

IDEAL

Impact of Distance Education on Adult Learning



Distance education in European higher education

-THE POTENTIAL-

Hungary case study

Distance education in European higher education – the potential Hungary case study

Report 3 (of 3) of the IDEAL (Impact of Distance Education on Adult Learning) project.

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E-learning courses offered by higher education institutions

Prepared by: Krisztina Fodorné Tóth

Question 1: What is the percentage of the population reaching ISCED5 A/B1 and beyond in your country?

Number of graduates in higher education ¹

- total = 51,668;
- full-time = 37,089;
- non-full-time = 14,579

Number of graduates holding a degree ²

- 1,439,616 = approx. 14%

Question 2 : What is the percentage of adult learners (not only in HE)?

Number of adults studying in higher education: 338,467 (total, 2013/2014) ³

Number of adults studying in secondary education:

- vocational school/specialized vocational school: 12,140
- secondary school: 70,588
- community employment: 48,000 (approx.)

Number of adults studying in elementary school: 2,587

¹ 2013: http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_wdsi002b.html

² 2011 census data: http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_iskolazottsag

³ Sources: http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_wdsi001a.html and <http://tkki.hu>

2014 <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/oktat/oktatas1314.pdf> - Statisztikai Tükör, 2014/39

2014 <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/felnottoktatas13.pdf> - Felnőttoktatás, felnőttképzés ('Adult education, adult training'), KSH (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)

Number of participants in community service programmes:

- development of basic competences: approx. 52,000
- other trainings: approx. 48,000

Total: 523,782 = 5.3%

(Population: 9,877,365 = 100% (2014); 9,937,628 (2011))

Total number of university students: (2013/2014) 338,467

- Full-time students: 233,678
- Non-full-time students (correspondence, evening, distance learning, study in another HEI): 104,789

A large proportion of the adults taking part in formal education pursue tertiary studies: in 2011, nearly two thirds took part in bachelor or master courses and 6% in PhD courses. About 50% of the adults concerned did not work alongside their studies. Four fifths of those who did work alongside took part in the courses mostly or exclusively outside their paid working hours. Only slightly over 10% were able to pursue their studies during paid working hours.

Following the 2005 peak, the numbers of adults participating in some form of tertiary education (correspondence, evening or distance learning courses) has been steadily decreasing. This is partly for financial reasons (adult education is typically self-financed), and partly due to the restructuring of the labour market. In recent years there has been a decrease not only in state financing of tertiary education, but also in private investors' willingness to finance courses, particularly since the world economic crisis in 2008. Due to the 2012 and 2012 amendments of the Labour Code, opportunities for employee training have been cut, not only financially but also in terms of time management and employment safety.⁴ This may account for the decrease in the number of people participating in adult education, which is visible not only in tertiary education but on every level and in every form except elementary education. Where elementary education and the development of basic competences is concerned, the government's community

⁴ http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1200001.TV

service training module resulted in considerably improved rates of attendance, especially in 2014.⁵

As regards the numbers of people participating in non-formal education, a somewhat earlier figure is available from 2011; however, where these courses are concerned, data covering several years is not always absolutely accurate. This is particularly true of courses that do not result in vocational qualifications acknowledged by the state (that is, content area, competence development or simply non-accredited courses).

In 2011, 27.2% of the adult population (25-64 years of age) took part in some kind of organized education or training. The proportion of women was somewhat higher than that of men (28.2% versus 26.2%). There was a relatively close correlation between economic activity and participation in learning programmes. On the whole, it can be concluded that the economically active – and among them, those who are employed – study significantly more than the economically inactive. More than one third of employed people (almost 40% of women and slightly under 33% of men) took part in some form of organized learning in 2011. The participation rate among unemployed men, however, exceeds that of unemployed women.

The most significant differences in rates of participation in adult learning reflect the level of qualification held: while little more than 10% of those with elementary qualifications took part in some form of formal learning, the rates for those with a school leaving certificate exceeded 30%. For those with a tertiary qualification, rates exceeded 50%. Within the above proportions, the rate of those participating in non-formal education varied in the following way. One quarter of the population between 25 and 64 years of age took part in some form of non-formal learning. The rate of participation is different for different groups. Willingness to participate decreases with age: while more than one third of those under 35 took part in non-formal education, less than 14% of those over 55 years of age did so (the distribution by age of adults in tertiary education shows a similar trend). Qualification level is a decisive factor in this case too: almost 47% of those with tertiary

⁵Statisztikai Tükör, vol. IV. No. 87., 5 August 2010 <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/felnottkepzes0507.pdf>; <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/felnottoktatas13.pdf> Felnőttoktatás, felnőttképzés ('Adult education, adult training'), KSH (Hungarian Central Statistical Office), March 2014.

qualifications took part in some form of non-formal education, while under 10% of those with only elementary qualifications did so.

The most popular forms of non-formal learning were vocational courses without qualifications, conferences and seminars, workplace trainings, and trainings listed in the National Training Register. As regards the content of courses, the most frequent choices were social sciences, economics and law, followed by service-related topics, mostly preferred by men. Healthcare and educational programmes were mostly attended by women, while men preferred programmes in the technical sciences and services.

The choice of acknowledged non-formal trainings which do not culminate in qualifications was mostly connected to participants' work. Adults completed almost three quarters of courses for this reason; the remaining quarter of courses were undertaken for personal reasons, for example, because they were related to participants' hobbies. Women were more willing than men to learn for reasons unrelated to their work. They attended about 30% of trainings for personal reasons; for men, this was true for only one fifth of trainings. Almost 30% of the adult population took part in at least one form of informal learning. Most of them were engaged in computer-aided learning, but many printed materials were also used. Computer-aided learning involves a combination of electronic study materials specifically developed for this purpose, digitally published literature developed for general purposes, and content retrieved from mixed electronic sources which is often of uncontrolled quality. For the time being, even in 2014, systematic online training remains the rarest form, despite the connectivist wave of 2011-12 and the great international breakthroughs in MOOCs since 2013. The most popular fields include the humanities, arts, services and social sciences. Since 2012 there has been a shift in preferred fields of study: at present, the most popular are language learning, development of ICT competences, healthcare/social care, business and economics, development of communication and individual competences. This means that there is an increasing demand among the Hungarian population to develop key competences.

Until recently, one of the most popular forms of adult education was postgraduate teacher training, the content of which extended from special subjects through methodological issues to key competences. Recently, however, the proportion of students in this sector

been considerably reduced or rechannelled due to the restructuring of the control and financing of public education.⁶

A considerable proportion of non-formal programmes, particularly self-organizing study groups, do not start in the educational sector and are not even seen as training by either the participants or the organizers. Both the number of such programmes and their participation rates are difficult to measure. Many are attached to the civil sphere or run by individuals. These courses often focus on esoteric fields such as right hemispheric drawing, creative writing, etc.

Reasons for failing to carry out planned courses often have to do with the living conditions of the participants: shortage of money or time, employers' unwillingness to support training, etc. In the case of distance and electronic learning, resources such as home internet access or IT infrastructure are often insufficient for learning. Lack of relevant key competences is also a significant factor: some potential participants consider their own ICT knowledge insufficient to complete an online course or one with strong electronic support. Similarly, some lack the necessary language skills to complete an online course taught in a foreign language.

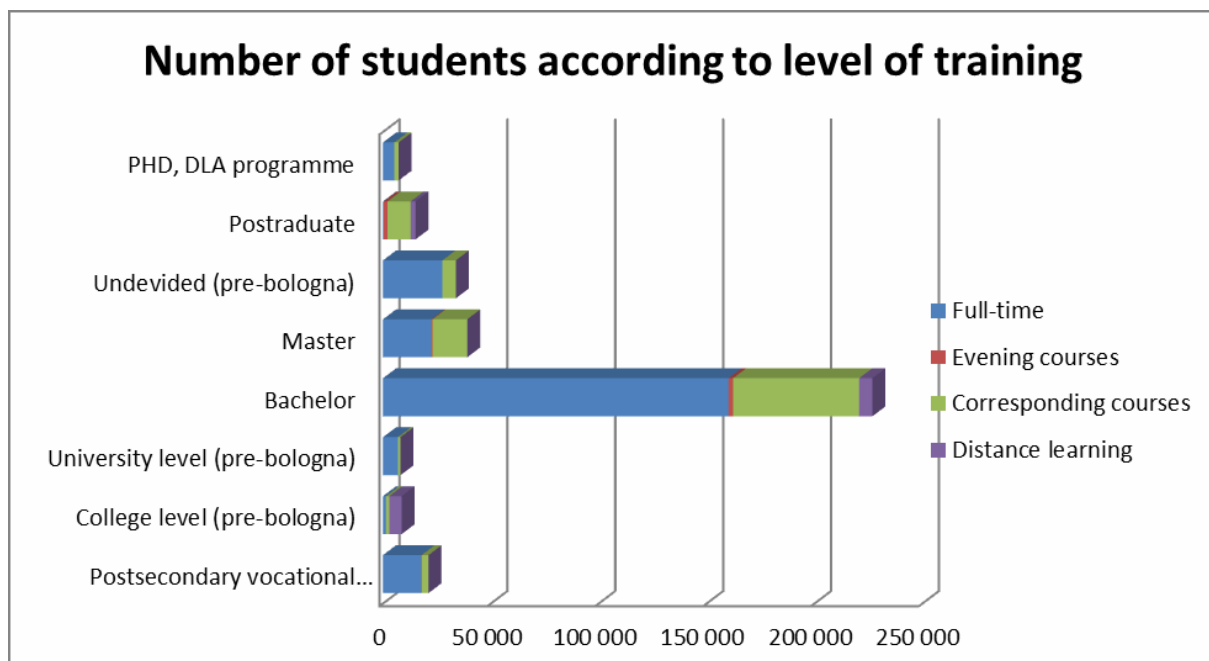
⁶http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100190.TV
http://klik.gov.hu/download/c/d0/70000/alapito_okirat.pdf

Statistics on students participating in distance / part-time training

Prepared by: Maria Kocsis Baán

The diagrams below present the data available on the following website:
http://www.oktatas.hu/felsooktatas/felsooktatasi_statisztikak.

