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Teacher Education in Hungary: Between Autonomy and Control

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Context of Teacher Education

> For him who flies above it, a map is all he sees,
> this living scape of being but symbols and degrees;
> the reader of the map lines has neither known nor felt
> the place where the great Mihály Vörösmarty dwelt;
> what's hidden in the map? Yes, barracks, mills and arms,
> but for me crickets, oxen, steeples, quiet farms.
> Miklós Radnóti, 'I know not what…'. (Radnóti 2000, p. 96)

Miklós Radnóti was one of Hungary's most insightful poets of the twentieth century, who, in the face of Nazi fascism, crafted words urging his readers to understand the world around them from new perspectives—in this case, from above, from a distant perspective. Hungary is a country in Central Europe, with a population of 10 million and has been a member of the European Union since 2004. Students are enrolled in the public education system between the ages of three and 18, with education being compulsory until the age of 16. In the 2018/2019 school year, 1,669,000 students (85.8% of the population aged three to 22) were in full-time education in public and higher education (Statistics Hungary 2019).

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Due to Hungary's falling birth rate, the number of students in the public education system is constantly decreasing, although the decline has been slowing since 2014. Parallel, in the public education system, the proportion of pupils with special education needs (SEN) and from low-income families constantly increases (Hermann et al. 2019). According to Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports, the performance of Hungarian students is below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average in all areas. Among the participating countries, Hungary belongs to the group in which family background variables explain student performance significantly more than is the case for the OECD average. National and international performance measures show significant differences between pupils at school level, but they are more homogeneous within schools. In the EU context, the Hungarian education system shows the greatest socio-economic and regional inequalities among students (Hermann et al. 2019).

In Hungary teachers' wages, according to OECD and Eurostat data, are generally below 60% of other groups with the same qualifications. Within this, the salaries of early-stage nursery and secondary teachers were the lowest among the surveyed countries. Low salary contributes significantly to the feminisation of the teaching profession: more than 80% of teachers are women. Teachers' shortages are constantly increasing, with one factor being the proximity to retirement of the existing teaching cohort: nearly 30% of those who currently work in the system are expected to retire in five to 10 years (European Commission 2017; OECD 2019). After describing the context, we turn to the presentation of the system. The following simplified Fig. 3.1 illustrates the relationship between the public education system and the teacher education system.

However, what historical, social, and economic factors influence the data and structures presented above? Indeed, such factors are always difficult to summarise due to the fundamental complexity of how they influence teacher education (Mason 2008; Cochran-Smith et al. 2014; Burns and Köstler 2016; Kauko et al. 2018). This complexity is increased by the fact that teacher training is a lifelong learning process, in which teacher education and continuing education represent different stages of a unified, ongoing process (OECD 2011; Caena 2014). Furthermore, teacher education exists at the intersection of public education and higher education (HE), which means that both systems affect how teacher education operates.

In this chapter, the complex factors that fundamentally influence Hungarian teacher education are viewed and interpreted through the lens of the major socio-political changes in the image of the country's teaching profession in

Fig. 3.1 The relationship between public education system stages and the required teacher qualifications

modern history (Németh 2009; Guerriero 2017). Our premise is that the status of the teaching profession, in turn, defines the social status of educators, therefore, decisively influencing teacher education and professional development. Based on this premise, this chapter will examine key elements of the profession along with two main issues: firstly, how and to what extent is a teacher's work viewed as a complex profession that requires high-quality professional knowledge and competences, and, secondly, to what extent are teachers autonomous? (Normand et al. 2019).

Historical Development of Hungarian Education: The Position of Teachers and the Historical Roots of Teacher Education

Hungary is located in Central Europe and its 'intermediate' position between the East and West of the continent has played a decisive role in its history (Szűcs 1981; Németh 2005a; Körösényi et al. 2007). This geopolitical position has directly influenced the development of Hungary's education system and theory of education—in particular, historically under the dominance of continental (i.e. German/Austrian) influence, but the Soviet cultures of teacher education theory and policy made an impact as well (Németh 2005b).

The Hungarian education system has traditionally followed the Austro-German model: where the typical school system consisted of four years of elementary education, followed by secondary education. Still, despite the continuous development of this system, the real expansion of Hungary's own education system began during the period between the two world wars (Németh 2012). The central curriculum closely regulated the content of education being provided in the nation's schools and a system of inspection was established for supervising teachers' work. Despite this centralised management on a national level, many actors were able to become education providers (e.g. church and state), which promoted school diversity. Characteristics of the German model of governance and regulation can be clearly identified, both in terms of content regulation and the control of the system (Németh 2005a).

The first official institutions of teacher education in Hungary were established during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy of the eighteenth century, with a view to modernising society (Gyáni and Kövér 2006). The education system of this period separated different socio-economic groups, and this separation also appeared in teachers' career paths and teacher education. At this time, there were two separate forms of teacher training in Hungary: one by way of a seminary (i.e. school of theology) for teaching at elementary schools, and the other by way of academic training for positions at secondary schools. The above-mentioned societal separation also appeared in the names given to the two professional groups: only the secondary school teacher was called *tanár* (teacher), while the primary school teacher was named *tanító* (educator). Indeed, this segregation created different statuses in terms of income and social prestige (Németh 2012): while primary school teaching was essentially an occupation afforded low prestige and only semi-professional status, the secondary school teacher belonged to one of Hungary's most prestigious professions (Sáska 2015).

