

The TECERN network (Teacher Education Central European Research Network) was initiated in 2012. Investigating higher education in the CEE region we realized that there are several common features in the situation and social context of teacher education. However, we do not have enough research results about it. One part of the study deals with curricular questions of teacher education, while the other part investigates practising teachers. Little attention has been paid to students who chose and took part in teacher education and their development during teacher education years.

In the present volume our papers are arranged according to three key areas. The first chapter deals with what special role of teacher education in connection with cultural communities, papers in the second chapter investigate, how teacher education of the CEE region prepares students to special classroom situations. In the third chapter studies observe the new challenges of teaching profession.

Development of Teacher Calling in Higher Education

Edited by
Gabriella Pusztai, Ágnes Engler and
Ibolya Revák Markóczy



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BEFEKTETÉS A JÖVŐBE

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Development of Teacher Calling in Higher Education

Edited by Gabriella Pusztai, Ágnes Engler and Ibolya Revák Markóczi



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Enhancing the regional networks of professional services and research activities to support teacher development in the North-East region of Hungary

Danuta Al-Khamisy, Katinka Bacskai, Júlia Csánó, Ildikó Csépes,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION CENTRAL EUROPEAN RESEARCH NETWORK (Gabriella Pusztai & Ágnes Engler & Ibolya Revák Markóczi)	7
TEACHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY	11
HUNGARIAN-LANGUAGE HIGHER EDUCATION AND PRIMARY TEACHER TRAINING IN VOJVODINA (Iren Gábrity-Molnár&Zoltán Takács).....	11
DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITION. TEACHER TRAINING IN THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE IN SLOVAKIA (Katinka Bacskai & Tünde Morvai & Júlia Csánó).....	26
HUNGARIAN-LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE (Ildikó Orosz).....	36
THE SITUATION AND ISSUES OF MOTHER-TONGUE VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN A BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MOTHER TONGUE - THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE STATE (Rita Pletl)	49
HUNGARIAN TEACHER TRAINING IN ROMANIA: THE CASE OF PARTIUM CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (Gábor Flóra)	60
PREPARING FOR THE CLASSROOM WORK	69
INQUIRY BASED SCIENCE EDUCATION OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE AND YOUNG SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN (Ivana Rochovská)	69
SUPPORTING OF SIMULATION AND VISUALISATION IN E-LEARNING COURSES FOR STEM EDUCATION (Gertruda Gwodz-Lukawska, Robert Janiga, Jan Guncaga) ..	81
LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT LITERACY IN HUNGARY: CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS OF ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING VS. TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR (Ildikó Csépes)	89
THE EFFECT OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMME ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDRENS'S PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS IN SCIENCE (Ibolya Revák Markóczi & Edina Malmos)	100
INTRAPSYCHIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONINGS OF FEELING EXCLUDED AT SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT (Marzanna Farnicka & Hanna Liberska)	115
LEVELS OF TEACHER COMPETENCES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACCORDING TO THE DIALOGUE MODEL – STUDY RESULTS (Danuta Al-Khamisy).....	126

TEACHER CAREER	141
SCHOOL PERSONALIZATION AND GENDER IDENTITY (Giuseppe Mari)	141
GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE ACADEMIA- RESULTS FROM A PILOT STUDY (Orsolya Kereszty)	149
PREDOMINANCE OF FEMALE TEACHERS IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN SCHOOLS (Dana Hanesova)	160
WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF FEMALE PHD STUDENTS IN ENGINEERING (VERONIKA PAKSI)	179
AUTHORS	195

HUNGARIAN-LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Ildikó Orosz

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the possibilities, chances and problems of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine in receiving an education and entering higher education by reporting on the legislative decisions and changes of recent years regarding education policy, and by reflecting on some of the anomalies of Ukrainian higher education. Our study primarily focuses on the Hungarian-language teacher education system in Ukraine, particularly in the Zakarpattia Oblast (henceforth referred to as Subcarpathia), which, nevertheless, forms part of the general system of Ukrainian higher education, which is essential to explore in order to understand Hungarian students' problems and their chances of entering a university in Ukraine. In our summary we have made proposals which may contribute to the decrease of inequalities Hungarian students in Ukraine have to face when entering a university.