Figure 1: Variations in rate of attendance in various levels of training with regard to status



	Post-secondary vocational training	College level training	University level training	Bachelor program	Master program	Undivided training	Postgraduate vocational training	PhD, DLA	Total
Full-time	17,811	1,361	6,867	160,151	22,428	27,497	299	5,200	241,614
Evening	78	67	46	2,104	498	41	1,747	65	4,646
Correspondence course	3,208	1,485	1,194	58,428	16,113	6,228	10,786	1,989	99,431
Distance learning	18	5,719	0	6,158	0	0	2,238	0	14,133
Total	21,115	8,632	8,107	226,841	39,039	33,766	15,070	7,254	359,824
Proportion of part-time students in %	16%	84%	15%	29%	43%	19%	98%	28%	33%
Proportion of distance learning students in %	0.09%	66.2 %	0.00%	2.71%	0.00%	0.00%	14.85%	0.00%	3.93%

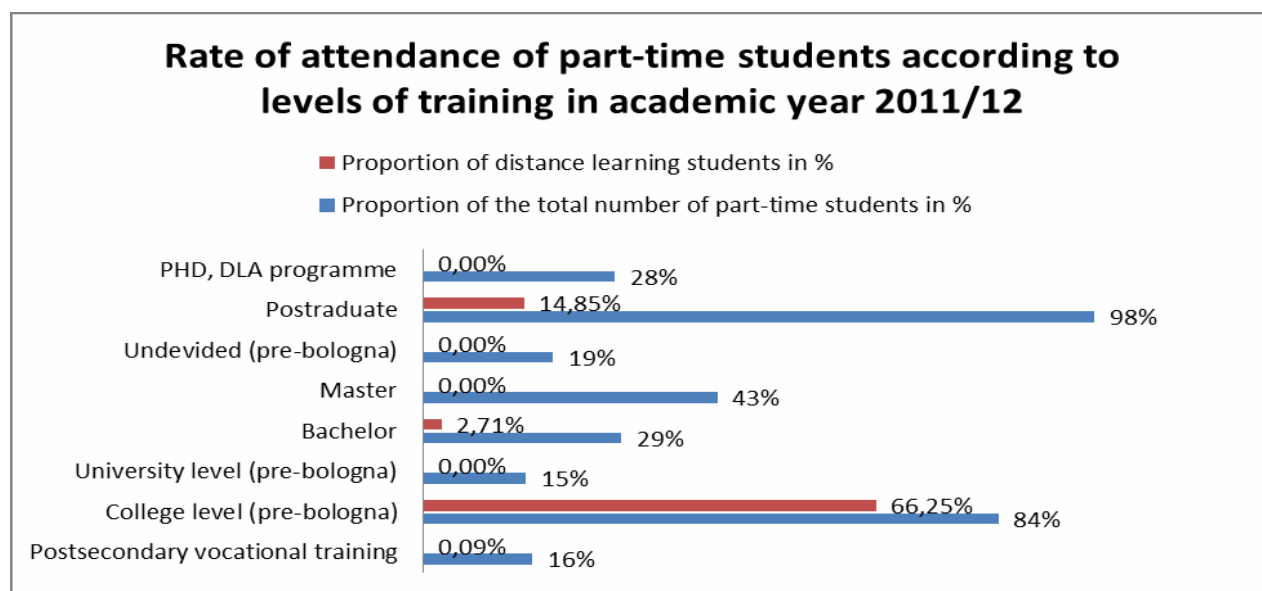
Table 1: Education statistics – Hungary 2011/2012

Analysing in detail the main levels of Bologna-type training and the levels of training with the highest number of participants, the following diagrams command attention.

On the basis of these diagrams, it can be concluded that distance learning in Hungary represents a particularly low proportion of the educational programmes available, despite the fact that a significant number of students require the opportunities and advantages that part-time training forms can offer. Moreover, the figures are low despite the fact that Hungarian higher education is able to meet both the infrastructural and methodological challenges of organizing and implementing modern distance education programmes. It

is particularly remarkable that, at masters level, there is no distance education on offer in Hungary at all.

Figure 2: Rate of attendance for part time students by academic level

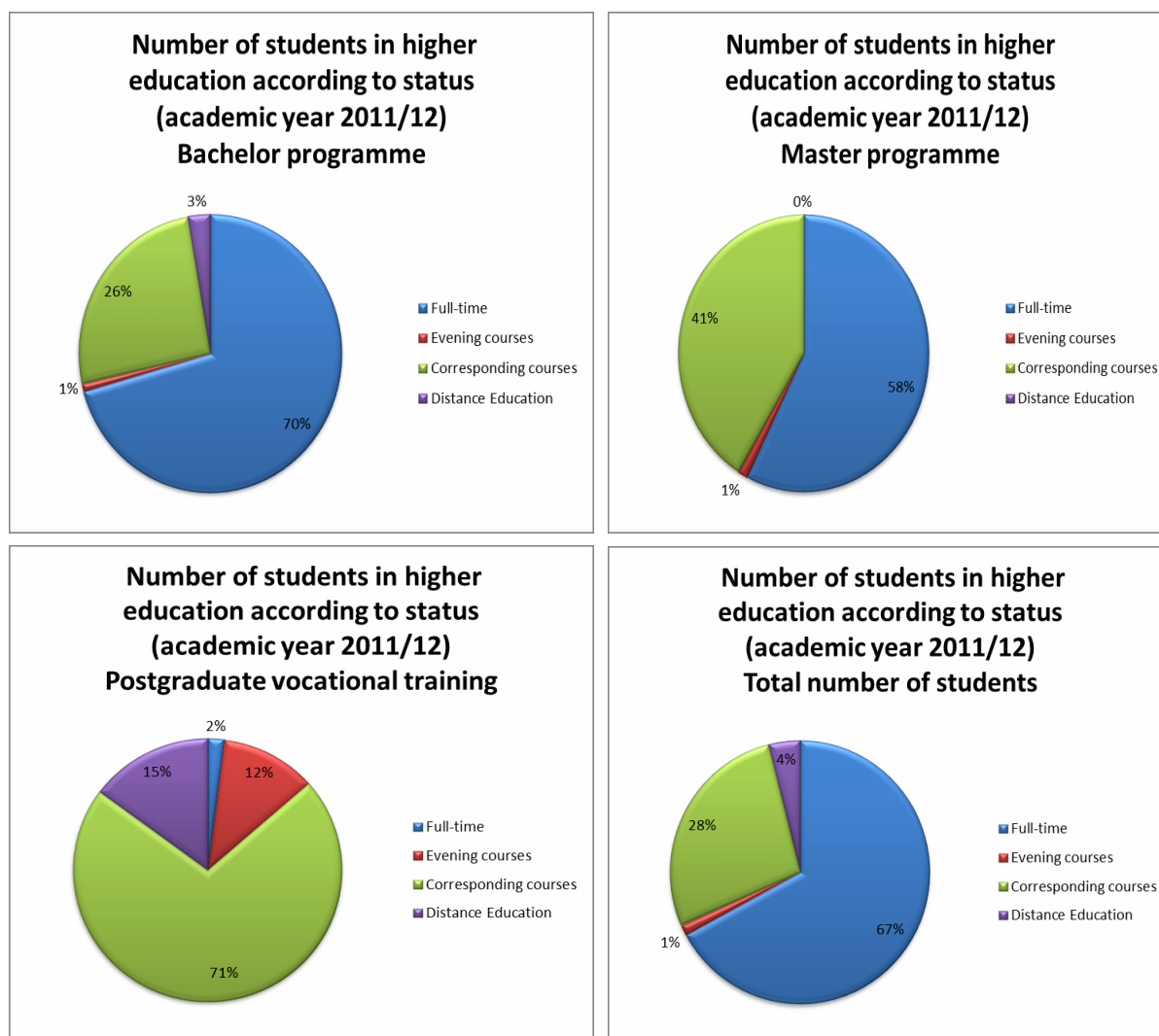


The reason for these shortcomings is all too clear: current legislation discriminates against modern e-learning in favour of the more familiar but less efficient correspondence programmes. While 73% of full-time and 27% of part-time conventional students receive state support, those participating in distance learning are not eligible to receive such support. This is why several higher education institutions advertise correspondence courses, which in optimal cases are carried out using blended learning methods.

Table 2: Students receiving state subsistence in Hungary

Academic Year 2011/12	Total	Receiving state subsistence (person)	State subsistence (%)
Full-time students	241,614	176,752	73%
Part-time students	118,210	32,084	27%
Total	359,824	208,836	58%

Figure 3: Distribution of students by academic level - Hungary



The significant number of students in college level training programmes is noteworthy. The table below shows the distribution according to status of students 'remaining' from pre-Bologna university-college programmes, with an institutional breakdown.

Table 3: Student numbers at institutions in Hungary

Institution	Total number of students	Students in their final year of studies)
Gábor Dénes College	195	195
Budapest Bussiness School	77	56
Károly Róbert College	5,327	794
Óbuda University	34	22
University of Pécs	3	3
Széchenyi István University	31	25
University of Szeged	10	10
College of Szolnok	42	42

According to this table, in four out of the eight institutions studied, the number of students reaching their final year of studies in the given academic year is very low. Károly Róbert College is the only institution with a high number of students in their final year. In the table shown below, it can be seen that the same institution is represented by only 246 students in full-time training at bachelor level in the same academic year.

Table 4: Student statistics by age - Hungary

Statistics according to age	Total number of students	Total number of students	Total number of students
18-24 years of age	166,112	19,719	633
25-29 years of age	29,677	9,076	3,009
30-34 years of age	13,245	3,270	2,858
35-39 years of age	9,139	2,449	2,870
at least 40 years of age	8,668	4,525	5,700
Total	226,841	39,039	15,070
'Adult' %	27%	49%	96%
over 30	14%	26%	76%

Figure 4: Distribution of students within Hungary

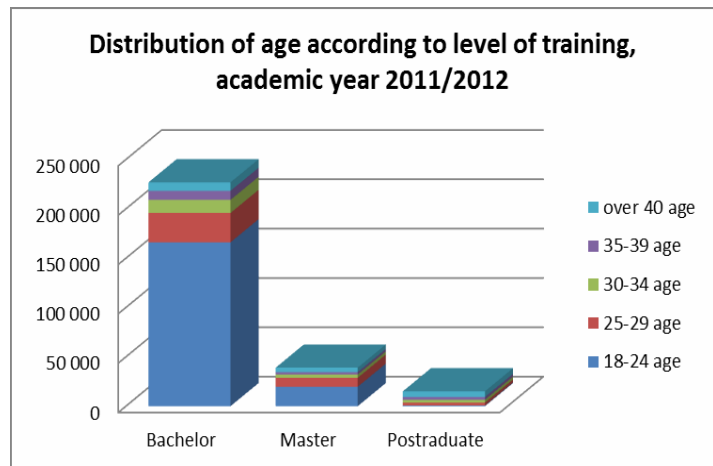
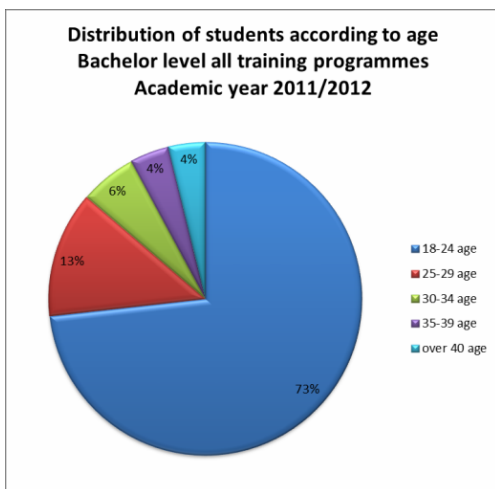
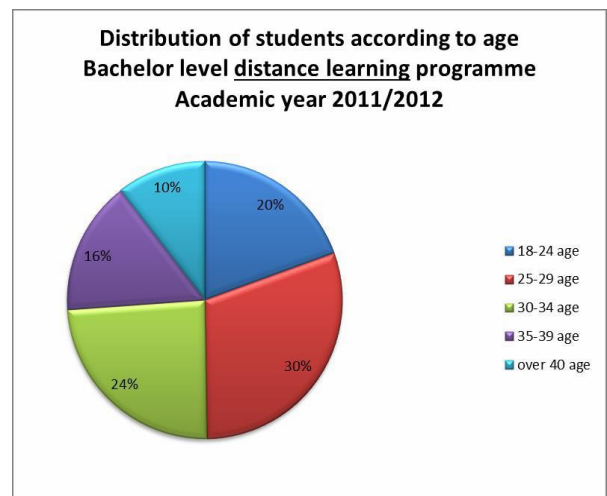
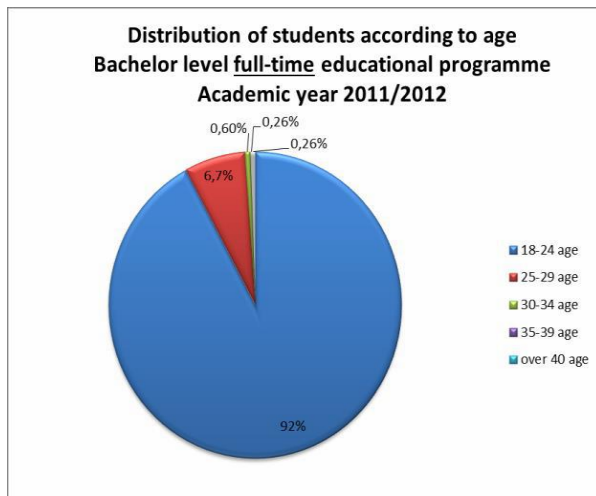