The Soviet occupation of the country in 1945 brought radical changes to this linear development process. Between 1946 and 1989, Hungary existed under the Soviet communist dictatorship. One of the first steps following the takeover by the communist party was the radical transformation of education because it was a strategic sector of citizen control for communist governance. During this Sovietisation, the state became the only education provider. The school system was completely redesigned, the curriculum was centralised, and external evaluation was implemented. Along with these structural changes within the school system, the system itself became a major tool for social restructuring. During this period, there was an unprecedented expansion of formal education in Hungary, first in primary education and then in secondary education.

Correspondingly, teachers' societal positions and teacher education went through comprehensive reforms. The growing number of students necessitated an increase in the number of teachers, but the already low salaries of teachers were pushed down during the price and wage reform of the early 1950s. As a result of the central wage reform, teachers' salaries were barely higher than the salaries of so-called 'unskilled' workers and agricultural workers (Lannert 2010; Polónyi 2015). Consequently, the gap between the two separate social classes of teachers did narrow, while the prestige of the teaching profession as a whole deteriorated. However, this economic devaluing of teachers' labour did not lead to a significant shortage of teachers, as a large, new cohort of female workers entered the teaching profession (Polónyi 2015). This is when the significant feminisation of teaching began, a trend which is still prevalent in Hungary today.

A subsequent important change in the teaching profession came in the 1970s and 1980s when the education of primary school teachers and pre-primary school teachers was moved from upper secondary school to college level—in 1974 for the former and 1983 for the latter. However, all these changes were not accompanied by the consolidation of possible training pathways in teacher education, thus maintaining separate training programmes for teachers working at different levels of the school system (Hunyady 2004; Németh 2007; Baska and Hegedűs 2015). Now, it can be generally concluded that the development of Hungary's education system follows global development trends on a regulatory level, albeit with some delay, with stops and setbacks found on a national level as a result of radical changes in Hungary's political environment.

In summary, the evolution of teacher education and education as a whole in Hungary can be characterised as follows: (1) politics has a powerful impact on education; (2) the teaching profession has traditionally been characterised by strong central regulation and control; (3) the teaching profession comprises segregated groups which are distinct from each other in terms of training, socio-economic privilege, and career paths; (4) the autonomy of the teaching profession is weak; and (5) the prestige of the teaching profession as a whole is declining, and has been since Sovietisation.

Major Changes in Hungary's Education System Over the Last Three Decades

In 1989, after the collapse of the Soviet regime, Hungary became a democratic country. The subsequent main socio-economic changes can be summarised as follows: after a very rapid period of marketisation, a fundamentally

capitalist economic system emerged, in which the role of the state in the distribution of resources has remained significant. Since then, material inequalities have increased radically, not only between regions but also within regions. In turn, these inequalities have affected students' and teachers' living and working conditions and are reflected in national performance indicators (Halász and Lannert 2003). Simultaneously, birth rates have continued to fall (Körösényi et al. 2007). Over the past decade, such unfavourable demographic trends in Hungary have been further reinforced by the migration of citizens seeking job and education opportunities in other EU countries. As a result of these socio-economic shifts, the number of students in Hungary is constantly decreasing (Kolosi and Sági 1997; Halász and Lannert 2003).

Since 1989, the field of education policy has also changed radically. Completely new actors (e.g. churches, associations, companies) have appeared, generating new forms of interaction between them and fundamentally transforming the power balance and dynamics on a policy level. Churches and private companies have emerged as education providers, and advocacy and professional consultation forums have been launched, including the Rectors' Conference which plays a crucial role in higher education reforms, including teacher education reforms (Halász 2011a). Nonetheless, like before, political actors have continued to play a decisive role in education policy, divided along political lines. This divergence in education policy did not occur immediately after the official change in political system, from a regime to a democracy, but at the beginning of the millennium, splitting opinion into two main positions: one advocating for strong state intervention and central management, as opposed to school autonomy and local focus; and the other advocating for integration and inclusive schools, as opposed to the segregation and separation of disadvantaged pupils, for instance, Roma students or students with learning difficulties (Halász 2017).

The end of the communist regime also had a profound effect on the organisation of the education system. As a result of rapid reforms, the highly centralised education system gave way to a diverse and decentralised system, characterised by the following features. First of all, the role of the state as the sole provider of education was diminished, and school maintenance fell under the jurisdiction of local government, with the church and private stakeholders emerging in the same capacity. Additionally, newly established or transformed institutions were reorganised: six-grade and eight-grade secondary schools appeared, while a form of the eight-grade elementary school still existed. The centralised, prescriptive curriculum was replaced by the National Core Curriculum, which prescribed about 50% of the school curriculum while a curriculum devised by the school defined the rest. Compulsory enrolment

and attendance at district schools was replaced by a free choice of schools. Lastly, the formal external evaluation of schools was abolished and the government began to develop a national competence measurement system (Halász 1998; Halász and Lannert 2003; Halász 2011a).

Simultaneously, the higher education system also went through significant structural changes, with many having a decisive impact on teacher education. As with primary and secondary education, new providers appeared in higher education, the same as above. Additionally, quality management systems were launched: the Hungarian Accreditation Committee was established, and internal quality management systems were introduced. Then, in 2005. the Hungarian higher education system became part of the Bologna Process (Halász 2009; Kováts 2010; Szolár 2010; Halász 2012).

