification
- C. technician's certificate
- D. skilled worker's qualification
- E. lower level vocational qualification given by special short vocational school

The Act of 1993 (LXXIX) was determinative from the aspect of special education. Different groups of disabilities (such as sensory disability, physical disability, speaking disability, mental disability, autism and 'other disabilities') were categorised in a term 'disability', which was consequently used instead of 'special needs'.

In 1980 the WHO (World Health Organization) published the ICIDH (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) for field trial purposes, which provided a scientific model of disability as well as a clarification of terminology for clinical use, data collection and research. Since the concepts of 'handicap' and 'disablement' are different, agreement between the perceptions of an individual's handicap and the individual's disability described merely by a medical classification, cannot be expected (Bornman 2004:183).

A category called 'other disabilities', which was introduced by the act mentioned above, refers to children with learning difficulties and other disorders of psychological development e.g. in sub-skills and learning disorders in school performance. The regulation made schools interested in opening their doors in front of disabled children thanks to the extra financial support offered to them.

Disabled students can apply for two kinds of financial support. They may receive financial support on the one hand as a person with disability and on the other hand as a student. General financial disability supports are family allowance, temporary invalidity annuity, regular social allowance, public medical service, transportation allowance etc. (Gyulavári 2010:2).

The statistical number of disabled children in Hungarian schools increased considerably after 1996 as a result of an opportunity to receive extra financial support (Csépe 2008).

Hungarian special education has brought about a number of significant achievements all over Europe. The first separated school for deaf students was established by András Cházár in 1802 in Vác, near Budapest. That date is also recognised as the year of establishment of special education in Hungary. Another outstanding figure of special education is a medical doctor and teacher of disabled students, Gusztáv Bárczi (1890-1964) whose name is inseparable from the establishment of the theoretical basis of special education in Hungary.

The first and the only one teacher training college for special teachers was established in 1906. It was working as an independent institution of higher education until 1999 when owing to the modernization process in higher education, the college was integrated into and existed in that period as a faculty of Eötvös Lorand University. Its training structure and contents of different programmes follow the claims of the most modern educational science. Special teacher education takes place in seven different specializations to promote disability intervention.

As it was mentioned above, the act of 1993 is one of the most remarkable legislation steps in Hungary i.e. creating the conditions of inclusive education despite the fact that mainstream teachers were not totally ready to accept children with disabilities in their classes. That arrangement was followed by several in-service trainings but teachers' attitude changed very slowly. Later, in 1996 the legislation was completed by an additional requirement, to put it more precisely, disabled children in their seventh-eighth grades in primary schools were not allowed to be taught in 'combined classes'. To make it clearer, in Hungarian villages there

was a schooling tradition that if the number of disabled children in a grade was less than the necessary to create an independent class at a given grade, then different grades were united in one class and taught by one teacher. The number of grades in a combined class was maximum three. Since 1996, the seventh-eighth grades have not been allowed to be taught together with other grades in order to prepare them for their special vocational studies. Headmasters of village schools understood the importance of the regulation and found a less costly solution. 'Private student status' was recommended for those students but the status had to be required by parents. It meant that the school did not have an obligation towards the children except to provide them with the possibility to pass their exams in every half an academic year. This provision was in practice for a year only as the legislator recognised the disadvantage of the disabled children caused by the law.

The following important regulation was the introduction of the National Curriculum Guidelines for Disabled Students in 1997. Different areas of public education from early childhood education to secondary school education were described for each category of disability in the document, including subjects and their criteria. Teachers were happy to accept the law because they needed central curriculum standards to create their syllabuses; hence they were strongly required to create their local curricula on the base of the newly introduced National Core Curricula. They felt they were not prepared for those tasks which caused uncertainty.

According to the National Core Programme of Kindergarten Education, published a year earlier (1996), Hungarian pre-school (kindergarten) time tables were organised to look through the academic year. It recommended kindergartens not to segregate children with special needs which practice has its traditions in the country's early education institutions. Early childhood education is strongly connected to the public education; namely, institutes usually provide services for families having different aged small children in order that they can participate in the labour market. These organisations generally are managed by school principals in given village.