Figure 5: Distance learning students by field of training

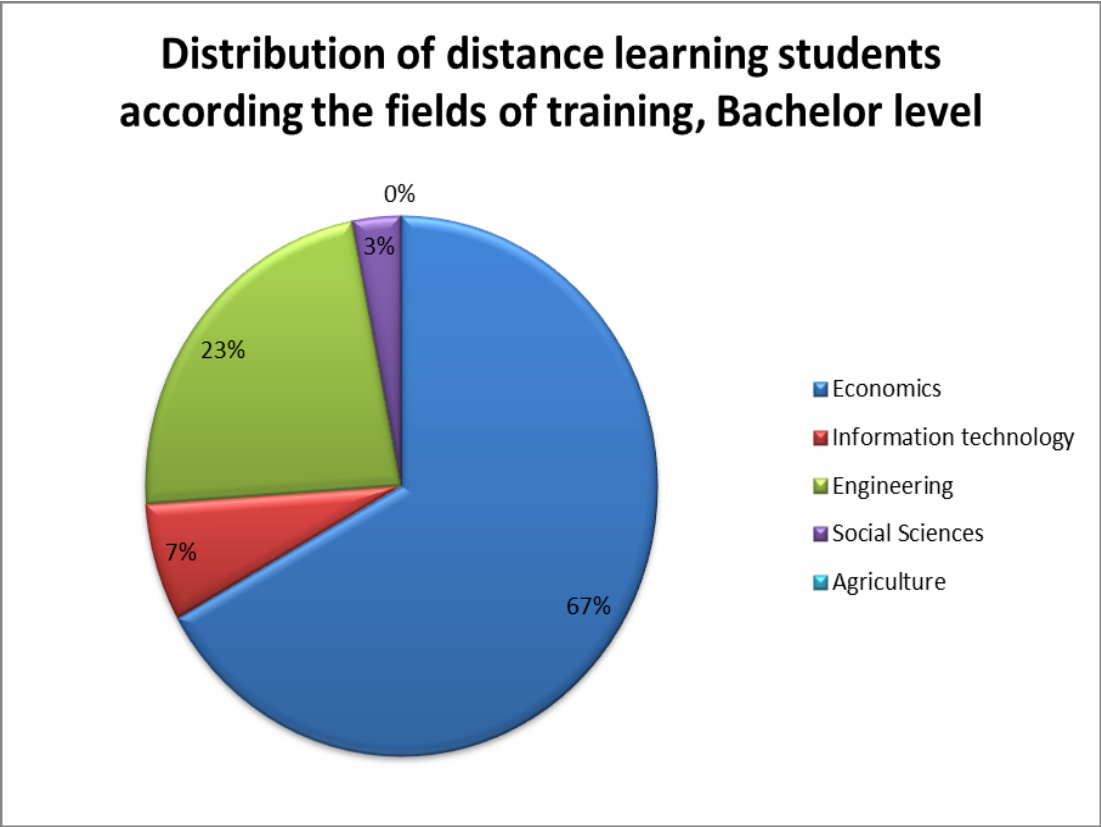
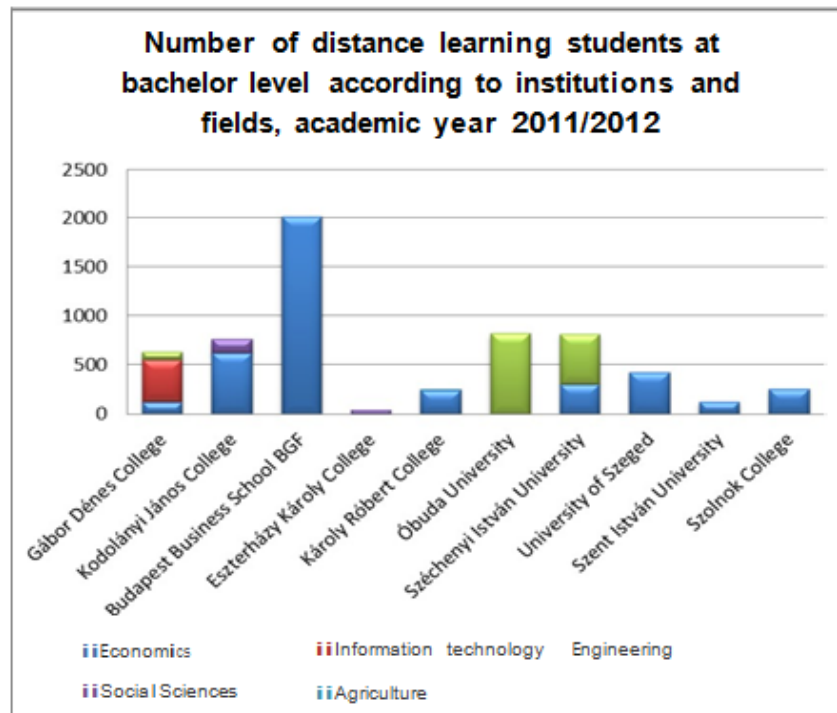


Table 4: Distance education bachelor students by institution - Hungary

Number of distance learning students at bachelor level according to institutions and fields, academic year 2011/2012	Gábor Dénes College	Kodolányi János College	Business School BGF	Eszterházy Károly College	Károly Róbert College
Economics	121	621	2,018		245
Information technology	433	0	0		
Technical sciences	81	0	0		
Social sciences	0	145	0	44	
Agriculture					1
Total	635	766	2,018	44	246

Óbuda University	Széchenyi István University	University of Szeged	Szent István University	Szolnok College	Total
	307	422	128	257	4,119
					433
823	512				1,416
					189
					1
823	819	422	128	257	6,158

Figure 6: Distance learning bachelor students by institution - Hungary



The social background, composition and characteristics of learners participating in distance learning

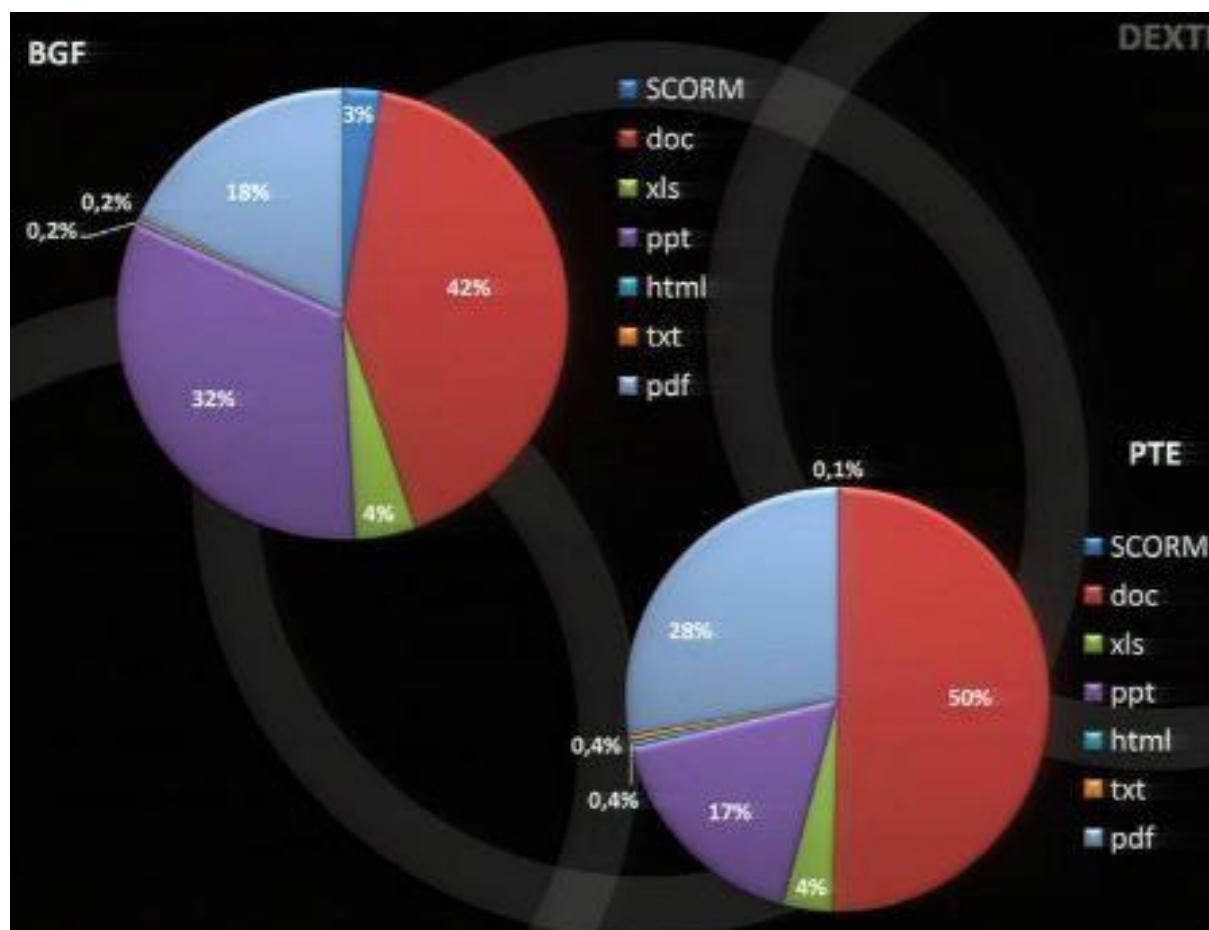
Prepared by: Krisztina Fodorné Tóth

Distance learning services provided by universities

Today, the distance learning services provided by universities are generally combined with electronic learning support services, mainly as a consequence of the organization of part-time (correspondence and evening) courses. Every Hungarian higher education institution operates some kind of electronic learning support system. At a minimum, this means the educational administrative system, which is represented by market framework systems (Neptun, ETR – Unified Study System). The framework systems support the sharing of educational documents, so some institutions use these primarily for storing and forwarding the minimally necessary amount of electronic training content. In general, it can be stated that document sharing (course descriptions, presentations, lecture notes, downloadable and referenced literature) represents the highest proportion of material in the electronic learning support systems of Hungarian higher education institutions, regardless of platform or system. This is illustrated through the example of user statistics from two universities using CooSpace, the Learning Management System (LMS) developed by Hungarian companies, which is the most popular in Hungarian higher education.