Despite the democratisation in terms of the structure and content of Hungary's education, many elements of the old system have remained intact. These shortcomings have led to long-term problems. Firstly, public and HE financing is fundamentally disordered, leading to a significant negative discrepancy between teachers' salaries in Hungary and teachers' salaries in other European countries, contributing to the low societal prestige of teachers, a workforce shortage, and the extreme feminisation of the profession. Secondly, Hungary's school system does not have a clear structure: different types of schools coexist, overlapping in terms of activity. Indeed, this lack of structure coupled with free school choice has resulted in an increase in the proportion of pupils struggling to perform in the upper level of primary schools. Thirdly, despite efforts to strengthen school integration, students' social background inequalities between schools have been continuously increasing. Lastly, while formal, quality control systems have been introduced, for example in the case of school pedagogical programmes and the system used for evaluating textbooks, a lack of appropriate evaluation systems has led to a deterioration in the quality of teaching (Halász and Lannert 2003; Balázs et al. 2011).

The 2010 election dramatically changed the socio-political environment within which the Hungarian education system operates. The right-wing conservative party, Fidesz, gained a two-thirds majority that enabled them, as the ruling party, to carry out comprehensive reforms which restructured almost every element of the political system, including the constitution and the electoral system. The government also implemented a fundamental education reform, the Public Education Act of 2011, with the following main elements. Firstly, the state has become the key player in education provision once again, taking over from the municipalities. Secondly, the government has transformed the role of the national core curriculum into a prescriptive curriculum that covers 90% of school education content. Thirdly, textbook publishing

has been made a state monopoly. Fourthly, inspection has been re-introduced for the evaluation of schools. Lastly, the teaching career path has been defined in levels, and progression is based on external, individual evaluation by the inspectorate. These decisions have re-centralised the public education system and entrenched the hierarchy between actors. The new system has significantly reduced the professional autonomy of schools and teachers and failed to solve some of the pressing issues facing the education sector: teacher shortage, an ageing workforce of teachers, and the deterioration in the quality of education by international measures (Balázs et al. 2011; Halász 2011b).

National centralisation efforts have also appeared in Hungary's higher education policy. The first step was to abolish the Bologna-type, divided teacher education, in 2011, and to re-establish the undivided form from the pre-Bologna period. Higher education institutions have lost their economic independence due to the financial management of universities by government-appointed chancellors: indeed, currently, Hungarian institutions have the lowest financial autonomy in the EU, according to Kováts' recent evaluation (2015). Most recently, the April 2017 amendment of the Higher Education Act has raised further concerns regarding academic freedom for teachers and educators in Hungary (EUA 2017).

Teacher Education Reforms Over the Last Three Decades in the Context of Global Trends

In the most recent decades of global educational policy discourse, the economic approach has been strengthened (Gitlin and Smyth 1988; Tenorth 2014), with the effectiveness of education systems measured by their contribution to national economic growth (as measured by gross domestic product) and market competitiveness (Venger et al. 2012). Within the economy-focussed framework, the quality of teachers has been identified as a key factor impacting the effectiveness of education systems (OECD 2011; Creemers and Kyriakidēs 2012; Halász 2013; Kyriakides et al. 2010). This ideology has influenced the professional understanding of teachers' quality, professionalisation, and learning, as well as the developments and interventions in teacher education policy (Tatto 2006). However, this over-simplified relationship implying that teachers' quality (e.g. competences, professional knowledge) directly determines quality in teaching that leads to better learning outcomes has been criticised in recent research (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005; Kauko et al. 2018). Furthermore, the need for a values-based approach

to teacher education, rather than an economic-focussed approach, has been raised by researchers such as Biesta (2009, 2019). The aforementioned approaches have also shaped Hungarian public discourse, for example, the discussion on how teachers' work should be assessed (Rapos and Kopp 2015).

If teachers do matter to such a great extent (OECD 2011), then the quality of teacher education should also be given a central role in ongoing discourses on education, particularly because research shows that student performance correlates to teacher quality (Burroughs et al. 2019). So, the main question for teacher education now is how the quality of teachers can be ensured. Indeed, in modern global trends, two relevant approaches can be identified: one that strengthens teachers' professionalisation by focusing on their professional autonomy, professional development, and learning, and another that high-lights the accountability of teacher education to the public.

The focus on effectiveness and professionalisation of teachers has strength-ened the current evidence-based (or evidence-informed) approach in European education policy on the one hand, and the integrated teacher education policy from initial teacher education to continuous professional development on the other. However, despite this progress, one of the major challenges remaining is how to integrate research-based knowledge into practice or, in other words, how knowledge production, mediation, and application can be linked more effectively (Guerriero 2017). Seeking to overcome this challenge, a compre-hensive and robust system for supporting teacher education is needed, rooted in policy that builds on hard instruments, such as regulation, as well as soft ones, such as enhancing cooperation between stakeholders (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).

The influence of global trends on Hungarian teacher education can be seen from different points of view. Some researchers argue that European policies are mainly 'downloaded' onto the Hungarian context (e.g. Halász 2017), while others emphasise that it is not a one-way process (e.g. Ozga et al. 2011; Prøitz 2015) in that global trends are formed by local traditions, that is, a complex adaptation process which is also influenced by both the education policy elites and the social needs of the country (Németh 2005a; Grek et al. 2009). Global and European trends—such as the Bologna Process, the European Qualification Framework, teacher competences and standards, the induction period for graduate student teachers and newly qualified teachers, and the teacher career model (initiated in 2013)—were all introduced in Hungarian higher and teacher education. However, these rapid, often parallel, changes, as well as subsequent revocations (e.g. the new undivided initial teacher education programme which will be mentioned later in this chapter), have taken place without substantial evaluation of their impact. This

turbulence and scant discussion of the impact and quality of teacher education has caused tensions and incongruences between the different parts of teacher education, impeding a harmonious and all-embracing strategy towards future teacher education (Symeonidis 2019).