INTRODUCTION

Whether a minority ethnic group is able to survive and to pass on and continue to follow its culture and national traditions greatly depends on the presence and effective operation of ethnic education. School, as a secondary agent of socialisation, offers an institutional framework for the preservation and development of indigenous minority communities' native language, for their familiarisation with national treasures such as folk songs, works of art, literature, history, etc., and for undergoing collective experiences which not only give young people a broader knowledge of their nation's culture but also encourage them to contribute to its development. If children's national identity is shaped by a supportive community which shares common roots and national values, they can find their place in the region, country or society where they live and can also find guidance to help them orientate in European or global culture. This requires teachers who are not only committed to teaching itself and to the subjects they teach but also to awakening the desire in minority children to learn about and preserve national values. Besides, one important aspect of ethnic minority existence has to be highlighted: since in most cases the majority nation has a different language, culture, and sometimes even religious tradition, coexisting communities have to learn how to get to know and respect each other's language, culture, and religion in order to live side by side in peace. In such a multicultural environment teachers have immense responsibility: it is their task to educate their students to show tolerance, empathy and mutual respect. To achieve this end, however, education politics has to provide adequate conditions for intercultural education: minority rights have to be declared in laws and regulations, education in the native language has to be provided at all levels, and equal opportunities have to be granted to compensate for linguistic, social, and other disadvantages.

THE STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE. TEACHER EDUCATION IN SUBCARPATHIA.

In Ukraine there are 9 years of compulsory primary education. At the end of their primary studies students take a final exam in their schools and receive their first “output” certificate. They can enter secondary schools and vocational schools without an entrance exam, or, if they want to continue their studies in talent development institutions (mainly specialised in sciences) called “lyceums” or college-level vocational institutions called “colleges”, they have to take an entrance exam. Secondary technical schools and “colleges” are also open to those who have already completed their secondary education; for them the period of training is shorter. Those who take their matriculation exams in secondary technical schools – which are part of the secondary school system – receive a diploma which qualifies them as skilled workers, and they can continue their training as second-year students at “colleges”.

Unlike in the continental system, higher education has three cycles in Ukraine. The first is tertiary-level vocational training, which lasts for 3-4 years, based on the 9 years of primary schooling. If students meet requirements successfully, they receive both a matriculation and a vocational qualifying certificate and, according to the Law on Higher Education passed in 2014, a so called “junior bachelor” title. This enables them to continue their studies in their field in the second year of the second – bachelor – cycle of higher education without an entrance exam. The bachelor cycle is based on completed secondary education (the matriculation exam) and lasts for 4 years (8 semesters) in Ukraine. The following, third cycle is the 4-semester magister course, which is the equivalent of the master’s course in Western Europe. Depending on the accreditation of the institution, it gives a Specialist or Master qualification. The next step is the aspirantura, which corresponds to PhD education. The “junior bachelor” level, i.e., tertiary vocational training, is the equivalent of post-secondary technical training in Hungary. Students can transfer the credit points they have obtained there to their bachelor’s studies, which provides mobility in the system.

Preschool and primary teacher education and the training of music, art and P.E. teachers can take place as early as in teacher education institutions which follow primary education. Graduates receive a so-called “junior specialist” certificate and can continue their studies in the second year of bachelor’s education.

In Subcarpathia, preschool, primary, and music teacher education is offered by the Institute of Education of Humanities of Munkhachevo State University, while preschool teachers and youth workers are trained at the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute. Bachelor-level teacher education is offered at three institutions: Uzhgorod National University, Munkhachevo State University, and the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute.