The same legislation defines the minimum opening hours of such institutes in ten hours. However, children usually arrive at kindergartens at 8 o'clock in the morning and leave for home at 3 p.m. Students have three daily meals: breakfast, lunch and afternoon-tea. They also have a 2 or 2 and half hours rest time ensuring afternoon sleeping. In 2003, Public Education Act of 1993 (LXXIX) was modified and completed with some new elements. For instance, the previous potential of integration became an obligation for each school, except for children with a severe disability who cannot be taught together with their mainstream peers.

In Hungary, as written in National Action Plan (2004), the proportion of children with special educational needs (learning disabilities) is 5.3% while the figure for the European Union is 2.5-3%. The other significant problem in addition to this exceptionally high rate is the overrepresentation of Roma children. Nearly 20% of Roma students are qualified as having special educational needs, while the rate for non-Roma students is only 2%. It often happens that children are redirected to special-needs schools simply because their social circumstances are poor and as a result they are not yet mature enough for school, or because they perform poorly on culturally-based tests. In 2003, a reform of the current system of defining students with special educational needs was initiated which focused on the issue how to prevent social disadvantages directly translated as special educational needs. The Act on Public Education included a new term 'special needs' to replace the term 'disability', previously used to label children. The goal of a project called "*Out of the Back Row*" is to reduce the number of students who are unreasonably labelled as

disabled and to return them to schools and classes with general curricula. As of September 2004, local self-governments will receive enhanced capitation grant for children thus returned to the mainstream education. The (...) central programme contains the resources intended to standardise the non-culture-biased tests that are relevant to the programme. At present about 3,000 children a year begin the first grade labelled as mildly disabled. The target of the programme is to reduce that number by two-third (National Action Plan 2004-2006: 34-35).

In the academic year of 2007-2008 the Act on Public Education (LXXIX) was modified with respect to the definition of the target group and in the 14/1994 Ministerial decree on qualification obligations and pedagogical special services regulated the operation of the expert committees. The background of the public education-political decision was a continuous increase in the number of children, students with special educational needs, more specifically those in need of special education due to psychological development disturbances and the significantly differing rate in different counties. Based on the evaluations:

- There was a revision of learners involved based on strict criteria.
- The need for special education was terminated if the severe and long-lasting recognised disorder of functioning or behavioural development were not justified, and
- if the severe and long-lasting disorder of functioning or behavioural development were recognised, but were not due to organic reasons, and the student participated in corrective teaching-education in a special class, faculty or school, but subsequent assessment indicated that the student in the following academic year can participate in general, that is, in integrated education. This assessment serves to hinder unreasonable segregation (European Agency, Country Data 2010: 28).

The latest change in legislation took place in 2010 when the diagnosis process was described by a Ministerial Decree (4/2010). The arrangement, following the common European classification of special needs, regulated the diagnostic protocol of Special Experts' Teams (*Expert and Rehabilitation Committee for Examining Learning Abilities TKVSZRB*) in different regions of Hungary. Identifying special needs in Hungary takes place at two different levels. The first level is an Educational Advisory Team (*Nevelési Tanácsadó*), which identifies psychological development disturbances, like learning difficulties or behavioural disorders. This team includes special teachers, psychologists and therapists. If a severe and long-lasting disorder (disability) is recognised by the Advisory Team, the child is forwarded to the second level, called Expert and Rehabilitation Committee for Examining Learning Abilities (TKVSZRB) and Rehabilitation. Members of the committee are special teachers, medical doctors, paediatric neurologists, psychologists, etc. The latter has competence to identify all the disabilities and provide help for schooling. Parents are involved in the examination process and they are entitled to ask for an appeal against the decision.

Theory and praxis of inclusive education inside and beyond Europe

The inclusion of people with disabilities in education is sometimes described as a strategy of modern education science and an education scenario in which every teacher and administrative staff knows their tasks whereas in Hungary, this just does not seem to work out smoothly. When attempting to achieve the total inclusion of people with disabilities in society and/or in education, it seems to be not quite adequate in spite of the best of our intentions. As Csépe (2008) writes, in Hungary there is a traditional diagnose-based schooling model for disabled children and this model causes several difficulties in education praxis. Just for

instance, diagnostic process is not uniform in the country due to different protocols applied by different teams.