Changes in Hungarian teacher education have usually begun with initial teacher education (ITE), as the research on teachers' learning first of all has an impact on the designing of ITE programmes. Teachers' competences; facilitating and assessing learning with a portfolio; and the concept of continuous professional development (CPD) were also first developed and introduced into ITE programmes (Falus 2006). Teacher educators as researchers endeavoured to implement their own research findings and to translate international trends for the Hungarian context. Additionally, the Hungarian Association for Teacher Educators has had a great impact on professional work and knowledge exchange. Organising the Teacher Education Academy (2006) and the renewed version of the *Hungarian Journal of Teacher Education* (2003) have also strengthened the professional knowledge and discourse on Hungarian TE (Hadar and Brody 2017). In 2006, teachers' competences were first developed for secondary school teachers' ITE programmes by the country's community of teacher educators, after which this competence framework was also included in the regulation of teachers' qualifications (see the Ministerial Decree 15/2006 regarding the requirements of TE qualifications, plus its amendment in EMMI 2013), and later became the basis for the teachers' career model.

In terms of its positive impact, the competence framework certainly reinforced the importance of teachers' pedagogical knowledge as a quality indicator within teacher education (Guerriero 2017; Ulferts 2019) by defining the main competence areas (Ministerial Decree 15/2006):

1. Development of pupil/student personality;
2. Assisting and developing the establishment of learning groups and communities;
3. Planning the pedagogical process;
4. Development of literacy and skills of pupils/students applying disciplinary knowledge;
5. Development of the competences laying the foundations for life-long learning;
6. Organisation and facilitation of the learning process;
7. Application of the numerous tools of pedagogical evaluation;
8. Cooperation and communication among professionals;
9. Self-instruction and teaching; dedication to further professional development.

Furthermore, this competence framework took the first step towards an integrated TE framework: firstly, it was a common requirement for all subject student teachers and within the CPD system, and, secondly, it helped to integrate the quality expectations placed upon teachers across all fields. In practical terms, this means that while in ITE there are separate routes for kindergarten, primary, secondary, and special education needs (SEN) teachers, in CPD (induction period included) all teachers are met with almost the same competence requirements. Still, some criticisms can be raised here, as teachers were not actively involved in the framework-building process, which in practice, led to their resistance, although research findings show that, by and large, they do agree with the competence framework (Kotschy 2006). The language of competence framework was general which may have helped its professional acceptance, also it was efficiently shaping curriculum design in ITE. However, regarding the career model, teacher standards were, at least at first, too detailed and not easily assessed. Lastly, a great shortcoming of the competence framework is that it has not been able to adequately frame one of the biggest issues of education quality in Hungary: namely, the challenge of inequalities. A summary of the main trends in integrated teacher education—from ITE through induction to CPD—in the European Union and Hungary is offered in Table 3.1.

Regarding the balance between the professional autonomy of (individual) teachers and the macro-level accountability of teacher education, the following crucial features can be highlighted. The main requirements of Hungary's ITE programmes were regulated by the state but, within that, pedagogical approaches were open to be defined by institutions, which led to the emergence of reflective and research-based approaches to teacher education (Menter et al. 2010). However, quality development has not been linked to ITE programmes because quality assurance and accreditation are carried out at an institutional level.

As seen above, the relationships in Hungary between TE policy, research on TE, and professional practice itself can be characterised as turbulent and incoherent, weakening the emergence of evidence-informed policy. While some interweaving between the three different strands can be identified over the past three decades, they are now further apart from each other than they were at the beginning of the 1990s after the collapse of the dictatorship. Positive examples of collaboration can be connected to the competence framework, practice orientation in ITE, the introduction of the induction period, and continuous professional development. However, even these areas remain problematic. For example, despite the fact that the integrated system of TE was initiated and supported by researchers and policymakers (Kotschy 2006;

Table 3.1 Comparison of teacher education in EU documents (Symeonidis 2019) and in Hungary

	EU documents (Symeonidis 2019)	Hungary
Initial TE	programme development (balance between knowledge and skills; new contents)	TE as mainly structural reform; developments in TE (portfolio evaluation; practice)
	selection; recruitment	entrance exam; student-teacher scholarship named after Klebelsberg
	partnership in programme development with stakeholders	informal or project-based
Induction	partnership with the novice teacher; adequate financial and time resources; support system	one-year practicum; two-year induction period; mentoring process
Continuous professional development	stakeholder collaboration; support structures; career paths; competence levels	teacher career model connected with external evaluation and appraisal
Teacher competence frameworks	learning outcome-based; agency, empowerment, and responsibility of teaching staff	learning outcome-based TE programmes, teacher appraisal system based on teacher competence framework
Role of teacher educators	competence framework; collaboration between stakeholders	informal and non-formal learning as a teacher educator

Rapos and Kopp 2016; Stéger 2019), the term 'CPD' has not been included in formal regulation because, in practice, it is still hard to understand, and validate, the informal means of CPD. The growing misalignment between policy, research, and practice can be also attributed to typical Hungarian implementation strategies that still focus almost exclusively on top-down regulatory decisions. Also, in terms of evidence-informed policy, the recent lack of usable data on TE is a serious cause for concern as it impedes analysis and evaluation of trends in Hungary's TE (Hajdu et al. 2018).

Main Characteristics of Initial Teacher Education

Reforms and turbulent changes, as outlined above as one of the main characteristics of initial teacher education in Hungary, have not been followed by long-lasting strategic implementation and evaluation. So, to understand the

existing system of ITE, consideration must be given to at least the last two waves of top-down transformation: namely the Bologna reform in 2005, and the restoration of the previous undivided ITE programme for subject teachers in 2013 (Stéger and Greguss 2014). These three broad dimensions can be used for summarising the main features of ITE: (a) ITE as a system, (b) ITE as a programme, and (c) ITE as a professional learning process.