The Uzhgorod National University offers teacher education in all majors (biology, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, history, English, German, French, Ukrainian, Russian, Slovak, Czech, and Romanian) at bachelor, specialist (the latter will cease after 2016, according to the Law on Education), and master levels. Every year the university allocates some student places to the Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences with the Hungarian Language of Teaching, where the studies of 10 students of Hungarian, 6 students of physics, 5 students of mathematics and 6 students of history are funded by the state.

Munkhachevo State University offers preschool, primary and music teacher training at all three levels, but they do not have Hungarian-language degree programmes at any of them.

The Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute offers bachelor-level teacher education in the following majors: primary teacher, English, Hungarian, Ukrainian, history, geography, biology, chemistry, and mathematics. The following majors have specialist-level accreditation: history, Ukrainian, Hungarian, biology, mathematics, and primary teacher. The accreditation of a master's course in mathematics is under way.

THE IMPACT OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS ON HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SUBCARPATHIA, ESPECIALLY ON ADMISSION CRITERIA AND CHANGES IN THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINORITIES

Several trends in education politics have been accelerated by Ukraine's joining the Bologna process in 2005 (Kovács, 2013). The country had to face the kind of system-wide problems whose solution could not be delayed any longer (the quality of education, overwhelming corruption in higher education, the efficiency of higher education etc.). The success of plans and regulations aimed at reform always depends on how seriously change is meant by those who propose it, how determined they are to implement the measures that sometimes involve drastic changes and to deal with the most critical issues, and, finally, how much authority and power they have for the realisation of their plans. As long as there is insufficient courage to put the proposed reforms into practice, they will be no more than ringing declarations, and there will be only minor measures introduced, as a kind of compensation, instead of real reforms. This is what happened when the Bologna Process was introduced in Ukraine.

In order to eliminate the corruption that had pervaded higher education, the introduction of a uniform admission system was decided on, with reference to the Bologna Process in 2006, and a network of independent examination centres was established. This was to have provided equal opportunities for every candidate at the entrance exam by standardising admission requirements. If the state had shown a positive attitude and the former system of admission had been left unchanged, this step might have given minorities real equal opportunities. In the former system, everybody had the right to take the entrance exam in the language and to be tested on the language that had been the language of instruction in their secondary school; that is to say, those who had attended Hungarian-language schools were tested on Hungarian and in Hungarian, and the same applied to other minorities, e.g. Russians and Romanians. The new system, however, under the pretext of the Bologna Process, was aimed at the latent Ukrainisation of higher education, and thus limited minorities' options at the entrance exam.

Stanislav Nikolaenko, socialist Minister of Education and Science, in his Ministerial Order no. 607 issued on 13 July 2007, made it mandatory for higher education institutions to admit students on the basis of exams taken in independent examination centres from the academic year 2008/2009. Students, even from minority secondary schools, had to take all exams in the Ukrainian language. Moreover, whoever wanted to apply for admission to any institution of higher education, for example to study Hungarian language and literature, had to sit for the matriculation exam on Ukrainian language and literature, but Hungarian language and literature was no longer required as an entrance exam subject.

After the next elections, his successor as Minister of Education, right-wing Ivan Varkhuk amended the above regulation in his Ministerial Order no. 1771 issued on 25 December 2007. He permitted minority school graduates to use technical glossaries at exams. Under the influence of international pressure generated by minorities in Ukraine he had to make further amendments in Order no. 33 of 24 January 2008, and minority school graduates were granted permission to be tested on technical subjects in the language of instruction. In the name of providing equal opportunities, however, the Ukrainian language skills of applicants for any degree course were/are assessed with tests originally compiled for those native Ukrainians who applied for admission to study Ukrainian philology. Those concerned and minority rights groups turned to various authorities such as the Ministry of Education, the President or ombudsmen and made complaints about the following instances of discrimination:

a. Since a uniform matriculation exam in Ukrainian language and literature is a prerequisite for admission to any degree course, it puts students who complete their secondary education in a minority language at a disadvantage. Although they speak Ukrainian as a second language, they still have to meet the same requirements as native speakers of Ukrainian do. It is only natural that the number of Ukrainian language lessons and the curriculum are different in minority schools. What is more, the state has failed to facilitate the education of Ukrainian as no Ukrainian-Hungarian and Hungarian-Ukrainian dictionaries were published until the launch of the new system, and neither curricula nor textbooks take into consideration the special characteristics of minority languages and the fact that Ukrainian is a second language for minority students. Besides, there are problems in human resource terms as well, since no language teachers have been trained for minority schools; therefore Ukrainian has been taught by teachers who have a certain knowledge of the language or, slightly better, are qualified teachers of Russian language and literature. As for qualified teachers of Ukrainian language and literature, they have been trained to convey Ukrainian high culture to native speakers; consequently most of them find it hard to cope with the challenges they have to face in minority schools. Minority students are hardly, if at all, prepared for the questions on Ukrainian literature at the examination. Ukrainian literature as a subject was introduced in minority schools only a few years before the reform. Although there are only one or two lessons per week and students are not even supplied with anthologies of Ukrainian literature, they are expected to write literary essays at the exams. According to admission regulations, students sitting the Ukrainian language and literature exam who perform below the centrally set threshold score, are not entitled to apply for admission at an institution of higher education. In 2008, the first year of the new system, only 40-43 percent of the graduates of Hungarian-language schools passed the Ukrainian exam. Those who failed it could not apply for admission to universities even though they performed well in their special fields. Even those who passed were at a disadvantage compared to native Ukrainians or graduates of Ukrainian-language schools, because no matter how well they performed in the subjects of their choice, owing to their Ukrainian exam results they were still not eligible for state-funded higher education but were only accepted, if at all, to programmes with tuition fees.

b. It was also considered discriminatory that the minister gave permission for the translation of technical subjects into the language of instruction only for two years. This was definitely a measure which was intended to dismantle the minority education system by discouraging parents from enrolling their children in minority schools. Furthermore,

the entire system contradicted current legislation, because it violated minorities' rights to equal opportunities for admission into higher education.

Instead of taking measures guaranteeing equal opportunities, the minister, in response to requests calling for equal opportunities, increased the number of Ukrainian language lessons and attempted to introduce Ukrainian as the uniform language of instruction of technical subjects in his Ministerial Order no. 461 issued on 26 May 2008. He announced a programme designed to improve Ukrainian language teaching for the years 2008-2011. It prescribed a model of redirection for minority education. In the first step, some subjects were planned to be taught in two languages, and later only in Ukrainian. In the action plan, the number of Ukrainian language and literature lessons was increased by 2 per week in years 10 and 11, which is not enough to overcome minority students' disadvantage compared to their Ukrainian peers if exam requirements are adjusted to native speakers' knowledge. In year 10, the history of Ukraine was also to have been taught in Ukrainian during the extra lessons that would originally have been reserved for optional classes. In year 11, the same subject was to have been taught in Ukrainian alone. For year 11, the last year of secondary education, a fully bilingual system of instruction was to have been introduced. The order stipulated that from the next academic year on, the matriculation exam was no longer to be taken in minority languages in any of the subjects. The action plan intended to increase the number of Ukrainian lessons in years 2-4 of primary school, which might well have been useful if the facilities, the human resources, and the methodology of Ukrainian language teaching had been changed, and if it had been acknowledged that Ukrainian was not the native language of minority students and if this had been taken into consideration when requirements were set. According to the action plan, the methodological directions were to have been elaborated by 1 July 2008. It was planned that in the next academic year, Ukrainian would be introduced in minority schools as the language of instruction for the following subjects: the history and geography of Ukraine, P.E., crafts, and a subject called "the defence of our fatherland". Further planned measures included publishing bilingual technical dictionaries, small group teaching at Ukrainian language and literature lessons, increasing Ukrainian teachers' language benefits, retraining subject teachers to be able to teach in Ukrainian, and developing libraries and textbooks. The Ministerial Order made reference to prevailing legislation such as the Law on Languages in Ukraine and the Law on Education as well as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and various treaties on the protection of ethnic minorities, but it was done selectively, in a peculiar interpretation. Moreover, no regulations were issued dealing with the preservation, development, or support of minority languages at that time.