Higher education institutions use different platforms to varying extents for document sharing or the management of distance learning activities (submission of assignments, examinations, group-work, student–teacher or student–student communication). Besides the above-mentioned administrative system, the two most common forms of electronic system used for publishing content are a) files or webpages via the institutional server, and b) Learning Management Systems (LMS): practically every Hungarian higher education institution (HEI) uses these solutions to some extent. External open source document sharing systems (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox) or mixed use platforms (e-portfolio, external websites and social platforms) are also used to a lesser extent.

Figure 7: Distribution of types of documents uploaded into Coospace LMS



Note: illustrated with the example of two Hungarian institutions 2004-2008⁷.

⁷ Pál Golobics: Új eszközök és alkalmazási területek a Coospace-ben ('New tools and fields of application in Coospace'), Dexter Kft. Networkshop konferencia 2009 <https://videotorium.hu/hu/recordings/details/1519>, Uj_eszkozok_es_alkalmazasi_teruletek_a_Coospace-ben.)

With regard to LMS, the range of platforms used and the activities performed may vary on the faculty, institutional, departmental or even individual level. This reflects a characteristic feature of Hungarian higher education institutions. In many Hungarian HEIs there is no well-planned, conceptually unified electronic learning support system for organizational and methodological matters. Instead, the form and source of such support depend on the subjects and teachers in question, thanks to strong fundamental respect for teachers' professional freedom. In institutions where the various forms of distance learning have a strong tradition and/or are markedly present, systematic electronic learning support is generally available but its sphere of influence does not necessarily extend to the whole institution. One reason for this is the significant organizational transformation which higher education has undergone in the past 15-20 years. As a result of integration measures, some formerly independent institutions with radically different educational methods have been merged, whilst still trying to preserve their integrity and autonomy.⁸ However, this may in certain cases have created a situation where even the best practices of some institutions were not spread over the whole institution. In addition, in the early 2000s, several new institutions (units, faculties and independent institutions) were established as a result of higher education expansion.⁹ Some of these new institutions have developed a modern electronic learning support system and applied this approach to distance learning, which then often departed from the classical university distance learning traditions.

Distance learning practice at Hungarian universities started with theoretical research in the early 1970s.¹⁰ During this period, methods were developed for the modernization of correspondence programmes (especially in teacher training). These methods advanced and spread in the 1990s, when the network of Hungarian Regional Distance Learning Centres was established.¹¹ Although these centres were generally under the auspices of

⁸ Kálmán, A. (2002): A Lifelong Learning Központ empirikus távoktatási felmérése az Észak-Alföldi Régióban, valamint a távoktatás regionális helyzete. ('Empirical distance learning survey of the Lifelong Learning Centre in the northern region of the Great Hungarian Plain and the regional conditions of distance learning') Lifelong Learning Füzetek 2. szám, Debreceni Egyetem 'Lifelong Learning' Központ

⁹Kozma Tamás: A felsőoktatás expanziója. 'The expansion of higher education'
http://dragon.unideb.hu/~nevtud/Oktdolg/Kozma_Tamas/doc/expanzio.pdf

¹⁰ Kovács Ilma: Távoktatástól távoktatásig. 'From distance learning to distance learning.' Budapest, 2006
<http://mek.oszk.hu/04500/04524/04524.pdf>

¹¹Hungarian National Council for Distance Education - website: http://www.fsz.bme.hu/lnokt/ntt/ntt_eng.htm

higher education institutions, the institutions in question did not always make use of the possibilities they offered. Moreover, the centres soon faced a significant lack of resources. As a result, university distance learning centres either became multifunctional units (e.g. for coordinating adult education or supporting the library or knowledge centre), or survived on external resources. Those that could do neither of these things simply ceased to exist. In the small percentage of institutions which have pledged to carry out distance learning education, this activity may not be affiliated with a distance learning centre (although this is primarily because the majority of institutions, especially the newly established HEIs, have never set one up). Distance learning activities related to universities or colleges are not connected to specific institutions, with the exception of a few cases. Instead, they function for the time being as a type of supplementary activity of universities, as far as the proportion of training programmes and the number of participants are concerned.

Distance learning represents only a very small segment of Hungarian university education. While there is still a wide range of programmes on offer, most of these are full-time correspondence programmes. In September 2014, altogether 31 distance learning training programmes were advertised in Hungary by the various institutions.¹² Thematically, this represents 11 different programmes provided by 9 institutions (for comparison, there are 46 higher education institutions in the country operating on a Hungarian licence and 30 on a foreign licence).

¹² admission portal felvi.hu

Table 5: Distance learning programmes advertised by Hungarian HEIs in September 2014¹³

Intézmény	Képzéstípus	Munkarend	Finanszírozási forma	Szak	
BGF-KVIK	A	T	K	kereskedelem és marketing	szak leírása
BGF-KVIK	A	T	K	turizmus-vendéglátás	szak leírása
BGF-PSZK	A	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment	szak leírása
BGF-PSZK	A	T	K	pénzügy és számvitel	szak leírása
EKF-TKTK	A	T	K	informatikus könyvtáros	szak leírása
GDF	A	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment	szak leírása
GDF	A	T	K	gazdaságinformatikus	szak leírása
GDF	A	T	K	mérnökinformatikus	szak leírása
GDF	A	T	K	műszaki menedzser	szak leírása
GDF	F	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment [kis- és középvállalkozási]	
GDF	F	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment [projektmenedzsment]	
GDF	F	T	K	gazdaságinformatikus	
GDF	F	T	K	mérnökinformatikus [hálózati informatikus]	
GDF	F	T	K	mérnökinformatikus [rendszergazda]	
KJF	A	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment (Budapest)	szak leírása
KJF	A	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment (Székesfehérvár)	szak leírása
KJF	A	T	K	nemzetközi tanulmányok (Budapest)	szak leírása
KJF	A	T	K	szociális munka (Budapest)	szak leírása
KJF	A	T	K	turizmus-vendéglátás (Budapest)	szak leírása
KJF	A	T	K	turizmus-vendéglátás (Székesfehérvár)	szak leírása
KRF	A	T	K	kereskedelem és marketing	szak leírása
KRF	A	T	K	pénzügy és számvitel	szak leírása
OE-KGK	A	T	K	műszaki menedzser (Budapest)	szak leírása
OE-KVK	A	T	K	villamosmérnöki (Budapest)	szak leírása
SZE-GK	A	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment	szak leírása
SZE-MTK	A	T	K	közlekedésmérnöki	szak leírása
SZE-MTK	A	T	K	műszaki menedzser	szak leírása
SZF	A	T	K	kereskedelem és marketing	szak leírása
SZF	A	T	K	pénzügy és számvitel	szak leírása
SZF	A	T	K	turizmus-vendéglátás	szak leírása
SZTE-GTK	A	T	K	gazdálkodási és menedzsment	szak leírása

Majors: commerce and marketing, tourism and catering, economics and management, finance and accounting, library information technology, economics and management, business IT, engineering IT, technical manager, economics and management (small and medium-size enterprises), economics and management, economics and management (project management), business IT, engineering IT (networks), engineering IT (system administration), economics and management (Budapest), economics and management (Székesfehérvár), international studies (Budapest), social work (Budapest), tourism-catering (Budapest), tourism-catering (Székesfehérvár), commerce and marketing,

¹³ <http://felvi.hu> (Columns in table: Institution, Type of training, Status, Financing, Major)

finance and accounting, technical management (Budapest), electrical engineering (Budapest), economics and management, transportation engineering, technical management, commerce and marketing, finance and accounting, tourism and marketing, finance and accounting, tourism and catering, economics and management.

Establishing and running a distance learning programme in Hungary is subject to well-defined criteria, which indicate the resource-demanding character of distance learning¹⁴. Due to lack of resources (both financial and human), even the production of the electronic content of courses and programmes can be a difficult task, not to mention the introduction of distance learning itself, which requires a total overhaul of approaches and work processes. Most institutions have decided instead to gradually transform correspondence training programmes into a kind of blended learning, or have developed an institutional distance and e-learning strategy simultaneously (one example is the 2013 e-learning strategy of Pécs University).

This, then, is the current state of play with regard to distance learning in higher education. The forms of accredited, organized adult education programmes can be measured; however, there is little comprehensive data available for the whole country. Universities measure the state, outcome, participant base, and satisfaction level of their distance learning programmes themselves, using a variety of methods. One priority area for the spread of distance education could be postgraduate teacher training, since the recently reformed system has given special attention to distance learning¹⁵. The range of non-accredited or even non-organized training courses cannot easily be measured, because they are launched in various forms based on various financing and conditions, and have similarly diverse reporting and dissemination requirements and institutional backgrounds. In general, however, it can be stated that vocational postgraduate training programmes, particularly intra-institutional training courses, represent a high proportion of distance

¹⁴ Hungarian Accreditation Committee,
http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=522&lang=hu,
http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=443&Itemid=646&lang=en

¹⁵ Márta Hunya – Regina Nagy: Miért menjünk? Tartalmi és formai megújulás a pedagógus-továbbképzési kínálatban. 'Why go? Content and form renewal in the offer of postgraduate teacher training')
http://www.ofi.hu/sites/default/files/WEBRA/2014/01/HUnya_Marti_TAMOP315_miertmenjunk_educatio_KIK.pdf

learning. The forms, time management and methodological quality of such training courses are equally diverse.

In Hungary, besides the regional distance learning centres operating under the auspices of certain higher education institutions, individual institutions undertake to operate distance learning programmes in conjunction with their main activity (Examples for these:.....Open access online courses which can be expanded through the cooperation of several institutions into a systematic national or even higher level distance learning platform could represent a breakthrough. The Hungarian E-university Network¹⁶ has already made preliminary preparations to this end. However, in recent years, several other initiatives have appeared aiming to introduce open access online courses, with the K-MOOC platform of Óbuda University being the most recent¹⁷. In 2013, Pécs University joined this trend with its open access online course provision; in 2014 it launched second cycle open courses whose credits are accepted by the relevant faculty¹⁸. The first initiative of this kind was the Virtual University launched by the teachers of ELTE University, which at present is operated via the social media platform Facebook¹⁹.

