

THE MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The most obvious responsibility of higher education is the education of young professionals. Another function is research, and it has other important functions. All higher educational institutions in the world (both universities and colleges) have a number of functions; apart from education and research: they also serve as centers of knowledge and scholarly wisdom; they also have to respond to the ever-changing needs of society, and provide educated and trained workforce for the labor- market. Generally speaking, they are creating and fostering social, cultural and ecological sustainability. Higher Education has deep traditions in Hungary. The Educational Authority recognizes the foreign decision, if the principles of the higher education system of the respective state are in line with the educational fundamental principles of the European Higher Education Area.

Key words

Higher education in Hungary. Mission. Statistical measurement.

Introduction – The responsibilities of Higher Education

Perhaps the most obvious responsibility of higher education is the education of young (and often not-so-young) professionals. Another very important function is research, and it has other important functions, but here we will be concerned mainly with its educational function. How it can fulfill this function can be measured by examining what benefits it can provide (or more precisely: *has provided*) to the target group (the graduates). This – the “return of investment” – can be measured by considering the rewards appearing in the form of better jobs, higher remuneration or other forms of appreciation. Some of these can be expressed in monetary terms; others (such as self-fulfilment or more favourable working conditions) cannot be quantified so easily.

Universities have always been characterized by intense and extensive international cooperation with other universities. Students have also been recruited internationally. Perhaps the word “recruited” is used inappropriately: students usually came in large numbers from foreign countries willingly and enthusiastically to renowned universities in Italy, Spain and other European countries. The oldest European university was founded in 1158, in Bologna, and the word university: the word *universities*’ was coined at its foundation. Islamic universities were founded even earlier: Al-Azhar University was established in 970 or 972 as a centre of Islamic learning, but its students also studied logic, grammar, rhetoric, and how to calculate the lunar phases of the moon. In the Middle Ages Europe saw the birth of several universities: the best known ones are Oxford and Cambridge in Britain, Padova, Siena, Macerata, Naples in Italy, and Salamanca and Valladolid in Spain.

Higher education is provided by colleges and universities. Colleges usually offer three-year programs and award college degrees, universities offer 4- or 5-year programs and offer Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, and following further studies doctoral degrees. Programs offered in higher education are specialized and with the advancement in science becoming increasingly specific.

Materials and methods

In what follows, we review the new higher education system in the wake of the Bologna Accord, corresponding to an education system according to ISCED. We explore how closely the Hungarian higher education system fits into the European Higher Education Area.

Descriptively, but buttressed with statistical data, we present a snapshot on the institutional structure of the Hungarian higher education system. We review and evaluate this in a historical perspective, and then turn to the current training structure in higher education, yet again based on statistical data, thus preparing the corollaries in the conclusion.

1.1 The New Higher Education System

A modern college or university cannot be satisfied with presenting the prescribed teaching material from the perspective a professor looks at it, and then require the student to produce the same knowledge during the examination. A university or college cannot restrict itself to the role of a simple teaching machine that feeds the student with some information and checks whether the student has sufficiently learnt it. It must maintain its status as a source of knowledge to be imparted to students; it must preserve its tradition of being a community of students and professors. It should be based on two-way communication: from professors to students and vice versa, professors and students should exchange and discuss their views.

At this point, the term higher education should be defined. Higher education. Specifically, higher education is education provided by universities, colleges, and other institutions that award academic degrees. Higher education includes both the undergraduate (i.e., college) and the graduate (or postgraduate) levels. Higher education includes most professional education and is strongly vocationally or professionally oriented. Higher education differs from other forms of post-secondary (after high school) education such as vocational education. Vocational education is a form of secondary or postsecondary education but is considered non-academic as compared to higher education. The figure below is an attempt to visually show the different levels of education and just where higher education fits in.

1.2 Forms of Education

The structure of the European Education system.