After the 2010 elections, the new Minister of Education and Science Dmytro Tabachnyk of the Russophile Party of Regions amended the above order. The system of admission to higher education in 2010/2011 was the following:

- The Ukrainian language continued to be compulsory. Admission requirements in all majors were still adjusted to the knowledge of those who applied for the Ukrainian language and literature degree programme.
- As a concession, it was introduced that if a candidate scored 170 points in their chosen field of study, they were allowed to apply for admission even if they did not reach the threshold score (124 points) in Ukrainian.
- Applicants were given the right to use the results of their tests taken in examination centres for further attempts at admission for three years.
- Higher education institutions were given the right to organise their own internal en-

trance exams for those who graduated from secondary school before 2007 and wanted to enrol in correspondence degree courses.

– Russian – but no other minority language – was included as an optional language of entrance exams.

In the 2012 admission regulation issued by the Ministry of Education headed by Tabachnyk, Ukrainian was still a compulsory exam subject for all majors, but there were some new elements incorporated into the system:

– Universities were to admit applicants on the basis of the results of the matriculation exams they had taken in independent examination centres in three subjects prescribed by the ministry (Ukrainian language and literature, the subject related to their chosen field of study, and one of the two subjects determined by the ministry).

– For admission, applicants had to achieve 140 points out of 200 in their chosen field of study and at least 124 points in the other two subjects, or if they achieved 170 points in their chosen field of study, they were admitted even if they had less than 124 points in one of the other subjects.

– Exam results were valid for three years for further attempts at admission.

– Institutions had the right to organise internal entrance exams for minority language majors, including Hungarian, as a third exam subject.

– The requirements of the compulsory exam subjects prescribed by the ministry contained the following anomalies: the same level of mathematics was required for primary teacher education as for subject teacher education or degree programmes in engineering. The same level of biology was required for preschool teacher education as for subject teacher education or medical studies. Besides, as has been mentioned, all applicants were expected to meet the same requirements in the Ukrainian language as those who chose Ukrainian philology as their major.

After the events of 2013¹, the founder and rector of the country's most renowned private university, Serhiy Kvit, became Minister of Education, introduced a new bill on higher education in parliament in 2014 and had it passed in record time. There were further changes introduced in the admission procedure as of 2015:

– The results of exams taken in independent examination centres are, once again, only valid for the current year.

– Every secondary school graduate has to take their Ukrainian language and literature matriculation exam in independent examination centres, and their results will be entered in their matriculation certificates.

– A two-level (basic and advanced) matriculation exam was introduced in Ukrainian and mathematics.

– Those students who failed the basic Ukrainian exam are not allowed to take any further examinations in independent examination centres, which would be necessary for admission into higher education.

This measure has centralised the matriculation exam but has separated it from the university admission procedure at the same time: while only the results of exam questions which concern the Ukrainian language are entered in the matriculation certificate, the results

¹ In December 2013 there were a series of mass demonstrations with a death toll of several dozens in Maidan (Independence) Square in the centre of Kiev against the then president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich because of the country's economic depression, overwhelming corruption, and the ever widening divide between certain social groups (especially between the economic – which was mostly also the political – elite and the rest of society).

of questions regarding literature are also taken into account during the admission procedure. A matriculation certificate is required to enter higher education. Those who apply to Ukrainian higher education institutions need a certificate of their results in the basic or advanced exam in Ukrainian language and literature, provided that they have reached the minimum score. The certificate is, however, only valid for one year.

The external and independent testing of Ukrainian language and literature is realised on two levels: students can choose whether they wish to take their matriculation exam on a basic or advanced level. The admission regulations of universities determine whether students are required to take a basic or advanced-level exam for each degree programme, and what percentage of the maximum score is provided by the results of the exam. Most Ukrainian higher education institutions require a minimum score of 100, which is also the threshold of the basic level.