According to the estimation of UNESCO (2009), by 2015 all children should be able to enjoy a full course of elementary education. However, without the inclusion of children with disabilities, this goal cannot be achieved. The scope of this task is demonstrated by the fact that out of the 115 million children worldwide are excluded from education and at least 40 million of them are disabled. Of all the disabled children in developing countries only two to ten per cent attend school (Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development, 2009).

Present education policy in Hungary is focusing mainly on school management and the economic status of institutions but the real troubles of inclusive education become visible in the classrooms (Némethné et al 2008).

While focusing on the quality of education and as seen in international comparative research on teaching in inclusive classes, students with or without special needs are still being ignored. It also seems that teachers' difficulties are often ignored. This is understandable if we consider that students' key competences are also in the centre of professional education since the 1990s in Europe. We must think about a fresh view about the basic skills and abilities that should be developed at school, a modern concept must be formulated and in the future, this could constitute a common basis for reforming European education. A lot of different kinds of schools are available for skills development. Each of them takes a stand somehow on their own practice and methods and though most of them are linked to a school of thought, in fact they focus on developing key competences in their educational practice (Hanák 2008: 12).

According to the latest data published by OECD (2010), efficiency of Hungarian schools on development of pupils' key competences is at the absolute medium level among the 66 compared countries. Moreover, European statistics show that in Hungary, only about fifty per cent of children with special educational needs are educated in fully inclusive settings (Watkins 2010: 30).

Inclusion is still an "under-theorised" area of education science (Topping & Maloney 2005: 5). Scientists in Hungary usually talk about inclusion from various aspects: ethics, sociology, philosophy and economy. Unfortunately, mainstream education practice still does not use a fully-fledged definition as a generally adopted scientific theory from anthropology, psychology, sociology or education science side. Inclusive education is described almost exclusively from the point of view of special education and there are only a few publications by researchers being not representative of the special education. It seems that this is a matter only for special education (Némethné et al 2008). Educational integration requires schools to be organised for all. Every child should be educated without a stigma or label and should be developed individually (Réthy 2002).

According to the definition that inclusion is a humane solution in which each country is presented with the challenges behind the inclusion movement most European nations deal with special educational needs in different ways due to their educational traditions. To indicate the differences between Hungary and Europe, we must have a look at other countries' traditions.

Northern and Western European countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Norway, as well as the United Kingdom, Spain and France have more experience and longer traditions in inclusive education than Central and Eastern European countries. Several of them have had national legislation on inclusive education since the 1970s, as documented in Italy and Sweden. The *Swedish policy* of inclusive education, and the *Italian policy*, envisages individual development for each pupil in accordance with their needs. In Italy there is a

currently general agreement in identifying five large areas where effective inclusion strategies may work better: the link between individualised programming and the class curriculum; classmates and schoolmates involvement; integrating behavioural strategies into the regular learning activities and educational relationships; meta-cognitive teaching and learning; and information communication technology (Ianes 2009).

More than 30 years after the entry into force of Law no. 517/1977, nowadays the integration of students with disabilities is an evolving process, which has already brought significant innovations to Italian schools towards a more inclusive system; however, some critical issues still need to be addressed (D'Anna et al 2013)

Just like other Nordic countries, *Norway* has been focusing on compulsory education and social inclusion far earlier than Eastern European countries. A remarkable change in schooling was brought about in the mid-1970s when the scheme 'School for All' was introduced. The real break-through happened only in 1996 when inclusion was defined in the new National Curriculum as participation in the academic, social and cultural community of the school (Feyerer 2005). In this context it should be mentioned that while the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries spend an average of 5 to 5.8 % of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education, Norway spends 6.2% of its. The Norwegian school system is quite comprehensive. There is no difference in the schooling provided for mainstream students or for students with special needs (Boarini 2009).

The *Danish* approach, demonstrates teaching as a 'pedagogical-psychological counselling service' since the early 1960s. The segregation of pupils with special needs was abolished in 1981 (Réthy 2002). The number of students with special needs attending mainstream classes increased remarkably at first, but a few years later it fell again. 'In the academic years 2005-06, 2.1 % of the pupils in primary and lower secondary school were supported within the framework of the *folkeskole*, while 0.7 % of the pupils attended a special school, thus segregated from mainstream education' (Eurydice 2006: 6).