1. Table. Forms of Education in Europe

Levels	Functions
Pre-school	1-3 years, nursery schools or kindergartens; prepare children for school
Elementary*	4-6 years; obligatory in most countries;

	provides basic skills: reading and writing, elementary arithmetic
Secondary*	4-6 years; provides general knowledge or special skills in different fields
Vocational training	prepares for trades that do not require the completion of 10 years of general education for entry
Tertiary education: a) Colleges b) Universities	prepares for jobs requiring college or university degrees (Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degrees) and also offers post-graduate specialization programs

*In most countries the age of compulsory education is set by the government. In Hungary, for example, students are supposed to attend school up to the age of 16, and an 8-year "general school" is established to meet the general education requirements.

All higher educational institutions in the world (both universities and colleges) have a number of functions; apart from education and research: they also serve as centers of knowledge and scholarly wisdom; they also have to respond to the ever-changing needs of society, and provide educated and trained workforce for the labor-market. Generally speaking, they are creating and fostering social, cultural and ecological sustainability.

2 Higher Education in Hungary

Higher Education has deep traditions in Hungary: the first university in the southern city of Pécs was established seven and a half century ago in year 1367.

2.1 Number of Hungarian Higher Education

At present, in a country of 10 million people, we have 65 higher educational institutions (IHEs), ranging from top research universities to minor colleges. Most Hungarian universities and colleges have extensive connections with other European HEIs, and many of them have gained international recognition. Hungary joined the Bologna process in 1999 and hence became part of the European Higher Education Area.

2. Table. Number of Hungarian Higher Education (IHEs)

State-run Institutions 29		36 Private and Church-run Institutions (8 Universities and 28 Colleges)			
		Private 11		Church-run 25	
Universities	Colleges	Universities	Colleges	Universities	Colleges
26	3	3	8	5	20
Total number of Hungarian Institutes of Higher Education: 65					

Source: 2011. CCIV. law on higher education, Appendix 1.

2.2 State-run IHEs in Budapest

1. University of Veterinary Medicine
2. Corvinus University of Budapest
3. Budapest Business School
4. Budapest University of Technology and Economics
5. Eötvös Loránd University
6. Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music (University)
7. Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts
8. Hungarian Dance Academy
9. Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design
10. National University of Public Service
11. Óbuda University
12. Pető András College
13. Semmelweis University
14. University of Theatre and Film Arts
15. University of Physical Education

2.3 Private or church-run IHEs in Budapest

1. Andrassy Gyula University
2. Budapest Contemporary Dance Academy
3. Budapest Metropolitan University of Applied Sciences
4. Gábor Dénes College
5. International Business School
6. Central European University
7. Wekerle Sándor Business College
8. King Sigismund University
9. Dhama Gate Buddhist College
10. Baptist Theological Seminary
11. Bhaktivedanta College
12. Evangelical-Lutheran Theological University
13. Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church
14. Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies
15. Pázmány Péter Catholic University
16. Pentecostal Theological College
17. Sapientia School of Theology
18. Sola Scriptura College of Theology
19. Szent Pál Academy
20. Jhon Wesley Theological College

2.4 In the rest of the country

State funded universities in the rest of the country

1. University of Dunaújváros
2. University of Debrecen
3. Eszterházy Károly University, Eger
4. University of Kaposvár
5. University of Miskolc
6. University of Nyíregyháza
7. University of West Hungary, Sopron
8. University of Pannonia, Veszprém

9. Pallas Athéné University, Kecskemét
10. University of Pécs
11. Széchenyi István University, Győr
12. University of Szeged
13. Szent István University, Gödöllő

Privately or church funded into the rest of the country

Debrecen University of Reformed Theology

3 The history of Hungarian Higher Education

The history of Hungarian universities runs back over several centuries (Che & Li 2013). After a few attempts to found a university in the 13th century, the first Hungarian university, with faculties of law and medicine, was finally established in the town of Pécs in 1367. Pope Urban V, in his Bull of Endorsement, ordained that this university shall last for ever, yet the political environment meant that it only survived for a decade. In 1435 another university was started in Óbuda with four faculties, which likewise, ran only for a quarter of a century, along with the University of Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia), founded in 1467 and surviving merely a few years. King Mathias (Mátyás) had also planned to constitute a university in Buda, though his plan was unsuccessful.