During this academic year, the evaluation of the independent tests has been changed as well, based on a mixture of evaluation systems used in Europe. A minimum score (a so-called threshold) has been introduced for applicants, which they need to achieve in order to apply for higher education. This year, the basic test consisted of 58 tasks, which could be rewarded with a maximum of 104 points. The advanced test consisted of 74 tasks, and 136 points could be achieved in total. The points achieved in the tests were then converted to a scale from 100 to 200. With these results, one could participate in the application process to Ukrainian higher education institutions.

The working group which evaluates the external and independent testing also determines the minimum score for application after the exam, considering the results of the tests. This year, the threshold was 22 points in Ukrainian language and literature, which means that these 22 points were converted into 100 points, which is necessary for application to a higher education institution, and every additional point increased this score. All applicants got 5 extra points, as the working group decided that questions 29-33 had been ambiguous, thus 17 points were enough to reach the threshold of the basic exam.

Based on the results of the independent testing in Ukrainian language and literature, points achieved in the language part of the test and converted to a scale from 1 to 12 compose the matriculation exam in Ukrainian at the same time. There is no threshold for the matriculation exam. Thus, results in Ukrainian influence the mean score of the matriculation exam, the percentage of which in the total score of application is determined by higher education institutions. For instance, the admission committee of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute decided on the calculation of points in the following way: 20% of the total score is based on the basic-level results in Ukrainian achieved at an independent examination centre, 50% on the exam results in technical subjects, 20% on the third subject determined by the institution, and 10% on the mean score of the matriculation exam.

In 2015, 275,000 people took the exam in Ukrainian language and literature, but only 14 of them achieved the maximum score on the basic level. Nobody could achieve the maximum score on the advanced level. The maximum score of 200 points was given to 142 students. This was due to the fact that if one achieved as much as 102 points out of the maximum 104 in the basic level exam, this was converted into 200 points. Similarly, 200 points were granted in the advanced level exam if one achieved 132 points out of the maximum 136. Of the 142 students who received 200 points, 127 took the basic and 15 the advanced exam. Of all the 275,000 participants, 23,125 students failed.

Several students broke the rules during the exam, thus their work has not been evalu-

ated. However, the Ministry of Education has allowed these students to take an extraordinary exam in Ukrainian at their schools so that they may get a matriculation certificate. This exam is expected to take place in August, after the application procedure.

The numbers of those who have achieved the threshold of application, calculated by school, must be published on the official website by the end of June.

Based on the data voluntarily provided by schools in 2015, Hungarian-language talent development institutions, lyceums, and grammar schools in Subcarpathia estimated the number of those who speak Ukrainian (on a level which allows them to pursue their studies in higher education) at 70%, with other secondary schools giving an estimate of 30%. Provided that they pass the exams in technical subjects and reach the threshold, 342 of the 904 students who have graduated from a Hungarian-language school can apply to Ukrainian higher education institutions.

The admission system is also centralised with respect to the subjects which are taken into consideration. The ministry regulates which two subjects institutions can take into account, alongside Ukrainian, which is compulsory. If one has not reached the threshold in the Ukrainian language and literature exam in the independent examination centre, one cannot apply, whatever one wishes to study. From 2015 on, one cannot even take exams in other subjects with a failed exam in Ukrainian. The exam requirements in Ukrainian are uniform; everyone has to take the same test as Ukrainians, graduates of Ukrainian-language secondary schools, and those who would like to study Ukrainian as a major at university. Therefore the primary requirement of the centralised admission selection is knowledge of Ukrainian, which is followed by skills and knowledge in a particular subject. Higher education institutions cannot organise exams themselves; instead, they rank applicants according to certificates issued by independent examination centres. The order of applicants is public during and after the process. Applications, that is, the copies of exam certificates issued by independent examination centres, can be submitted to three institutions and five degree programmes. After one's admission, one is required to hand in the original certificates at the institution. The order of applicants can be followed on the official website run by the ministry. There are five days available for enrolment. If an applicant, after having been granted admission, enrolls at an institution, and the institution confirms this, the central system deletes his or her name from the other orders of applicants, which causes other applicants to move one position higher.