The motivations and attitudes of higher education institutions to distance learning programmes are also varied. In line with global trends, institutions are primarily interested in increasing the number of participants, including both Hungarians living abroad and foreign students. Since demographic changes and the transformation of the financing of Hungarian higher education have caused admissions of native Hungarian students to dwindle, institutions have been turning towards foreign target groups by introducing an increasing number of training programmes taught in foreign languages. At the same time, the distance learning programmes on offer are being expanded by transforming correspondence courses and introducing MOOCs. In an earlier phase of development, distance learning programmes were seen as attractive because they were presumed to have low costs and modest human resources requirements following their launch. By now, however, it has become clear that under network conditions and with the

¹⁶ <http://e-university.hu/>

¹⁷ <https://elearning.uni-obuda.hu/kmooc/>

¹⁸ <http://efeek.pte.hu>, Krisztina Fodorné Tóth: Nyílt online kurzusok tanulságai a szervezés és a motiváció tükrében; 'Open online courses in terms of organization and motivation'. Networkshop 2014; <http://nws.niif.hu/ncd2014/docs/ehu/052.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/virtualisegyetem>

infrastructural, content and support expectations of the present target groups, the demand for human resources in distance learning programmes is equal, although different, to that of attendance-based teaching. This motivational factor therefore seems to be disappearing. In contrast, however, the target group seems to be changing as the Net Generation reaches the age of entering adult education and web applications become a way of life. As students' ICT competences improve and their attitude to online learning becomes more favourable, distance education seems a more and more relevant tool for increasing the range of people who can be involved in higher education. Moreover, a significant number of participants in distance learning find it to be the only form of training flexible enough to accommodate their way of life. (According to the internal survey of Pázmány Péter Catholic University in 2012-14, 72% of the respondents participating in distance programmes would choose the same form of training in their further studies for the above reasons.²⁰

Adaptation of higher education programmes to distance learning environments partly follows the general trend of e-learning support and partly reflects a gradual departure from the organizational methods of correspondence courses. Thus, initiatives focus mainly on electronic content development and only subsequently on ways of elaborating possible online courses or training programmes. In the case of full distance learning programmes, the first step is to design the whole learning process (often starting from the organizational model of correspondence courses, already familiar to students). The framework is then filled with thematic groups and training course activities, followed by content development and editing, creation of the platform and preparation of trainers. According to the survey conducted by Pázmány Péter Catholic University, the Hungarian distance learning programmes examined featured group tutorials (not necessarily in postgraduate training) and tutor support, as well as a recommended learning schedule which learners can handle with a certain flexibility. Course materials (lecture notes, electronic material, etc.) were partly online and partly printed. Open online courses introduced in recent years signal a further departure of distance learning from correspondence courses, at least with regard to face-to-face contact. These courses are run fully on electronic platforms, and can be completed without contact teaching or

²⁰ Éva Cseszka: Felsőoktatási intézményekben folyó távoktatásban résztvevők ('Participants in distance learning in higher education institutions'), Internal survey, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2014

tutorials using only online material and activities. Course materials include electronic lecture notes, online literature and video materials; activities include forums, video-conferencing, real-time or asynchronic communication via social media, collaboratively edited documents, assignments to be submitted, and assessment tests.

In a university environment, the costs for the participants/students of self-financed distance learning programmes are often equal to those of correspondence programmes. The order depends on the field and level of training (the cost of bachelor distance learning programmes is typically 150 000-180 000 HUF/semester; in addition, tertiary level vocational training courses are also available in distance learning mode, which are somewhat less expensive). The lower cost of open online courses reflects the lower rates of face-to-face consultations compared to the correspondence courses.

From the institutional perspective, the cost structure of electronic distance learning is different from that of traditional programmes: a significant proportion of the whole cost (approx. 57%) is spent on content development and system operation, while the cost of teaching is divided between teaching and tutoring fees. In addition, a significant proportion of the costs of distance learning (namely those related to content, course and system development) must be covered before the launch of the training, when the risk of recovery is high. However, these initial high costs are only incurred once and will not reach the same proportion again, unlike face-to-face training costs which remain the same for the duration of the programme. The provision of human resources is the responsibility of higher education institutions and must be covered by a very narrow budget until the income from the training allows the financing of extension. The whole cost demand of electronic distance learning during a cycle of seven semesters is some 70% of that of a correspondence course with the same number of participants, so even taking into account its significant need of human resources, it is clearly more cost-effective.²¹

²¹ Kata Némethné Farkas: Az e-learning oktatás bevezetése a Széchenyi István Egyetemen. 'Introducing e-learning training at Széchenyi István University'. Student research, 2012

Today, university distance learning programmes are all fee-paying, and participation in such training is not subsidized. According to the legislative regulation of the act on higher education, one benefit is provided for all part-time training programmes according to duration: part-time training can be extended by a maximum of four semesters²². In the case of accredited adult trainings, training can be launched with a certain amount of state support depending on the content and target group, but not on the form of training, i.e. whether it is distance learning or face-to-face.

The participation rate in university and college level distance learning programmes is very low compared to the whole student population. At the same time, hardly any participation data are available for training courses offering no diploma. The main reason for the low participation rate may be the narrow offer of training programmes in this form. This seems to be verified by the wide interest shown in the recently launched MOOC programmes. For example, the open online courses launched by Pécs University in 2014 (3 courses altogether) have 309 registered participants (as of 8 October 2014). As shown in the figure below, the largest and most prestigious universities offer part time study programmes, but typically in the form of correspondence courses. No master level programmes are offered in distance delivery mode.

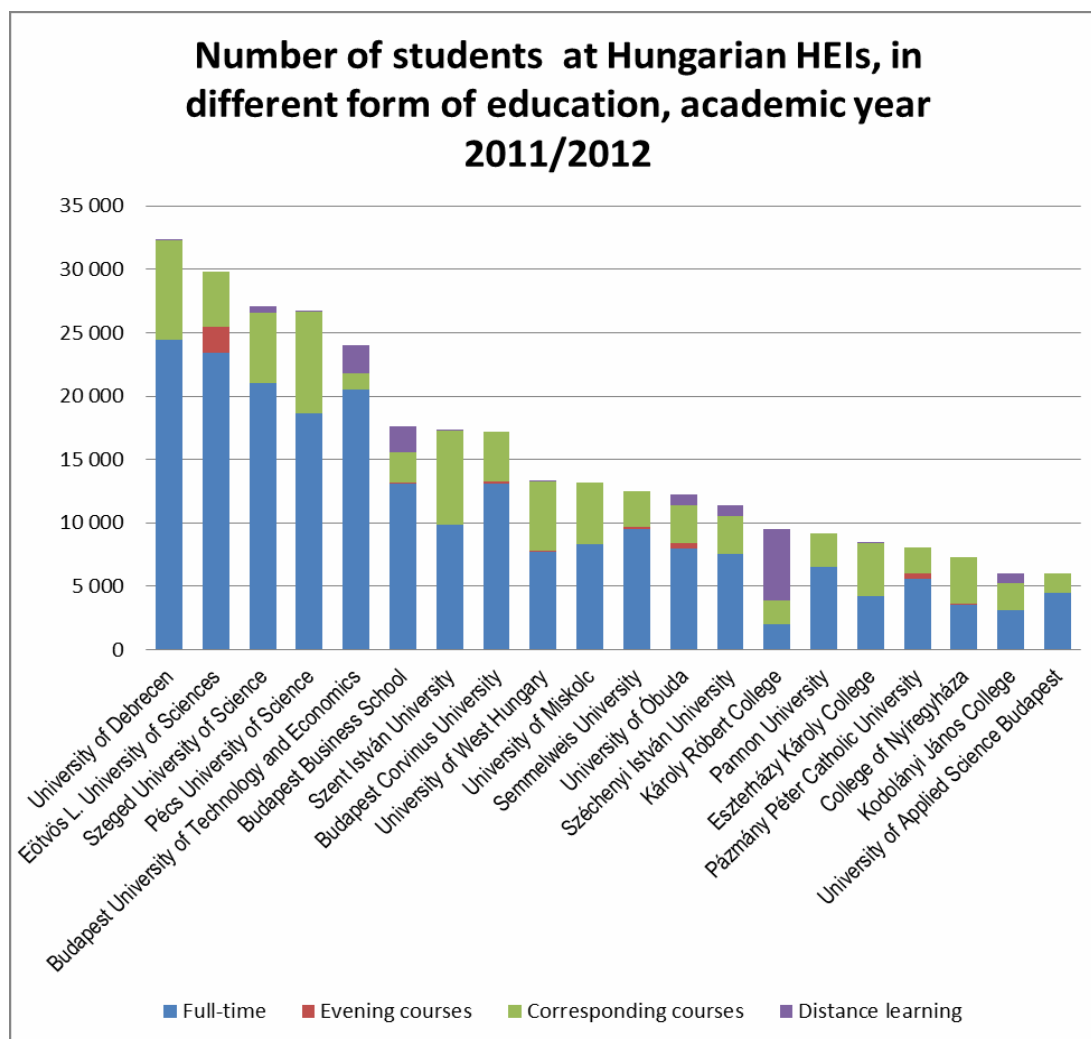
Information on higher education degree programmes together with their distance learning formats can be obtained from the annual Admission Information Booklet, which is available online at the central education and administration website²³ as well as from the institutions' own registry offices and websites. As with other university training programmes, these sources of information describe the disciplinary setting of the training, the level of diploma/certificates awarded, the tuition fees charged, and the course content of the programmes. The information provided by the institutions themselves gives much more detail, covering the organization and structure of the training courses, the required tools, platforms and software, and the list of contact persons together with their contact details. The institutions' own websites also provide information on higher education courses which do not award degrees or certificates. Those interested can obtain

²²Article 55 (2) of Act No. CCIV of 2011 on Hungarian higher education, http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV

²³ <http://felvi.hu>

information on these and other adult training programmes at the website of the Public Employment Service.²⁴

Figure 8: Ranking order of Hungarian higher education institutions according to the total number of students and proportion of participants in different delivery forms (academic year 2011/12)



The workload on distance learning programmes depends on their organizational characteristics. The above description of the cost structure of distance learning programmes applies here, too: the more automated the training, the lower the workload for instructors during the course. In the field of distance education, however, highly automated trainings are less effective due to the lack of participant interaction and the

²⁴ http://www.afsz.hu/engine.aspx?page=allaskeresoknek_kepzes
https://www.nive.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=211&Itemid=167

demotivating effect of anonymity. In the case of degree awarding and accredited training programmes, the institution must provide a degree equivalent to that of the corresponding full-time attendance-based programme. Learning outcome requirements must be the same in both face-to-face and distance programmes. This means that the total workload for students of distance learning programmes is similar to that of full-time students. Naturally, the number of contact hours, if any, can only extend to what is permitted by law: in the case of distance learning, the number of contact teaching hours must be fewer than 30% of the contact hours in the equivalent full-time programme;²⁵ the rest of the workload is made up of independent work. This usually means a 20-80% or 30-70% division.