ITE as a System

In the Hungarian system, ITE belongs to the jurisdiction of higher education, meaning that pre-service teachers can study either at colleges or universities and receive a higher education degree (see Fig. 3.1). Only those educators who work in day-care centres with children under the age of three do not need to have a higher education degree. However, in 2009 a new bachelor's programme—Infant and Early Childhood Educators—was introduced as a new option.

For Hungarian higher education institutions, ITE is a highly relevant field: 41 of the 65 institutions offer some form of ITE, including vocational teacher education programmes (Eurydice 2019). Teacher educators who work in HE are instructed to follow academic career requirements, that is, primarily focussing on their quality as researchers, not as teachers. As such, TE can play a crucial role in innovating educational practice in HE, given that the diffusion of education innovation is highest among larger, more scientifically-focussed universities, where teacher education can enhance the culture of innovation (Horváth 2016).

The scale of ITE offered in Hungary's higher education institutions differs widely. Those institutions where the initial subject teacher education programme is offered in at least two subject fields have had to establish a Teacher Education Centre (TEC) (Act on National Higher Education 2011). The primary tasks of these centres as separate units within the university are the alignment and coordination of professional tasks such as content and structure of subject teacher education; as well as the operative procedures of ITE, such as organising entrance and final exams, school placements, evaluation of student teachers' progress, and tracking graduates' careers. These TECs function in diverse ways and occupy various positions within their broader institutional structures. To some extent, they lack operative competences, experience of delivering public education, and, sometimes, are overburdened—especially when they take on the responsibility of the theoretical parts

of ITE (Csapó et al. 2015). These centres work in partnership with the basic and partner ITE schools which helped in building networks between practice schools and universities (Stéger and Greguss 2014).

ITE as a Programme in Higher Education

In Hungary, the state strongly regulates the structure and learning outcomes of teacher education, as well as the percentages of the course content taken from specific fields (e.g. 130 credits for each subject of upper secondary school teachers but only 100 credits for lower secondary school teachers) (Fig. 3.2). ITE programmes are established nationally, approved and accredited by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee.

In recent decades, the structure of ITE programmes for kindergarten, special education needs, conductive, and primary education have remained the same, but for subject teachers, a dramatic change occurred with the CCIV. Act on National Higher Education in 2011. The initial education of infant and early childhood educators, and kindergarten teachers, is now provided as a three-year bachelor's programme, with that of primary school teachers and special needs educators as a four-year one. The programme for all subject teachers between 2006 and 2013 was offered at master's level as a two-and-a-half-year programme after graduating in at least one subject field at bachelor's
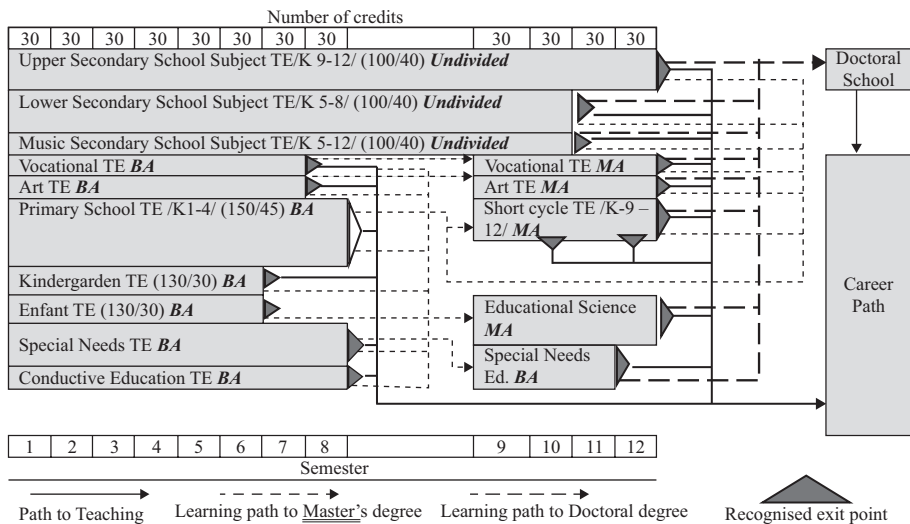

Fig. 3.2 ITE programmes in Hungary (In the brackets first showed the credits of the subject fields, second the credits of teacher' preparation)

level (i.e. the consecutive system). This Bologna-type ITE programme demonstrated a high commitment to teacher education as a profession and not as a scientific, discipline-focussed education.

However, in 2013, ITE in Hungary was reorganised as an undivided, long-cycle programme that lasts five years for K5–8 teachers and six years for K9–12 teachers. This new structure increased the length of the ITE programme from five and a half to six years, which mainly derives from the prolonged school placement at the end of the course. Also, it separated the preparation of lower and upper secondary school teachers in the subject field but not in the pedagogical-psychological study area. As explained above, this segregation goes back to the system which existed before the Bologna Process and is highly criticised because it strengthens the different social and professional prestige of teachers teaching in primary (K1–8) and secondary schools (K9–12), as well as widens the socio-economic gap between primary teachers (K1–8) and secondary teachers. Furthermore, such a divide in professional status underestimates the pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge of all teachers (Shulman 1986), as well as going against the international trends of teacher professionalism focussing on teachers' competences and professional knowledge instead of subject knowledge (Stéger and Greguss 2014). Although two routes exist for upper and lower secondary school teachers, in practice, 75% of student teachers in Hungary choose to study for six years, so even financially it is not worth organising different types of routes (Stéger 2019). ITE programmes prepare student teachers for two subject areas in 11 types of combinations (e.g. math and physics), reducing the possible combinations of subject areas compared to the Bologna-type system where 125 types of combinations existed, and helping to better respond to the expectations of schools.