Alongside Ukrainian, the same level of biology is required for preschool teacher education as for medical studies; and the same level of mathematics is required for primary teacher education as for degree programmes in engineering or theoretical mathematics. Hungarian language cannot be an exam subject in independent examination centres, thus institutions cannot take it into account during the admission process. After a series of efforts, institutions which offer a degree programme in Hungarian have been permitted to organise an internal entrance exam for applicants. Previously, institutions had no information as to whether applicants even spoke Hungarian, as it was only required for applicants to submit their certificate in Ukrainian, a foreign language, and the history of Ukraine. This does not affect other degree programmes. Thus, as all applications with valid certificates must be accepted, the professors of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute, which is funded by the Hungarian government and trains teachers for Hungarian-language preschools and primary schools in Subcarpathia, never know until the beginning of the academic year how well applicants speak Hungarian, if at all.

LAUNCHING DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Degree programmes are also launched in a strict system. Whenever a degree programme is launched, a set of self-evaluation documents demonstrating that material, personnel, and methodological requirements have been met, must be prepared and submitted to the ministry. Nevertheless, some of the regulations for the requirements may seem absurd from a European point of view. For instance, a floor area of 1.5-2 square meters per student is to be provided at the institution as an area which can be used for education; moreover, institutions need to prove with property records that they actually own as much space as the number of students requires. The number of computers per student is also regulated, and 6 square meters must be provided per computer. Furthermore, two types of textbooks approved by the ministry must be provided in every subject (one volume each per five students). The curriculum, lectures, i.e. college notes, methodological projects which help students work in an independent way, guidelines, description of the system of field practices and its requirements, and the system of evaluation need to be methodologically prepared for each subject of every semester of the programme. The questions of the end-of-module exams, i.e., subject databases, must be formulated beforehand as well. As for personnel requirements which guarantee the quality of education, regulations are very strict. Lectures can only be given by full-time teachers with an academic title. One is considered a full-time employee if one's official documents containing one's occupational history are held at the institution, a point which is regularly checked. At least 10% of the lectures have to be given by doctors of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, while seminars can be conducted by those who have a master's degree. Academic doctors, candidates of sciences, and those with the rank of associate professor or professor are considered certified lecturers if they obtained their qualifications in Ukraine. PhD degrees acquired abroad are not regarded as valid qualifications unless they are accredited in Ukraine. During the accreditation, the procedure of earning the academic title must be repeated, that is, a dissertation defence is held before an appointed committee; its members then decide by secret ballot whether the person with a PhD degree can be granted its Ukrainian equivalent, the degree of candidate of sciences. Any rental property necessary for education (i.e. laboratory, model farm, sports hall) is only considered part of the floor area officially if there exists a long-term contract, i.e. for at least two academic years, between the owner and the tenants, officially countersigned by a civil-law notary. This is problematic because owners are not likely to sign a long-term contract in an atmosphere of political and economic uncertainty. The number of student dormitory spaces, the stock of books at the library, subscription to scientific journals, equipment, and laboratories are normatively regulated. It is not clear, however, how many institutions could continue to operate if ongoing degree programmes were strictly supervised based on these regulations. Politicians specialised in minority education fear that minority higher education institutions might be at a disproportionate disadvantage during the execution of these regulations.