Statutory framework and legal regulation of distance learning

Distance learning is defined by Hungarian legislation within the field of higher education and adult education. In addition, it also appears in such non-regulatory legal documents as the 2010-2014 Action plan for digital renewal and the 2014-2020 Info-communication strategy. In these documents, distance learning is presented partly as a general and partly as a public education objective.²⁶

Within higher education, distance education is regulated by Act CCIV of 2011 on Hungarian higher education²⁷. This defines distance learning as ‘a form of training based on the interactional relationship of instructor and student and the student’s self-study,

²⁵ Article 55(2) of Act CCIV of 2011 on Hungarian higher education, http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV

²⁶ Info-communication strategy <http://www.google.hu/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCEQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nih.gov.hu%2Fdownload.php%3FdocID%3D24683&ei=aolmVJz2GsK5OJnjgAg&usg=AFQjCNHcm6l2tbA9myv0edBmfKzxdshqtQ&bvm=bv.76247554,d.ZWU>

Digital Renewal Action Plan: <http://20102014.kormany.hu/download/b/fd/21000/Nemzeti%20Infokommunik%C3%A1ci%C3%B3s%20Strat%C3%A9gia%202014-2020.pdf>

²⁷ http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV

using special information-technological and communicational educational devices, knowledge transfer/learning methods and digital course materials, in which the number of contact teaching hours amounts to less than 30% of the contact hours of full-time training'. The act regulates the possibilities for launching distance education in various specialist subjects, and stipulates that the educational system shall make up for the lower number of contact teaching hours in correspondence courses by distance learning methods. In general, distance learning is handled by law with the same conditions as those provided for part-time training programmes. In the case of specialist subjects taught in full distance learning mode, distance learning activities are defined in detail by the accreditation process.²⁸

In the case of non-formal training and training completed in another higher education institution, the act on public education and the act on vocational education should be regarded as governing law. In the act on vocational education²⁹, distance learning is included as one of the modes of training without any special definition or condition. The act on adult education,³⁰ however, provides a definition of distance learning for use in adult education: 'the form of education where the participants carry out learning activities on their own, independently, in a period longer than half of the duration of the training programme with the guidance included in the distance learning material, and participate in consultations requiring less than half of the time of the duration of the whole training course. The education package containing the course material, assessment material and guidelines for the learning process are provided by the institution. During the consultations, which can take any form (face-to-face meeting, internet, telephone), the participants clarify and deepen the knowledge they have acquired individually. Each phase of distance education can be supported by the use of info-communicational technology vehicles.' In addition, the act stipulates that the training can be provided in distance learning mode, and that in this case, the documentation establishing the training must declare this and the necessary supplementary documents must be attached. In public education, Act CXC of 2010 on national public education³¹ mentions distance

²⁸ http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=361&Itemid=522&lang=hu.

²⁹ Act CLXXXVII of 2011 on vocational education

http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=a1100187.TV

³⁰ Act LXXVII of 2013 on adult education: http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1300077.TV

³¹ http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100190.TV

education in one instance without any special focus, as one mode of public adult education. Although the method of adult training accreditation has changed significantly since 2013, the accreditation of distance learning programmes appears as a subfield of the traditional accreditation of adult training programmes without any particular further detail.

One interesting feature of Hungarian regulation is that the law does not mention the concept of e-learning in any form, despite the fact that distance learning and both synchronic and asynchronous distance learning support have almost completely shifted to electronic platforms. Electronic tools and devices are mentioned only in the context of the administration of either face-to-face or distance education. Although distance learning appears in the documents regarding the national ICT strategy, no detailed principles are provided.

Profile and social characteristics of participants in distance learning

With regard to accredited university training programmes, the range of students participating in distance learning is the same as the target group of correspondence courses, particularly those who view their own ICT competence and learning habits with self-confidence. The participant population of non-formal programmes within higher education is varied, but the correlation discussed above between level of qualifications already held and willingness to engage in further study still applies. In other words, adult students with higher qualifications have heightened motivation for further learning. These adults are also characterized by a vivid interest in specific professional knowledge similar to that provided by corporate vocational training courses (particularly in the fields of economics, business and law). Understandably, those with physical disabilities are represented in this group to a greater extent.

One specific field of internal vocational distance learning at Pécs University of Arts and Sciences is the annual labour safety training of the employees, which provides the staff of the university with general theoretical knowledge. In this field, the target group is naturally the same as the staff of the university, which means a significant variation in ICT competences, learning habits and motivation. As a result, both the training and the online examination are as simple as possible both in content and technical implementation. In 2014 the third cycle of training was carried out. Although at first the employees showed some reluctance regarding the distance learning mode, by the end of the course they were significantly more open and receptive towards the new cycle.

One of the difficulties related to the training was clearly infrastructural: there were not enough computer workstations available for employees within the university. One solution for this was more efficient use of the available workstations (those with their own workstations provide access to their computers to those without workstations; in the relevant period, students' computer centres can also be used for this purpose). The other difficulty related to the participants' motivation. Previously, when the training was delivered face-to-face, employees were not reluctant to participate in a compulsory training course not closely related to their work, because it was carried out in working hours during which they were freed from work responsibilities. In the case of distance learning, however, it is the employees' own responsibility to manage their time and to make time for learning (which the line manager must naturally support). This means that employees must carry out self-directed learning, like participating voluntarily in a training course but without the inner motivational support.

According to a non-representative survey of participants in Hungarian university distance learning programmes (Cseszka, *ibid.*), the largest group of participants in distance learning are 31-40 years of age, 32% are 20-30 years of age, and 20% are 41-50 years of age. There were no younger or older respondents in the survey. The lack of younger participants may be due to the overrepresentation of that generation in full time programmes; the lack of older participants is probably due to the digital generation gap. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (70%) participated in basic/bachelor training programmes, 20% in tertiary level vocational training and the remaining 10% in postgraduate vocational training. At present, there are no master level distance learning

programmes in Hungary. The majority of respondents (88%) are studying alongside work or on childcare leave. Most of them decided to take part in distance learning because the relatively few face-to-face consultations make it possible for them to participate in the training alongside work or family commitments (more than half have children), or because their employer did not allow them the time to take part in face-to-face training. In addition, however, it is surprising that about half of respondents identified closeness as a decisive factor when choosing a school, while 30% pointed out the greater distance from the training institution as an advantage.

It is clear from the answers to this survey that students in Hungary do not necessarily choose distance learning for traditional reasons. Those participating in distance learning may not necessarily prefer this form because of its advantages (sometimes they are not even aware of distance learning as a form of education). Instead, they are driven towards the choice of distance learning by lack of time, because it requires minimal face-to-face attendance. Ignorance of the opportunities offered by distance learning is also apparent when organizing open online courses: many of those interested clearly do not know the form of training, the working methods expected of them, or the support mechanisms available. According to the survey of Pázmány Péter Catholic University, several respondents had expected more support and human contact than is available in the distance mode. Among participants on the online courses at Pécs University of Arts and Sciences, by contrast, tutorial support came as a surprise because they had expected a fully automated course.

The possible obstacles to distance learning for students can be divided into two categories: lack of competence (or presumed lack of competence) and lack of information. Lack of foreign language skills (in the case of international or foreign language medium training courses), lack of ICT competences and insufficient self-directed learning skills belong in the first category. Many participants in the survey by Cseszka were shown to have difficulties with independent time management (when not under pressure, they are more likely to carry out periodical rather than regular learning activities), and with keeping deadlines for the submission of assignments. This last feature is noticeable among the participants on MOOCs as well. This may be related to

the fact that those studying in distance learning mode take longer to complete their training than those who participate in face-to-face courses.

The second category, lack of information, is related to the nature of distance learning and its organizational and completion conditions. One particular obstacle is that students have less trust in the quality of distance learning programmes than in that of face-to-face training. The Hungarian teaching-learning tradition is based primarily on two factors: traditional classroom teaching and out-of-class study groups. Students who have formed their learning habits in this system may find distance learning programmes faceless. Moreover, they may have less trust in the professional expertise and/or dedication of an instructor whom they do not know personally. A third hindering factor is that students, whether young or old, who are used to being constantly connected via the internet and social media tend to expect similar accelerated multidimensional communication on their learning platforms, too. They therefore find distance learning platforms which are unlike social media sites less interesting or exciting, or even unsatisfactory with regard to human support, even though they themselves show little communicative initiative on the online learning platforms because they are accustomed to the traditional teacher-led model (with few exceptions). Moreover, students used to free internet access are often unwilling to pay for network content. Technical restrictions (such as lack of internet access) are less characteristic of higher education programmes.

The potential of distance learning at universities

Distance learning requires organizational and human as well as financial support. Financial support for students could be put in place (e.g. by lowering training costs and making certain aspects of training freely available). However, there are at present only a few examples of this concept in operation (MOOCs constitute one), and the national educational strategy does not seem to be pointing in this direction. Preliminary ICT training for students or preparation for independent distance learning constitutes a promising form of support for distance learning, especially when considering the majority

of potential participants' lack of independent study skills and unfamiliarity with the educational platforms, software, and organizational characteristics of distance learning.³² The third form of support recommended is to make distance learning less faceless and automated by organizing and running communication trainings. This would increase the motivation of students and make the distance learning experience more enjoyable and motivating.

At present, higher education institutions focus primarily on filling their participant quotas, which is becoming a more and more difficult task due to the transformation of higher education financing and the changes in the demographic structure of the target group. The main obstacle to increasing distance learning, however, is the lack of human resources with the requisite expertise. In the majority of institutions, for instance, there is no e-learning unit responsible for setting up, developing and managing infrastructure or planning course content and conversion. In such cases, instructors personally devoted to e-learning try to develop and publish course content and to operate their education administration system. The tutoring of courses with a large number of participants also requires considerable work from the staff, who have to deal with this on top of the same or even an increased amount of contact teaching, due to the rationalization of teacher resources on several occasions. In addition, instructors have limited opportunities to acquire knowledge of specific e-learning, distance learning or andragogical teaching methods, including knowledge about the development of distance learning courses. Such matters are usually covered within the framework of specialist projects. Consequently, the majority of the teaching population is ill-prepared for providing electronic support for distance learning courses, especially with regard to the standard fast-paced form of distance learning involving a large number of participants. Despite all this, several higher education institutions are planning to extend their portfolio of distance learning, short-term and particularly international training programmes, often by transforming their correspondence courses into distance learning programmes. Distance education can evidently reach new target groups through open access courses/programmes and short cycle (including gamified) courses. Such courses, if constructed in a modular fashion and

³² Molnár György: A közoktatási vezető képzés informatikai háttértámogatásának vizsgálata és fejlesztési lehetőségei. 'Examining and developing possibilities for information technology support in the training of public education managers', Budapesti Műszaki és Gazdaságtudományi Egyetem, Budapest, 2011

based on an elaborate validation system which acknowledges previous studies completed in Hungarian or even international higher education, could make the training structure of higher education more flexible, which could lead to a significant increase in the number of participants in it.