So-called short cycle subject teacher education programmes were introduced with the 8/2013 Decree on requirements for teachers. These new routes made ITE programmes more flexible, and provided easier access for graduates with a qualification in a disciplinary field—or for those who already had a bachelor's degree, master's subject teaching qualification, or primary teaching qualification, then applied for a new teaching qualification. However, in practice, the number of applicants who are now choosing these routes is small and decreasing (Stéger 2019), therefore meaning that the current teacher shortage cannot be solved only via these new paths to TE. There is a real problem in that no other type of access is supported: the field of teacher education does not offer easy access to applicants from other professional fields (e.g. for engineers to become STEM teachers).

Hungarian ITE has a separate system for kindergarten and primary teachers on the one hand, and subject teachers for K5–12 on the other. The only transition from kindergarten, special needs education, and K1–4 ITE programmes to a scientific career path is the master's programme in Educational Science, but this does not qualify candidates to teach in upper grades. In addition, special needs educators with a bachelor's degree can proceed their studies directly on the same field at master's level for one and a half years. K1–4 teachers can apply for a shorter four- or five-semester subject teacher education programme. Doctoral programmes are open to teachers with an MA teacher certification: they may obtain a PhD in subject-specific or education science doctoral programmes. Overall, the transition points within Hungarian ITE are still quite inflexible.

In Hungary, all higher education programmes have been built upon the intended learning outcomes regulated at the national level since 2017. Subject teacher education programmes have had a longer tradition in competence-based education because, from 2006, a teacher's competence list was identified as the main requirement. The outcome requirements of initial subject teacher education have remained almost the same since 2006, but the proportions of courses allocated to specific fields have changed to a greater extent. This change can be said to have led to the misalignment of the programme, namely, in the form of excessive learning outcomes which cannot be implemented within the reduced proportions of pedagogical-psychological and subject teaching preparation (Rapos and Kopp 2015; Stéger 2019). Furthermore, another tension can be identified between the intended learning outcomes of the kindergarten and primary teachers' bachelor's programme and the subject teachers' master's programme—the developed competences do not differ between the two as much as the typical disparity outlined between the sixth and seventh levels of the European Qualification Framework. Also, despite the differences in learning outcomes of ITE programmes, after graduation teachers will be evaluated by the same standards of the teacher career model.

At present, the subject teacher programme consists of two subject fields and the teacher preparation part. Pre-service teachers for lower secondary earn 100 ECTS for each subject field, while those training to teach upper secondary earn 130 ECTS. The teacher's preparation covers pedagogical-psychological content, subject teaching, and school practice, which altogether make up 100 ECTS. The new undivided teacher education programme has changed as follows. Firstly, the proportion of subject fields has increased, while the proportion of pedagogical-psychological studies has decreased—both of which shifts are in contradiction with European trends (Stéger and Greguss 2014). Besides,

the emphasis on subject teaching (which is included in teacher's preparation) has not increased, which raises the question of how student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge can be effectively developed (Stéger 2019). Secondly, subject teaching and school practice have gained more credits, with increased school practice strengthening the characteristics of competence-based education and practice orientation. However, school placements are organised in the last year of the programme, a choice criticised by experts because it does not help the ongoing competence development of student teachers, or the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge (Rapos and Kopp 2015; Stéger 2019). In 2021 it looks that school practice will be reorganised and divided for the whole TE programme from the first year till the end—as the education policy has also started to support this idea.

These changes mainly stem from ideological concerns, rather than scrutiny of the effectiveness of the different ITE programmes (Hunyady 2010). Unfortunately, on the one hand, these unfounded changes increase uncertainty within the system; on the other hand, they do not result in real transformation because the actors of the system adapt to the changes on the surface only.

ITE as Student Teachers' Professional Learning Process

A study by Paksi et al. (2015) showed that, in Hungary, three times more female candidates were applying to teacher education than male candidates. According to their findings, other demographics less frequently opting for teacher education included those students whose parents had a higher educational qualification themselves, those living in better financial circumstances, and students with better formal measures of academic achievement. Other studies have also shown negative self-selection in Hungarian teacher education based on the achievement of applicants (e.g. Veroszta 2015). Furthermore, 2018 applicants from the new undivided system of TE gained fewer points on the entrance exams compared to students from the other undivided programmes (Polónyi 2019). Thus, it can be said that if the 2013 teachers' career model had any positive impact on the prestige of the teaching profession, it had all but vanished for 2018 TE applicants (Polónyi 2019; Stéger 2019).

The ITE entrance exam in Hungary has two parts: one relies on points from matriculation exams plus the grades students gain in the last two years

of their secondary education, and the other requirement is an aptitude test. In kindergarten and primary school teaching programmes, a special selection process was established in the late 1990s. In these early stages, it involved a more complex examination of applicants' commitment and preparedness; nowadays, the exam has a narrower focus on applicants' physical, verbal, and musical aptitude. In the undivided initial teacher education programme, an oral aptitude exam was introduced in the 2013/2014 academic year. In this process, applicants are asked about their personal motivations, career plan, communication competences, and beliefs about education. A Hungarian review of international practice and development projects was conducted (e.g. Falus 2011) before introducing the aptitude exam, but the results have not influenced practice, meaning that the aptitude exam still only consists of an unstructured oral discussion between a committee of teacher educators and the applicant. The validity and reliability of this new oral aptitude exam are highly debated within the Hungarian professional community (Stéger 2019). Indeed, applicants themselves are not satisfied with it: when surveyed, only 20% of students thought that the procedure was appropriate for filtering out those who are 'incapable' of becoming a teacher (Kállai and Szemerszki 2015).