In spite of the initial uncertainty caused by the firm belief of parents and teachers regarding the dual system of mainstream and special schools, by the 1990s the Scandinavian principle 'School for All' was included in the Dutch legislation (Pijl & Meijer 1999). Conceptual opportunity of inclusive education was given in the Netherlands but the teaching practice depends on alternatives in schools (Réthy 2002).

Social and educational inclusion craggily appeared in the education policy of the 1970s in the *United Kingdom* and determined the tasks for the coming decades such as legislation since 1981 in the UK (Réthy 2002). According to the British theory, social inclusion may not be achieved without integrative education. Inclusion is not merely a school-based idea of acceptance; it overgrows the frames of education, and it is a part of human rights. We should not identify inclusion with assimilation knowing that assimilation means only giving place to children with special needs but still does not mean equal opportunities for all (Thomas & Davies 1999).

Inclusive education is well achieved in early childhood in present-day *German* schools, because the right to select a school for their children is given to the parents. But, this advantage is still not totally observed as several civil organisations disapprove it. Integration was involved in some of the newly designed courses as a part of the changes in teacher training and the conversation began between mainstream and special schools (Bick 2008).

Special education receives guaranteed funding in *France* so that each school can provide this service for students with special needs, as required by law since 2005.

The law of 2005 stipulates that all pupils have the right to be registered with a mainstream school as their base institution, even if they attend a special school because of their disability. This is described as their “learning path” and learning continuity. The law tries to address the problem of dispersal of structures by introducing new actors in new structures for coordination purposes. (Zay 2009: 109)

Inclusive education together with the right of parents to choose a school for their child first appeared in *Austrian* legislation in 1993. The number of students in inclusive classes increased significantly between 1989 and 2002. Behind this fact there were other factors, namely the quick growth of the number of inclusive classes from 4 to 412 over the course of 15 years in Upper Austria (Feyerer 2005).

‘The policy of integration is currently being developed in *Romania*. Most children (36,729) with special educational needs attend special schools. The structure of special education in these schools is very similar to that of mainstream education’ (Eurybase 2001: 3).

As a new member of EU, *Bulgaria* also has a national policy shift towards an inclusive society but this evidence appears mainly in the theoretical literature of special education in the late 1990s (Tzokova & Dobrev 1999). Recently Bulgaria has adopted a National Programme for the next decade focusing on inclusive education in the school system. The Centre for the Educational Integration of Children and Students (CIE) was set up to handle this aspect of human rights (Valtchev 2008).

According to the literature of special education 10-14% of the student population had special educational needs in *Turkey* in the 1990s. However, there are some doubts in educational policy and practice about the quantity and the quality of the special support provided for pupils with SEN and about the co-operation between special and mainstream schools. ‘The right to equal educational opportunity is routinely accepted as a general principle, but is widely ignored in practice’ (Sari 2000, Conclusion section, para. 8).

Inclusion in society, policies and education is quite a new theory, intensified in the past twenty years in Central and Eastern European countries like Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. Some doubts are perceived in the phrasing even today. The notion of ‘inclusive education’ relates to the social acceptance of disadvantaged people, to ethnic minorities and also to people with disabilities. Groups of ethnic minorities, for example gypsies and socially disadvantaged people have practically never had a separated school system. Students with disabilities really need this new concept because their separated schooling has had traditions for centuries in the Central and Eastern parts of Europe like in Hungary.

Inclusive education in Hungary

Students’ rights to be educated in mainstream schools has been legislated in *Hungary* since 1993, but the social tolerance, including teachers’ inclusive approach towards the SEN students has been changing very slowly. Currently, a modern support system is in place to look after a child’s individual needs. Since the missing diagnostic protocol has described a student with special needs is educated in the following settings; an inclusive mainstream class; a special class in a mainstream school or in a special school. The student’s placement depends on the suggestion of an expert team which has members such as a psychologist, a neurologist and special teachers. The Experts Committee (*TKVSZRB*) is well-informed about the possibilities of the given family and schools as well as to its local area of operation. The number of children with SEN placed in special schools and special classes is shrinking since 2003 when the previous education law (*LXXIX/1993*) was modified.