The next new foundation took place a century later in Transylvania where Prince Báthory István established a university. Besides universities, the operating colleges and academies also contributed to an increase in the number of scholars, as did the traditional habit of attending universities abroad. The foundation of the University in Nagyszombat (today: Trnava, Slovakia) on 12 May 1635, brought a change. It was Bishop Pázmány Péter who re-organised the Jesuit college into a university, starting with faculties of theology and philosophy, later extended by a faculty of law and in 1769 by a faculty of medicine. This university has operated continually since its foundation, its location was in Nagyszombat until 1777, when it was moved to Buda and again in 1784 to Pest.

In line with the demands of the era, an Engineering Institute was opened at the university in 1782, which later became a part of the Technical University. Similarly, the department of veterinary science established in 1878, can be looked upon as the forerunner of today's Veterinary Department. The bourgeois-democratic revolution required an educated middle class, which promoted the development of Hungarian higher education, as did the fact that ministers of public education and religion were aware of the need of intellectuals and acted accordingly for the sake of the cause.

A notably important figure was Eötvös József, who already during his first term (in 1848) dealt with the statutes of the university and defined the requirements of academic freedom. On 7 April 1870 during his second ministerial term, he introduced a bill to establish the József Nádor Technical University, the first technical institution in the world to be called University. The foundation of the University of Kolozsvár (today: Cluj-Napoca, Romania) was proclaimed in Act XIX of 1872 under the ministry of Trefort Ágoston. Besides these universities, colleges of dramatic art, music, trade and of veterinary science were also established. In 1912 an act declared the foundation of the universities in Debrecen and Pozsony (Bratislava).

The number of university students had significantly increased: in 1866 there had risen 4,955 students, by 1913 this number was raised to 18,899. By reason of the enormous territorial losses due to the Peace Treaty of Trianon, the universities of Kolozsvár (Cluj) and Pozsony (Bratislava) needed to be saved for Hungary. The one in Kolozsvár was moved to Szeged and the one in Pozsony to Pécs.

At that time the Hungarian market was in need of a faculty of economy, which in 1920 was incorporated into József Nádor Technical University. This institution included the former Technical University, the College of Veterinary and the College of Mining and Forestry Engineering as well. In the period between the two world wars the standard of university education was that of the general quality of Europe; however, participation in the various sciences was not proportionate. In the academic years of 1937 and 1938, almost half of the 11,747 students graduated in law and theology, with only 11% in medicine and 7.2% in engineering.

After the end of World War II the principal aims were the restoration of the demolished university buildings, the replacement of ruined equipment and a painful tolerance of human losses, both of lecturers and students. Political interference, such as the placement of public servants and forced admittance of new lecturers, had every now and then caused harm to the autonomy of the universities, yet education re-commenced successfully. Referring to the social demands of society, evening and correspondent courses were initiated though many impugned these methods and women were admitted without limitations. The establishment of the University of Agriculture in the autumn of 1945 was to serve the improvement of agriculture.

After 1949 Hungarian universities had to witness series of reforms aiming to eliminate academic freedom. Soviet schoolbooks and curriculum were implemented; Marxism and Russian language were made obligatory subjects. The principals of admission were based on ideologies of the administration, therefore, several brilliant lecturers were dismissed by reason of either their noble birth or alternative ideology. The strict central governance eliminated the autonomy of the universities. Due to the needs of the communist economy, new universities were founded: the University of Economics in 1948, the Heavy-Industry and Technical University of Miskolc in 1949, the University of Transport based in Szeged, (later in Szolnok) in 1951. In the same year, the medical universities were transformed into individual institutions. An executive order of 1950 declared the separation of theology faculties from the organization of universities.

The political changes in 1949 produced lack of tension and a decline of values at the universities. This also contributed to the fact that university students played an initiative and significant part in the revolution of 1956. After the suppression of the revolution and the events of retaliation, gradual changes attempted to restore the status of university education. The major part in this restoration was played by university lecturers, often those independent of politics. A certain change was projected by the abolition of discrimination based on birth in 1963, and the reform of organizational statutes of the universities in 1968, providing more autonomy to university councils in which 1/3 of the representatives could be students. The university network was extended by promoting art colleges in 1971, the Postgraduate Medical Institute in 1973 and the College of Physical Education in 1975, to university rank.