A new Klebelsberg Training Scholarship was established in 2014 (52/2013 (II.25.) Governmental Decree), funding the best and most committed student teachers, in order to retain them in the teaching profession after graduation. Issued to 2582 students by 2019, the main targets of the scholarship are where the teacher shortage is most pronounced: for example, in STEM disciplines and in the countryside. Scholarship holders are employed by one of three schools of their choice, and must work as a teacher for at least the same amount of time as they received the scholarship.

In ITE for secondary school teachers, the development of student teachers' competences is supported by reflective learning practices throughout university courses and the school placement, as well as preparing a portfolio, which is part of the final exam (Rapos and Kopp 2015). However, the length of time elapsed between courses on general education, which are mainly at the beginning of the undivided ITE programme, and actual teaching practice, which mainly takes place at the end of the programme, has damaged the cohesion of ITE as a whole. In terms of the quantity of student teachers' learning, the undivided programme tends to put a heavier burden on student teachers but not the other ITE programmes. While students in higher education spend an average of 33 hours per week on their studies, that is, contact hours plus independent learning, students in the field of teacher education spend an average of less than 30.7 hours per week on their studies. On the other hand, those students on the undivided programmes (mainly in medical and subject teacher

education programmes) study for an average of 44.3 hours per week (Hámori 2018).

All in all, students from the field of teacher education report feeling well prepared for Hungarian labour market expectations, with 69% of those surveyed by Hámori (2018) evaluating such preparation offered through their ITE as 'good', as well as rating this aspect of their education as being second-highest in value (after theological study area). However, the number of students undertaking a teacher's degree has decreased in recent years. While 9480 students received a degree for K-12 education in 2005, in 2016 that number almost halved with n=4932 (Polónyi 2019). Additionally, the dropout rate of student teachers is currently quite high, sitting at an average of 20–25%—with the dropout rate for STEM teachers sitting above average (Stéger 2019).

Main Characteristics of Professional Development

In Hungary, the system of teachers' professional development is traditionally based on formal courses—but the overall concept of teachers' lifelong learning, as well as the development of ITE, induction, and CPD along the same principles have been growing since the 1990s. Since 1997, teachers have been required to participate in in-service teacher education, amounting to 120-hour learning obligation every seven years. There are multiple ways to fulfil this obligation: (1) attending an accredited in-service teacher education programme; (2) obtaining a new higher education degree; (3) participating in school development projects; and (4) participating in ICT or foreign language training. Formal in-service TE programmes are organised by higher education institutions, pedagogical institutes, and private contractors, and must be accredited by the National Education Office. Although the system of in-service TE has long been in place in Hungary, it has always struggled with issues related to quality. Firstly, in many cases, training programmes are too general and not concretely linked to local problems or developments in schools; secondly, teachers' CPD continues to be based on formal, individual learning, so the acquired knowledge cannot be easily integrated into school activities (Liskó and Fehérvári 2008; Lannert 2010); and, thirdly, for a significant number of teachers, fulfilling the training obligation is simply a formal task and is not based on their own conscious career planning (Kálmán and Rapos 2018).

In 2013, the introduction of the teaching career model radically changed the professional development of teachers in Hungary. The career model is aligned with the new system of complex external evaluation of institutions,
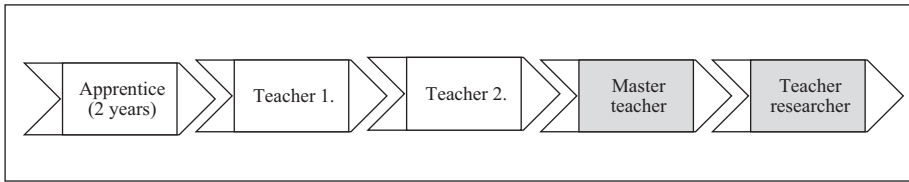
Fig. 3.3 Teachers' career model

leaders, and educators, in which supervision by the inspectorate plays a cru-
cial role. This system has implemented a five-grade career path for teachers,
where the first three levels are required and the second two are optional
(Fig. 3.3).

After completing the initial two years of the internship period and success-
fully passing the qualification exam, teachers enter the 'Teacher 1' level. In
order to advance to the 'Teacher 2' level, teachers must have an additional six
years of teaching experience: teachers can voluntarily apply for this qualifica-
tion after six years, with the procedure becoming obligatory after nine.

The evaluation process is the same across the first three levels: a qualifica-
tion committee evaluates the teacher's competences, based on lesson observa-
tions and a portfolio, which they defend in an examination. One of the
important requirements for evaluation at each stage is the participation in
continuous professional development. The areas of competences included in
the assessment are the same as those covered in ITE, however, the indicators
are much more detailed. The same indicators are applied for each of the first
three levels in the career model, with incrementally increasing thresholds to be
achieved. Beyond this, the 'Master teacher' grade requires 14 years of experi-
ence plus an additional professional exam, and the 'research teacher' grade
also requires 14 years of professional experience plus a PhD. These last two
levels are voluntary and primarily based on teachers' planned professional
activities concerning professional development, innovation, research, and
knowledge-sharing (Kotschy 2014; Oktatási Hivatal 2019; Szivák and
Pesti 2020).