This legislation made it possible for several special schools in Hungary to change their profiles only to become a ‘solid methodical institute’ to help inclusive education at

mainstream schools (*EGYMI: Egységes Gyógypedagógiai Módszertani Központ; Centre for a Single Methodology in Special Education*). It is necessary to change Hungary's diagnose-based schooling model for a modern education needs-based model but the latest legislation (of 2007) did not result in a clear situation regarding the education profession and the relevant financial support. Two categories of SEN were introduced by the law of 2007, namely group 'a' & group 'b'. '*SEN-a*' means a student's special educational needs are traced back to organic causes while symptoms of '*SEN-b*' group are not. This arrangement is an issue of practice which has been adopted by schools to receive more funding for the increasing number of students with special needs (Csépe 2008).

Some uncertainty can be traced in the terminology of special educational needs in school practice. Most troubles were caused by the distinction between learning disability and mild mental retardation. Four different categories were used previously to indicate the various degrees of difficulties: learning troubles, learning disorders, learning disabilities and mental retardation (Mesterházi 1998). According to the Act of Public Education of 2003 (LXXIX), categories of learning troubles are the following: learning and behavioural difficulties, permanent and severe learning difficulties (dyslexia, dysgraphia and hyperactivity), mild and moderate mental retardation. While there was a terminological uncertainty in schooling, parents were advised and financially helped to take their children into kindergartens.

Kindergarten subsidy: is granted from January 2009 twice a year to families with multiply disadvantaged small children aged 3 or 4 who are enrolled to kindergarten, provided that the children attend the kindergarten regularly.

Extension of places at kindergarten: The number of places at kindergarten is extended under the scheme of the infrastructure development within the Regional Operational Programme (Ministry of National Resources 2011: 6).

Moreover, since the 1980's it has been obligatory for parents to send their children to kindergarten in the last year before starting primary school. The newest Act of Public Education (Nr. CXC. 20.12.2011) makes it obligatory for children to attend kindergarten not only from the age of five, but already from the age of three (Act of Public Education Nr. CXC. 20.12.2011).

Experts dealing with this age group do not talk about inclusion related to early childhood education since most psychological development disorders cannot be tested distinctly due to the significant differences among children at this age.

The inclusion of students with a disability as a teaching strategy appeared in Hungarian schools only after the changing of the political system in 1989 (Csépe, 2008). We had some pilot schools in the early 1980s to deal with inclusive education but their results did not receive wide publicity. The first laws after changing the political system were permissive and allowed integration but teachers were neither trained nor experienced. That was the main reason why many teachers' disapproved of the idea of integrating these students into mainstream schools. Accordingly, our segregated educational system existed for the very few, even with inclusive education spreading over Europe. Laws adopted in the past few years provided not only the opportunity of educational integration but stipulated obligations for mainstream schools (Act of Public Education of 2003. LXXIX/1993).

The integrated educational policy was laid down in the Act on equal treatment and equal opportunity from January 2004, which bans discrimination in schools. In line with this legislative framework, to prevent disadvantaged and Roma students from dropping out of school and to reduce current school segregation practice, as of September 2003, a programme of *integrated education* was established in grades one and five of primary schools and in grades nine of secondary education. The programme involved the introduction of integration

training in the grades given and ‘fostering talents’ programmes in the other grades, with state capitation grant’ (National Action Plan, 2004-2006:ix).

Regarding regulation, students with learning disabilities or mild mental disabilities do not have to go to special schools or classes since 2003. Unless recommended otherwise by the special teachers’ team, students with a learning disability are supposed to go to mainstream classes.

In this case schools play a double role. On the one hand they have to find the qualities in pupils which could be changed and have to do so in the most appropriate time during the pupils’ sensitive periods. On the other hand schools have to find ways of handling the qualities which cannot be modified by the school (Gáspár 2003:147).

We must put our fingers on or apply new teaching strategies or methods when we have already far too many of descriptions focusing on the various aspects of inclusion, but we still lack a complex definition accepted by all the branches of relevant sciences. We know what inclusive education does not mean, but still do not know what it does. Theoretical and practical scientists in Hungary must deal with this issue as much as it deserves.