The undeniable turning-point, as in other areas of life, was brought by the change of the political regime. Principles of the autonomous university and academic freedom have once again become acknowledged. New institutions were founded and the old ones were extended by new faculties. Of particular importance have been the establishments of Pázmány Péter Catholic University and Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in 1993. Amid various concepts on how to improve Hungarian higher education, the rational unification of disintegrated institutions has been distinguished for years. Finally, after debate, Act 52 of 1999 was concluded, which reflects the result of integration, out-lines the structure of Hungarian higher education and leads academic training into the next millennium.

4 Some Data on Hungarian Higher Education

Hungarian higher education is now in a transitional state (Che & Li 2013). A new *National Law on Higher Education* was adopted in 2011, which means we have new regulations and are faced with some unresolved issues. The main points of debate are the number of Hungarian IHEs, the concerns about quality of education, and the problems of financing.

Some people say that we have too many colleges and universities in Hungary: sixty-six IHEs in a country of about 10 million inhabitants seems to be too large a number, compared to 33 in Greece, to 28 in the Czech Republic, 19 in Portugal. But if you look at the relevant foreign statistics they will show that some of the church-owned or private colleges (or even universities) are not always included.

In 2006 more than 400 thousand students were enrolled in higher educational programs, and although a decreasing tendency is noticeable, we still have about 340 thousand students in higher education. Territorial distribution of students in higher education is not proportional: with the capital Budapest still dominating, so called regional university centres like Pécs, Debrecen and Szeged remain attractive (Polónyi 2013:36.) The decline in students number will remain a trend for some time. What can be done? Undoubtedly *quality* has to be *raised* – not only *preserved*. This is a very important point to remember especially in critical periods of time when financial considerations may induce decision-makers to choose “cheap” solutions that are detrimental to quality.

Last year the top three areas of training that attract the largest number of applicants were (1) Technology (including Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, and Architecture), (2) Business Studies, and (3) Humanities. Those areas attracted more than 40% of the total number of applications. The second position of Business Studies in this ranking reflects the general interest in economics and business.

In Hungary, a clear distinction is made between state and non-state (private or church-run) institutions of higher education (IHEs). Non-state institutions are subject to the same rules and regulations as state-run institutions. Recognition of state and non-state operated IHEs is must granted by the Parliament and must be listed in the Annex of the Higher Education Act. Establishment and operation of all kinds of higher education institutions (universities or colleges, state-run or operated by the church or foundations) are regulated by law. State-run IHEs are supported by the government (central and/or local) and students – as a rule – are also supposed to pay tuition fees, although those who need (and/or deserve) it may receive exemption or grants. Non-state institutions may also receive financial support government, which means they do not have to rely exclusively on tuition fees. However, both state-run and private or church-run IHEs are only partially financed by the state.

Another clear distinction is made between colleges (non-university higher education institutions) and universities. Universities are supposed to provide Master programmes in at least two fields of study and offer doctoral programmes. Colleges usually offer practice-oriented programmes, award Bachelor’s (or some of them Master’s) degrees. They can also operate as part of another higher education institution. Colleges often provide single-cycle long programmes, and sometimes training (higher education vocational training or post-graduate specialist training) that does not result in a higher education degree. By contrast, universities usually offer more theoretically oriented degree courses; they have doctoral programmes and are especially active in basic research. State universities are large organizations with several faculties, while colleges are rather smaller institutions, with a few exceptions. Non-state institutions are usually smaller than state institutions (in terms of the number of faculties and students) and the majority of them are colleges.

Conclusion

Foreign higher education institutions may also operate in Hungary. In Hungary, foreign higher education institutions may offer study programmes resulting in a degree if their state-recognition granted in their home country is recognized and the operation is approved by the Hungarian Educational Authority. The Educational Authority recognizes the foreign decision, if the principles of the higher education system of the respective state are in line with the educational fundamental principles of the European Higher Education Area. At present there are 28 such institutions.

Financing higher education is probably a problem in most countries. For a number of reasons (financial crisis, Hungary's dependence on foreign markets, the government's budget deficit, the new law on higher education) government support for higher education has been continuously decreasing over the years. Nevertheless, we don't give up, and think that the stringent regulations force us to do things better.

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