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Prospective students

Prepared by: Éva Cseszka

Higher education institutions make several programmes available for adults, primarily tertiary level vocational trainings, bachelor and master programmes, and doctoral programmes based on these. In addition, they regularly advertise postgraduate training courses to help former students comply with legal regulations obliging everyone employed in the given field to complete them. A very important group of training courses are the mandatory postgraduate trainings for certain professions: e.g. for healthcare workers or educators.³³ Good initiatives were also undertaken, for example, between 2009 and 2011, on the project entitled: 'Training the trainers among the instructors of Budapest University of Technology',³⁴ which addressed the lack of instructor competences necessary to meet the requirements of the Bologna process, the European Qualifications Framework and LLL strategy in an e-learning form. Training programmes were based on the needs and possibilities explored on the basis of previously surveyed institutional demands of Budapest University of Technology.³⁵

The situation of adult learners in higher education in Hungary is fairly complex. Significant factors include the socio-economic and/or labour market status of the adult concerned, his/her former learning experiences and those of his immediate family, and the social environment, which may either encourage or constrain further engagement in education

³³ Decree No. 64/2011. (XI.29) NEFMI of the Minister of National Resources – on the continuous postgraduate trainings of doctors, dentists, pharmacists and those possessing special tertiary qualifications in healthcare, government decree No. 346/2013. (IX. 30.) Korm. on the postgraduate training of educators, on the professional examination thereof, and on the amendment of government decree No. 277/1997. (XII. 22.) Korm. on the allowances and benefits for those participating in postgraduate trainings and on the amendment of government decree No. 202/2012. (VII. 27.) Korm. on Klebelsberg Institution Management Centre.

³⁴ (TÁMOP – 4.1.2-08/2/C/KMR-2009-0005), implemented at Budapest University of Technology and Economics (1 September 2009 to 28 February 2011)

³⁵ For details see: Dr. habil. Anikó Kálmán (2011): Innovációs célok a felsőoktatási tanárképzésben a Tudásháromszög megvalósításáért. Empirikus kutatások a szakképzésben és a szakmai tanárképzésben ('Innovation objectives in tertiary level teacher training for the implementation of the knowledge triangle. Empirical research in vocational training and vocational teacher training') – Trefort Ágoston Szakmai Tanárképzési Konferencia ('Trefort Ágoston Conference on Vocational Teacher Training'), 21 November 2011, Budapest (CD format)

through flexible programmes. In many cases, flexible programmes require basic ICT knowledge and the status of a regular ICT user with certain minimal hardware and communication capacities. Unfortunately, many adults and young adults outside the big regional municipalities are prevented from entering HE by low social status or poverty. For those who are in a good, stable social environment, participating in higher education is seen as a tool to achieve mobility.³⁶

The act on Hungarian higher education³⁷ sets forth what kind of student representation should be present on an institution's senate. The organization responsible for coordinating representative bodies at the different universities, HÖÖK (National Union of Students), also provides representation for students. Unfortunately, however, student organizations are all made up of full-time students who enforce their own interests. A large number of higher education institutions do not take into account the needs and opinions of adult learners at all. Perhaps the only exceptions are the mandatory postgraduate trainings related to the different professions, which represent a safe market for higher education institutions. It can be concluded, therefore, that adults play no role in the formulation of strategic objectives and the mission statements of higher education.

The table shows the number of students enrolled in higher education/tertiary education since 1990.³⁸ 96,520 adult learners studied non-full-time formats in 2013/14, from tertiary vocational programmes to doctoral degree programmes. However, it is difficult to measure adults' learning at universities and colleges in forms other than tertiary level vocational training, bachelor and master degree majors, unified/undivided majors, postgraduate specializations and doctoral degree (PhD/DLA) studies. Several universities and colleges organize other forms of adult training for non-traditional groups, with the aim of upgrading labour market and lifelong learning-oriented key competencies.³⁹ Unfortunately, the number of adults participating in such courses are not documented.

³⁶ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH.

³⁷ Act on Hungarian Higher Education - CCIV./2011.

³⁸ http://www.ksh.hu/docs/eng/xstadat/xstadat_annual/i_zoi007a.html

³⁹ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH

Table 6: Yearly overview of higher education institutions and adults in tertiary education

Academic Year	Number of higher education institutions	Total number of adults in tertiary education (learning in formats other than full-time programmes)
2006/07	71	177,674
2007/08	71	154,811
2008/09	70	138,105
2009/10	69	127,630
2010/11	69	120,620
2011/12	68	118,210
2012/13	66	104,789
2013/14	66	96,520

The Hungarian Universities Lifelong Learning Network (MELLearn) conducted a special survey on adult training activities provided by the 16 state-owned universities in 2006 (although two of them did not return the questionnaire). The survey listed special categories of adult training activities, such as part-time degree courses, evening degree courses, state-listed (OKJ) labour market trainings, postgraduate professional trainings, language courses, and other forms. A special 'Table of participation figures for adult university training courses' indicated the following figures for 2006.⁴⁰

It is clear from these figures that the number of adults in conventional forms of higher education is steadily falling. Nevertheless, the number of adults studying on non-regular or non-degree courses at several universities is growing.⁴¹

⁴⁰ MELLearn Survey on adult training competences in higher education, 2006. Debrecen: MELLearn, p. 3. Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH.

⁴¹ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH

Table 7: Adult learners in different education formats

Format of education and training for adults in higher education (at 14 state owned universities)	Number of adult learners to enrol in such programmes (2006)
part-time degree courses	33,671
evening degree courses	1,141
state-listed certified trainings (OKJ trainings)	3,364
postgraduate professional trainings	2,479
language courses	3,347
other forms of training	4,442
Total	48,444

Dropout figures show significant differences according to the type of training and the learner's motivation for participating in it. In the case of postgraduate training courses, there are almost no drop-outs (for example, in the mandatory postgraduate trainings related to specific professions). Where a higher salary, promotion to a higher job category, or simply keeping one's job is at stake, the majority of adults enrolled complete the training. The dropout rate is higher in cases where employers prevent their employees from studying, for example by forcing them to work overtime, leaving no time for study. In such cases, the student's own motivation is not sufficient to prevent him/her from dropping out. He/she will prioritise keeping the job in order to support his/her family, even if that means giving up learning.

In the case of tertiary level vocational trainings or BA/MA programmes there is a considerable rate of dropping out: about one third of adult learners never complete their training.⁴² The primary reason for dropping out is inability to spend enough time studying due to work commitments. One third of adult learners surveyed said that they dropped out because they were unable to cover the costs of their training. 15% gave up their studies for personal/family reasons. On average, those who drop out complete three years at bachelor level before they give up studying. It can be concluded that, in many

⁴² Dr. habil. Éva Cseszka: Felsőoktatási intézményekben folyó távoktatásban résztvevők (empirikus kutatás) 2012-2014. ('Participants in distance learning programmes offered by higher education institutions (empirical research) 2012-2014') Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Vitéz János Faculty - Grundtvig International Research Centre. On this topic, see also Ágnes Engler – Ágnes Réka Dusa – Anett Huszti – Katalin Kardos – Edina Kovács: Az intézményi tanulás eredményessége és minősége, különös tekintettel a nem hagyományos tanulói csoportokra. ('Efficiency and quality of formal learning with special regard to non-traditional learner groups') http://ni.unideb.hu/learn/doc/22_Engler_et_al-Tanulo_regio.pdf

cases, even those who complete their studies successfully are delayed in earning their degrees/diplomas. Depending on the type of institution, full-time students earn their degrees in three, four or five years; many adult learners spend much longer studying. On non-mandatory and other tertiary level courses, dropout rates are very high, exceeding 50%.

Individuals' participation in organized forms of adult learning is motivated primarily by financial considerations, or perhaps financial pressures. Interviewees considered learning possibilities with what one might call 'economic rationality'. The most important element of their motivation to learn is in line with the basic principle of human resources development, which states that the primary objective of learning is to improve the individual's labour market status. This may be manifested in improved chances of finding a job, in promotion, or in a timely change of profession or workplace, and usually involves financial benefits such as a payrise.⁴³

As this would suggest, adult learners tend to apply for courses that are relevant to their work. This primarily means mandatory profession-related postgraduate trainings and programmes leading to higher qualifications in the student's profession. Regrettably, the decision to choose a programme is rarely based on the students' interests. A considerable number of those taking part in adult learning are even 'forced' to do so. According to a survey by Semmelweis University, 98.4% of those taking part in the sport coach and trainer course would not have enrolled if their jobs had not been at stake⁴⁴.

In general, admission to bachelor, master and postgraduate studies takes place through a formal entrance examination which enables the adult to become a student of the university or college and hold special rights attached to that status. One can directly enrol in full-time or part-time/distance courses either at ISCED 5a or 5b.⁴⁵ Access to adult

⁴³ Dr. habil. Éva Cseszka (2010) A távoktatás helye és lehetőségei a felnőttek iskolarendszerű képzésében. ('Place and possibilities of distance learning in formal adult training') In: Katalin Tordainé Vida Katalin (ed. Innováció és felsőoktatás ('Innovation and higher education'). Esztergom: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Vitéz János Kar, p. 1-19.

⁴⁴ National survey conducted at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences of Semmelweis University (with 953 participants in 2012/13). Research leader: Dr Ágnes Kokovay.

⁴⁵ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH

education is formally open to any adult who holds a school leaving certificate and who collects enough points in the entrance examination to the bachelor or master programmes.⁴⁶ Vocational programmes are open to all adults holding a school leaving certificate. Doctoral programmes require a Diploma of Master studies and a successful entrance examination.

There is currently no alternative admission pathway to accredited programmes of higher education in Hungary. The only exception concerns short non-degree courses and lifelong learning programmes for adults who want to upgrade their knowledge and skills in special continuing education, for example at the university of the third age.⁴⁷ This underlines the importance of widening access to part-time and distance formats of bachelor and master programmes. Certain universities and colleges have already opened access to their continuing education programmes or non-degree/non-credit courses to non-traditional adult learners, and have begun to offer these courses in part-time, evening/weekend and distance education formats. Nevertheless, Hungary is still in need of a sophisticated RPL or VPL system for higher education, which is currently still in an experimental and early phase.⁴⁸ Significant obstacles to adult learning at universities and colleges include the costs of education and training programmes, a lack of appropriate courses in learners' local areas, and students' own bad experiences or those of others in their family or community.

Most recently, the education administration has made several decisions making it more difficult for adult learners to enter higher education. In most of the subject majors⁴⁹, the adult applicant to a bachelor programme, who may have passed the school leaving examination decades ago, has to sit for an advanced level school-leaving examination. For admission to a master course, an intermediate level Hungarian language examination certificate is now required in addition to a relevant BA degree.⁵⁰ The foreign language

⁴⁶ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH.