Some primary schools in Hungary have experience in different models in teaching strategies involving the so-called ‘co-operating-teaching’ method, while others offered their students with SEN extra-curricular classes given by special teachers. A student with a learning disability must receive a minimum of 15% extra time in compensation for his/her learning abilities, guided by a special education teacher. This means that if a school undertakes to educate students with SEN in a peer group, it must guarantee this service. Such schools with an inclusive approach towards students with SEN must maintain professional ties with a special education teacher and every mainstream teacher should have the opportunity to consult the special teacher as often as needed.

It seemed to be an absolutely new idea in schools, so many of the mainstream teachers did welcome it, though they had some misgivings about inclusive class teaching. The knowledge-centred Hungarian schools of the 1980s should have been transformed in a number of ways; e.g. placing their focus on key competences instead of the earlier factual-knowledge teaching; their methodological culture should have been renewed to accept modern co-teaching technique instead of their much-favoured frontal methods; their race-pedagogical approach should have been replaced by the idea of individual development or co-operative learning strategy; and last but not least, teachers will have to make their efforts to teach heterogeneous groups of students. In addition to new challenges, Hungarian teachers had to make ready themselves for a new system of administration and teaching plans like curriculum editing and research-based education, providing qualitative evaluation of their students’ knowledge or the implementation of new teaching technologies , for example, computer-based teaching (Kárpáti 2008).

Teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion in Hungary

Underlining the exclusivity of compulsory public education definitely does not help to promote the desire to meet special educational needs. Catering for individual needs can be successful only and exclusively if we are able to ensure an individual opportunity to participate in life-long-learning programmes as well (Csépe, 2008).

Our survey excludes data on the attitudes of kindergarten teachers since separation has never been an issue in Hungarian kindergartens. Inclusion is a fairly traditional strategy of education in early childhood because there have been only a few institutes for young children with special needs and they only cater for the severely disabled. In contrast, the differentiation

in school system caused more difficulties for spreading inclusive approach in schools in our country.

As it follows logically from the fact above, we have been inspired to assume that teachers were impressed by those new challenges and the effect is identifiable in their attitudes towards the integration of children with special needs (Némethné et al 2008). As a starting point, we tried to evince how teachers' attitudes towards special needs have been changing during the past two decades in Hungary. It was expected that teachers would aim to learn more about students with special educational needs (SEN), and that they would be ready to teach students with SEN together with other students in their mainstream classes because they understand the importance of the new paradigm in education. Given the fact that the first groups of students with SEN educated in inclusive schools have already entered secondary schools, it was also assumed that there would be no differences between the attitudes of mainstream teachers in primary and secondary schools. That is why opinions were compared in the frame of a survey.¹

To ascertain answers to the questions above, ten schools were selected in three different counties of the Western Transdanubian Region in Hungary. These included five primary schools in towns and villages as well as five secondary schools in towns. All of them identify themselves as inclusive institutions in their documents of establishment. That was a part of a survey in 2007. The sample was quite small (170 mainstream teachers) and the schools were selected randomly. Representativeness of this study was not ensured but it was supposed that our findings were in line with a representative research's results. Due to the small size of the sample, it was impossible to have generalised conclusions; and applied to larger populations like a nation or so. All the teachers were requested to answer the survey at their respected schools.

The findings of the survey show that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by a number of factors ranging from teacher preparedness, gender influences, teacher attitudes and perceptions, years of teaching experience, past experiences working with special needs students and the availability of support services (Avramidis & Norwich 2002). As we know from our earlier experience, teachers generally do not have enough theoretical knowledge about SEN because of their inadequate education in this field. Studies on special needs were published only in specific subjects as part of Hungarian teacher training but the whole of the teacher training should be transformed by getting information about individual needs which require interdisciplinary collaboration (Csépe 2008).

Hungarian mainstream teachers did not learn about the typology of disabilities at universities earlier because we had a separated teacher education system to train teachers for special needs. As a result, their knowledge should have been completed by self-study. On the other hand, it is known in Hungary that there is a strong requirement for teachers' continuing education (Government Decree 277/1997 XII. 22.). 'Teachers are required to complete 120 hours of in-service training every seven years, whether they incorporate their new skills and knowledge into their teaching is up to individual preferences' (Kárpáti 2008: 19).