The external evaluation of teachers in Hungary has decreased the profes-
sional autonomy of schools to a great extent. Indeed, a 2016 qualitative study
by Vámos et al. showed that even the most innovative teachers in the
Hungarian education system experience a low level of decision-making power
(Fehérvári et al. 2016; Fullan and Hargreaves 2012). Furthermore, this focus
on individual teachers within the accountability system has correspondingly
strengthened the focus on individual learning, detracting from professional

learning communities which, as research shows, are actually the more effective means of professional learning (e.g. Caena 2011, 2014; Cordingley 2015; Cordingley et al. 2015).

These recent changes in education policy were introduced without professional or societal consultation, but were accompanied by an intensive public debate that was focused on the wage compensation linked to the career model. As such, in the public debate, the model was not framed in terms of CPD, but to the time of advancement and increase in wages at each level. Other major focuses of these debates included criticism of how the new evaluation system places excessive administrative tasks on institutions and teachers, as well as being left without an adequate system to support the evaluation process. Additionally, the evaluation criteria were criticised as inadequate for assessing the effectiveness of education and the quality of teachers' work, a problem confounded by how the external evaluation of teachers is separated from internal institutional evaluation. Lastly, many of those who spoke up noted how the introduction of the model was a radical, sudden change, instead of incremental. To date, these discussions have not been satisfactorily concluded, which indicates that the reform has failed to resonate with a significant proportion of Hungary's teachers.

Challenges and Further Directions for Teacher Education in Hungary

The previous sections have described in detail how the socio-political background of teacher education in Hungary has changed historically; how the teacher education system has evolved into its modern form; and what problems and difficulties can be identified in the system today. Mainly aligned with European trends at structural and regulatory levels, the integrated teacher education system—that is, ITE, induction, and in-service training—is now established in Hungary. However, at the implementation level, several shortcomings can be identified.

Based on the original questions from the start of the chapter, this section will summarise the most important challenges currently facing teacher education in Hungary, and offer some critical suggestions for addressing them effectively. Although each problem is summed up somewhat separately for the sake of readability, it is necessary to emphasise here, once again, the extremely complex and intersecting natures of these challenges and problems—this means that, in turn, viable solutions can only be formulated in an equally

complex way, in order to have a comprehensive impact on the teacher education system as a whole.

Firstly, consideration must be given to the loss of professional autonomy at all levels of the system: indeed, as shown above, centralisation has been a major endeavour in education policy over the last decade. Within this, weakening professional autonomy can be identified not only at the level of individual teachers, but also at the level of institutions (i.e. schools and universities) and processes (i.e. curriculum regulation, financing, and evaluation). Regarding the former, the fading image of the teacher as an autonomous professional also affects recruitment and retirement—too often creative, innovative applicants do not choose the teaching profession, or, if they do, they may leave it. Simultaneously, the possibility of autonomous, collaborative professional decision-making in the field is reduced, or even made impossible, by centralisation. On each of these levels, the erosion of professional autonomy damages Hungary's education system.

Secondly, teacher education and the teaching profession face challenges on the level of professionalisation. The current teacher shortage threatens the long-term viability of the entire education system. Thus, the greatest danger for the profession is that the qualification requirements may be lowered with a view to alleviating the teacher shortage, but, in reality, this would further diminish the prestige of the teaching profession and the quality of teaching delivered. The present minimised autonomy of different actors in the system mean that policy decisions dictate how these processes will evolve in the future. Indeed, many reforms have taken place in recent years with the aim of strengthening professionalisation. However, the weighting currently given to pedagogical content is not sufficient. In particular, the preparation for teaching marginalised students is inadequate, while the proportion of such students in Hungary's school system is increasing. In order to attract the best students to the profession and to select suitable prospective teachers, a scholarship system and an admission system were introduced in 2013, but did not meet expectations. As a result, the number of applicants for teacher training has increased, but not to a desired or necessary extent, and dropout rates within TE programmes remain significant. At present, however, there is a reduction in the amounts of available data and research on teachers and teacher education across the board; parallel with this, on a cultural level, the importance of data-driven decision-making in education policy is decreasing. This fundamental lack of knowledge compromises and curtails the professional capacity of teacher education in Hungary today.

As mentioned above, there is a pressing need to articulate potential solutions to these problems on a policy level, as that is where most of the

autonomy regarding teacher education in Hungary is currently held, and would have a decisive impact on the teacher education system. The seriousness of the problems outlined here show that there is an urgent need for complex reforms based on robust consultation that comprehensively accounts for the interests, realities, and views of the various actors. As such, there must be access to and generation of current and nuanced data; support for research in the field of teacher education; and participation in international assessments of teacher education, all tailored to the specific needs of schools across the country. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work—for example, in schools in economically underprivileged areas, where teachers are facing poverty and high student dropout rates, the uniform external teacher evaluation system is too far from their reality.

Indeed, a multi-faceted approach is needed in order to attract the best students to the teaching profession and to reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession. Reforming some parts of the system is not enough: without legitimately elevating the autonomy of teachers and schools, raising teachers' salaries, and investing in the image of the teaching profession, these types of reforms will never bring about the necessary changes. As a pathway towards this type of system-level transformation, a shift away from initiating changes exclusively via regulatory processes must take place, with 'softer' methods due more attention. Concretely, this could be achieved by enhancing knowledge-sharing and collaboration between actors, or by applying more varied, flexible, and long-lasting strategies for the implementation and evaluation of any interventions. Ultimately, looking forward, professionalisation in Hungary's teacher education can only be strengthened by a renewed commitment to a rich support system of student teachers, in-service teachers, the teaching community, and schools.

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