⁴⁷ The Programme of King Sigismund College is relevant in this context. A list of courses for elderly learners is accessible at: <http://www.zskf.hu/nyugdijasok>

⁴⁸ The latest project to focus on the development of the validation system in higher education is described as follows (only in Hungarian!): <http://tamop413.ofi.hu/validaciorol>, <http://www.ofi.hu/felsooktatasi-validacios-rendszer>

⁴⁹ <http://eduline.hu/cimke/k%C3%B6telez%C5%91+emelt+szint%C5%B1+%C3%A9retts%C3%A9gi>

⁵⁰ http://www.felvi.hu/felveteli/jelentkezes/felveteli_tajekoztato/FFT_2014A

requirements are also high for many people. As a result of this new legislation, the number of both applicants and financed students has been greatly reduced.

Situational barriers can also hinder adults' access to higher education. Being a busy worker, one may not be permitted to join a course, or an employer may not let an employee learn for higher degrees, develop competences, etc. Family responsibilities may also prevent adult learners from actively participating in higher education.⁵¹

Factors which facilitate the participation of adults in higher education include the general assumption that higher education degrees and certificates are valuable, since they combine the acquisition of knowledge with the upgrading of key lifelong learning competences which are valuable in the labour market: for example, high-level foreign language skills, or skills in problem solving, decision making and group work. Top-ranked state universities and colleges and some private higher education institutions are still considered places of quality education, and enrolling in such scholarly communities is still appealing and challenging. Many adults are motivated to continue their learning by seeing examples of other people's careers being improved by their participation in higher education. The positive experience of others thus turns into a special external motivation. Curiosity and the desire to explore new worlds of knowledge and meet new and interesting people also constitute motivating factors.⁵²

Adult learners in distance learning programmes cover a wide range of ages, from 20 to 50 years. In distance learning, the overwhelming majority of adult learners are aged between 30 and 40 years. Naturally, thanks to modern communications technology, distance learning attracts a younger generation than traditional forms of training. As regards the sexes, there are no considerable differences. Differences are more often linked to the nature and field of training. One third of distance learning participants are single, while two thirds are married or live in a partnership. 58% have children; the

⁵¹ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH.

⁵² Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) PhD. Balázs NÉMETH.

average number of children is 2.⁵³ Most adult learners have a job (or are at home on childcare leave). Some lead their own companies. Few of them are unemployed (which is understandable as the financial burden of fees would be too great for most unemployed people).

A considerable number of those participating in adult learning are also actively involved in lifelong learning and participate regularly in trainings and postgraduate trainings. Only 30% of training participants surveyed had not taken part in any formal training in the past 5-10 years, which is a lower rate than in traditional forms of training. It is important to underline that most adults involved in distance learning did not know of its existence prior to starting their course.

Adult learners usually have a vocational or secondary school graduation certificate. The number of postgraduate students are low, with the exception of profession-related mandatory postgraduate trainings where a degree is required to complete the course. One third of students live in the countryside, while another third live in large villages. The number of students from large cities and small towns is very low. White-collar workers in managerial or other high-level jobs make up more than half of the students, 58%, followed by middle managers. Adult learners have a higher than average income.

Most students used computers regularly before starting their studies. More than two thirds use a computer on a daily basis. Overall, these are very good indicators because they are well above the national average. 88% of adult education students have a computer, while about 90% of their workplaces contain one. Two thirds of the students have internet access at home. This is significantly more than the national average of around 15%. Many students have internet access at their workplace (61%). The average student has been using the internet for two years. The most common computer-based activities are emailing and browsing the internet. Two thirds of students already had an email address prior to starting their studies. They usually had no experience of distance

⁵³ PhD. habil. Éva Cseszka: Felsőoktatási intézményekben folyó távoktatásban résztvevők (empirikus kutatás 2012-2014. ('Participants in distance learning programmes offered by higher education institutions (empirical research) 2012-2014') Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Vitéz János Faculty - Grundtvig International Research Centre.

learning (e-learning).⁵⁴ There are still no statistics available on the special groups or types of adult learners, other than those which classify them according to sex and form/mode of education within the HEI (e.g. full-time, part-time, evening or distance education). Most adult learners study in part-time form.⁵⁵

The majority of trainings advertised in distance learning form belong to the fields of economics and technology. Without exception, these are offered by higher education institutions in the form of fee-paying tertiary level vocational trainings and bachelor programmes.⁵⁶ Postgraduate trainings are also advertised as fee-paying courses. The most important motivating factor for entering training courses is to improve career prospects. The second most important factor is internal motivation. In general, distance learning in Hungary is not necessarily chosen for traditional reasons. Surprisingly, in the case of tertiary level vocational training courses and bachelor programmes, a large proportion of the adults surveyed referred to the closeness of the institution. In fact, it seems that participants in distance learning do not generally prefer this form for its advantages (in general, they did not even know of it before starting their studies), but rather due to lack of time, as distance education requires the least personal attendance of all forms of education.⁵⁷

The most important reason for choosing a postgraduate distance learning or e-learning course is to have a chance to harmonize work and learning. The second most important reason is to take part in well-organized education. Two thirds of the students surveyed would enter a distance learning programme again in future. The overall experience of distance learning programmes is usually positive: 36% of students judged distance learning courses better than traditional ones. One third of students chose their programme for its user-friendly service (flexible training location and scheduling, easy accessibility, etc.).

⁵⁴ Survey of Eszterházy Károly College.

⁵⁵ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH.

⁵⁶ http://www.felvi.hu/felveteli/szakok_kepzesek

⁵⁷ PhD. habil. Éva Cseszka: Felsőoktatási intézményekben folyó távoktatásban résztvevők (empirikus kutatás) 2012-2014. ('Participants in distance learning programmes offered by higher education institutions (empirical research) 2012-2014') Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Vitéz János Faculty - Grundtvig International Research Centre.

In the opinion of most of the participants, distance learning is the only workable option for an adult with a job and a family, due to its flexibility and adjustability to students' individual schedules. On the other hand, the greater freedom also requires a higher degree of independence, which may make this kind of learning more difficult as well. The higher dropout rate in distance education compared to traditional education may partly be accounted for by the fact that some of the students applying to distance learning courses are incapable of the independent study required by this form of education. In order to achieve his/her final objective, the student must be highly motivated and persistent, and must not be afraid to ask his/her tutors, mentors or even peers for help in case of learning problems.

For most of those taking part in postgraduate trainings, however, independent learning generally causes no problem. Students on these courses generally claimed to have received proper training packages and adequate assistance via e-mail and telephone. The overwhelming majority of the students put their successful completion of the course down to the distance learning form, saying that they had been able to learn where and when they had the opportunity to do so. One of the advantages of distance learning is that it is the most feasible form of education if the student has a job: it only involves learning at the weekends, it is not compulsory to attend classes, the student may learn at his/her own pace, and the syllabus and scheduling of examinations are more flexible.

For one third of adults with only lower level qualifications (usually school leaving certificates), independent learning proved problematic, particularly in the case of tertiary level vocational trainings and bachelor programmes. Participants had little free time, and many of them (15%) had not taken part in organized education for many years.⁵⁸ These participants missed the traditional kind of help from teachers and the regular personal meetings. Interestingly, some of those participating in distance learning reported that they usually learn together with another person.

⁵⁸ PhD. habil. Éva Cseszka: Felsőoktatási intézményekben folyó távoktatásban résztvevők (empirikus kutatás) 2012-2014. ('Participants in distance learning programmes offered by higher education institutions (empirical research) 2012-2014') Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Vitéz János Faculty - Grundtvig International Research Centre.

With the exception of postgraduate training courses, for those participating in distance learning, the requirement for high-level independence and the lack of the instructor's direct presence may present a problem. During the learning process, the student faces a number of difficulties which are harder to face if she/he has no experience in independent learning. Cultural habits acquired earlier may also affect efficiency. Due to the distance, the student does not attend classes but must usually learn the material alone at home, in limited time and potentially under troubled circumstances (family, work, etc.). There have also been complaints about the lack of opportunities to meet regularly with peers. The disadvantages of distance learning reported include insufficient tutorials, content which is difficult to learn alone, lack of pressure to study continuously and few opportunities for contact with peers.⁵⁹ The use and accessibility of the internet presented no problem, although in some locations insufficient bandwidth made it difficult to download pictures and videos belonging to the study material.

Unfortunately, distance learning has not become widespread in Hungary because higher education institutions and scholars continue to believe more strongly in the quality of attendance-based education. Correspondence courses therefore continue to take precedence over e-learning. As a consequence, distance learning is obliged to fit into the existing system and cannot develop a separate system of its own. Distance learning is therefore currently unable to enhance the openness of higher education or to broaden access to new target groups.

One of the major advantages of distance learning is that it can allow for differences in individuals' learning style by exploiting different forms of communication (correspondence, telephone, etc.) and teaching methods (suggesting courses of reasoning, making the student practise, displaying ideas, etc.) tailored to the needs of the individual. It is obvious for experts and researchers that lifelong learning needs to play a stronger role in adult education, and that the future trend is the planning of learning

⁵⁹ PhD. habil. Éva Cseszka: Felsőoktatási intézményekben folyó távoktatásban résztvevők (empirikus kutatás) 2012-2014. ('Participants in distance learning programmes offered by higher education institutions (empirical research) 2012-2014') Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Vitéz János Faculty - Grundtvig International Research Centre.

paths tailored to the needs of the individual, creating an opportunity for everyone to learn in a way suited to his/her way of life.

A joint labour market and education policy could be a key driver to enhance the number of adult learners in higher education. However, joint actions are needed to raise the number of adult learners in universities and colleges. University lifelong learning can only be achieved if universities function as open learning spaces, both by inviting adults to participate in their flexible programmes and by moving out into the local region to cooperate with learners and learning organizations through the formation of learning cities, regions and communities.⁶⁰

In any case, better promotion is required. Both the government and the academic sector, including the management of higher education institutions, need to recognize the potential of distance learning. The offer of distance learning programmes by higher education institutions could be enhanced in this way. A complete change in approach is needed for higher education institutions to realize that attendance-based education is not the only way to teach or learn efficiently, and that distance learning does not mean lower standards. It is important for higher education institutions to apply distance learning as a system, and to develop the appropriate IT facilities, human resources (e.g. tutors) and electronic and printed materials required for distance learning, as well as providing information for potential learners and learning methodology orientation within courses. In this way, people who would otherwise have no opportunity to make up for gaps in their education would be able to do so. The spread of distance learning in Hungary could afford more groups the chance to participate in lifelong learning and allow disadvantaged members of society to make a new start in education.

⁶⁰ Developing the Adult Learning Sector Country Report. DIE Country Report HUNGARY. Opening Higher Education to Adults (HEAD) Dr. Balázs NÉMETH. Longworth, Norman (2006) *Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities*. London, Routledge.

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