Our results indeed confirmed this necessity. Only 62% of responders could define the categories correctly. It was shocking that one in three of them did not recognise disability as a very special deficiency. The co-efficient of standard deviation was quite high ($sd= 22$) among the different teacher groups of public education (Némethné 2009).

One of the main problems is that teachers confuse notions like learning difficulties, learning disorders, learning disabilities and mild mental disabilities. Some of them define learning disabilities as a mental handicap and suggest that students with those syndromes should be placed and taught by special teachers in separate classes². Ammah and Hodge (2005) studied attitudes and practices in teaching and they found that teachers do not believe that they are adequately prepared for inclusive education. Our finding is similar, mainstream

teachers disapprove their special preparation for teaching in inclusive classes at their high schools and universities. This confusion is partly understandable considering the possible translation disharmony in English-Hungarian terminology, as Fejes & Szenczi (2010) observed such differences between American and Hungarian terminology (See Table 1).

This terminological confusion causes problems in education practice and the widespread implementation of inclusive education. According to British Institute of Learning Disabilities (...) definition: 'IQ is one way of classifying learning disability,

- 50-70 mild learning disability
- 35-50 moderate learning disability
- 20-35 severe learning disability
- below 20 profound learning disability' (British Institute of Learning Disabilities <...> :3).

In the previous legislation, Hungarian marking of the groups with IQ 50-70 refers to 'mild mental disability' and groups having IQ over 70 to 85 are referred to 'learning disability'. This difference derives from the disharmony that we experienced between denomination in professional literature and the statutory language.

American terminology	Hungarian terminology
Mild intellectual disability	Tanulási akadályozottság Learning disability (Mild mental retardation group)
Mild cognitive disability	
Mild mental retardation	
Learning disability	Tanulási zavar (Learning disorder)
Learning disorder	
Learning difficulty	

Table 1 *Terminological differences* (Source: Fejes & Szenczi 2010)

Given the right of students with disabilities to learn together with others, integration is becoming more and more common in regular schools. Although our research was not a nationwide representation and focused on the region of our University, still, it provided quite illuminating results. No more than half of the responding teachers at the Western Hungarian mainstream schools said that they were informed about terminology of special needs or about the methodology of inclusive education but its known this is not a feasibly extended inclusion all over the country. As a nationwide foreign project showed (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly 2003), teachers with more positive views of inclusion had more confidence in their abilities and competences to support students in inclusive settings and to adapt classroom materials and procedures to accommodate their needs.

We suppose new educational challenges could not really affect the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in the ten schools involved in the survey. Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2000) also found that teachers who had been implementing inclusive programmes for some years held significantly more positive attitudes than the rest of the sample who had apparently little or no such experience. Others had established this earlier; inclusion needs to be pursued in a thoughtful manner not only by teachers, but also by other professionals, administrators and parents (Giangreco, Baumgart & Doyle 1995; Waligore 2002). These findings suggest the same conclusion to both researchers and the Hungarian decision-makers, namely that inclusion is far more than merely yet another education philosophy but should be regarded as a way of acting together, involving all players.

However, it is not enough to prescribe something for schools like integration without providing them with the necessary means and/or guidance. We found that a lot of teachers still have negative attitudes towards disabled students' integration probably because of their classical 'achievement-orientated' or 'competition based' teaching practice. It was experienced that secondary school teachers do not or hardly use any modern methods of competence-based teaching like co-operative, individual and project learning programmes. Accordingly, we are looking forward to the outcome of the two-level teacher education which should ease these troubles, coming from the lack of the classical system. Yet, the standards of Hungarian teacher training at the various universities should be revised (Kárpáti 2008).

In addition, one in every five of secondary school teachers would accept students with special needs neither in schools nor in their own classes, contrary to elementary school teachers whose significant proportion would undertake to teach disabled students together with the others, either in school or in their classes. It must be pointed out that the secondary school teachers' approach should be changed as soon as possible before a large number of students with SEN appear at secondary school level in the next five years. This poses a major problem considering the outcome of the survey indicating the reluctance of secondary school teachers to enrol for in-service trainings. It seems, however, that the actual application of their newly acquired skills is hard to measure. 'Even if we could measure this, then the way to do so would require measuring the extent to which the newly acquired skills are put into classroom practice' (Kárpáti 2008: 210).

Mainstream teachers in Western Hungary with experience in integrative pedagogy are hanging onto the limited range of their teaching methodology, their teaching tools, and limited knowledge about the organisation of learning and classroom management, as well as SEN terminology. They clearly believe that only because fifteen or twenty years ago they did not have the opportunity to be taught about children with SEN in their professional training at colleges or universities, they in turn use this as an excuse for their shortcomings and deficiencies in teaching. The issue of limited teaching tools is a matter for the management of the school or its maintainer to think about.

Unfortunately, our respondents in Western Hungary generally think negatively of postgraduate or in-service training courses. There might be all sorts of reasons for this, as for example trainings that are too long and have unrealistic theoretical content. Sometimes, a lecturer may not be the right person to guide the teachers and manage the courses. Experience shows that our department (Department of Education) should develop postgraduate training courses for practising teachers but also pay more attention to the teachers' learning needs. Consequently, trainings must be short, practice orientated and lecturers must be selected according to their presentation skills and according to their teaching and research experience. The research results seem to suggest that distance and/or e-learning must be offered to teachers. Our conclusion is in full harmony with the findings by Kárpáti (2008), who points out that further training course development for teachers should have a much closer relationship with the formal institutions of teacher training than they do now (Csapó 2007). Our greatest challenge is that Hungarian teacher training should be transformed into research-based training programmes, ensuring more emphasis on research methods as a part of university/college teacher training.

Implications

Inclusive education is a new challenge in Hungarian education policy as well as in society and education science. Due to the effects of foreign research results, it seems that development of education science in several orders of magnitude is faster than that of the policy and of the society. A lot should be done in this field including the change of social approach.

Mainstream Hungarian school teachers should be more aware of the theory and the practice of inclusive pedagogy on the one hand, and more confident to use their teaching competences.

The other difficulties are methodological and curricular ones; personal development, group dynamics, planning and management should be subject to more on-going research. This is an important aspect for the development of teacher training at our University, which has just undergone a renewed procedure of accreditation. Unfortunately, this had not been preceded by broad research on the inclusion of students with special educational needs. New teaching methods should be elaborated and evaluated according to their efficiency for renewing our pedagogical culture. When introducing the new methods and techniques, it is indispensable to abandon the classical frontal class management (Csapó 2008). This statement is also reasoned by the words of Gyulavári (2010) who said:

General teacher training does not include the treatment of people with disabilities. To be able to treat these persons, teachers must complete a special pedagogical training which is available at two universities. Universities must establish a committee on equal rights to promote adequate education and the equal rights of disabled students. Each institution has to employ a coordinator of disability affairs to help disabled students. The schools with integrated education receive higher amounts of normative support from the government (€450 per person, per year), which is dispensed by the coordinator of disability affairs. The Government may order preferential treatment for disadvantaged student groups and disabled applicants (Gyulavári 2010: 2).

Knowing how teachers' attitudes affect the students, they their service is an essential ingredient to improve their teaching. Regarding to that the teaching profession is mainly based on personal aptitude so the views on teaching activities of teachers, are organised around the professional knowledge (Köcséné 2007) we firmly believe that identifying, redirecting and changing attitudes of our future educators is a huge step forward in a process that we hope to initiate, ultimately resulting in improved outcomes for all the students with disabilities.

Preparing mainstream teachers for dealing with special needs children brings up significant questions such as: What kind of teachers should we train? What kind of licences and rights should inclusive teachers be given? What do we mean by teacher versatility? Should versatility be required of every teacher? (Barton 2000: 61)

We try to answer the questions above with analysing our curricula and training programmes. These new tasks and achievements are highlighted in our new programmes to make sure that the future teachers leaving our institute be able to fulfil the requirements of public education in every aspect.

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¹ *In a previous research, students in teacher training at our University expressed the opinion that integration means difficult tasks for teachers at schools. However, 58% of them said they wouldn't have any problems with inclusion of SEN in their classrooms.*

² *Only an incidental note. Some differences are also discovered in denominations of different education stages in different countries. For instance, an institute of early childhood education is called kindergarten, 'pre-schools' or 'infant schools' in different European countries. Presumably, languages mirror the dominant activity (teaching, schooling before school) in these institutes.*