If the submitted documents are found to be formally and normatively appropriate, a selected ministry official, by a Ministerial Order, sends a visiting committee to the institution. The committee must consist of at least two people who do not know one another. The committee members, who are also doctors of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in most cases, are selected from one Eastern and one Western region. The task of the com-

mittee is to personally investigate whether the self-evaluation is realistic and to summarise this in a long report. The data regarding the personnel, the methodological background, and technical equipment are always inspected. If the report is positive, the documents are transferred to a competent subcommittee of the National Accreditation Committee, then both the subcommittee and the Accreditation Committee decide whether the degree programme can be launched. The permission to launch a degree programme is valid for one educational cycle (i.e. 4 years for bachelor's and 2 years for master's programmes), at the end of which the accreditation procedure must be initiated. This is very similar to the licensing procedure described above, but in this case final year students' knowledge is also tested. The visiting committee makes students take tests, and the results are then compared with actual tests which were taken previously. The accreditation is valid for five years after which it must be reinitiated.

When a degree programme is launched, the institution prepares the concepts of the course as well as its description of education, qualification, and evaluation, and has these approved. The curricula is based on subject standards and norms, which are regulated on a national level, therefore they can only be altered very slightly. Institutions can list some subjects as optional. This is going to change, however, according to the new Law on Education: from 2016 on, the number of mandatory subjects will be decreased, and students will be able to choose from subjects available at the institution themselves.

According to the regulations, multiple groups of subjects need to be offered. These include, 1) subjects which develop general scientific knowledge, including subjects in humanities, social sciences, economics, mathematics, and natural sciences; 2), professional and technical training, and 3), subjects chosen by the institution and the students.

For instance, the following subjects are taught in every degree programme: philosophy, sociology, politics, the history of Ukraine, Ukrainian and universal cultural history, Ukrainian language, Ukrainian official language, civil defence, informatics, hygiene, and ecology.

EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE

The bachelor's course lasts four years (eight semesters). This is due to the fact that primary and secondary education last 11 years, and several general subjects were transferred into higher education. According to the strategy planned between 2015 and 2025, 12-year-long primary and secondary education will be restored in Ukraine, after which it will only take 3 years (6 semesters) to obtain a bachelor's degree in accordance with European norms. The two-semester "magister" course, which is equivalent to a master's course, will be adjusted to international norms and become four semesters long. The two-semester "specialist" training, which offered a complete university degree, will be discontinued. Nevertheless, the "junior specialist" or, from 2016 on, "junior bachelor" technical course, which is based on primary education, will be still offered. This course is preceded by 9 years of primary education and is 1.5-3 years longer than secondary education. As an output, students are granted a matriculation certificate as well as a tertiary vocational diploma, which allows them to continue their studies in the second year of a bachelor's degree programme through credit transfer.

A semester consists of 18 weeks of term-time and an examination period. According to the new Law on Education, the semesters will be 15 weeks long from 2016, the number of subjects will be decreased, and more time will be provided for students' preparation and exams. Subjects will be categorised into a credit system. A one-credit subject will be taught in two weekly lectures during one semester. Due to integration, every subject will bear a credit value of at least 3 from 2016. An order has regulated that a student should not have more than 8 compulsory subjects per semester. Several facultative courses can be chosen in the institutions as well. Each compulsory subject must be completed in the appropriate semester. Students who cannot finish the second semester will automatically drop out, but they can reapply to the institution. Those who failed their exams in the third or fourth semester cease to be students legally, but in the next semester, they can initiate the restoration of their student status. If it is indeed restored, they can continue their studies from the semester which they failed in, and are only allowed to move on to the next semester if they pass all their exams.

Field practices and internship programmes form a vital part of the courses. During field practices, students can acquire skills which are necessary for the profession but cannot be taught in class. For example, geography students have economic and nature-exploration field practices. During the former, they visit factories, while during the latter, they take part in a ten-day trip to get to know the natural characteristics of their region, country, and the Carpathian Basin: Teacher education students visit classes at several schools for one day each, then practice teaching themselves in an appointed institution for six weeks in the last semester.

P.E. classes bear no credit value. Two such classes per week are obligatory in semesters 1-4, while two further classes can be substituted by activity in sports groups, which must be documented. Language courses have been compulsory up until the present. Ukrainian vernacular, official, and professional language has been taught during 7 semesters, foreign languages during 4 semesters. The new law does not prescribe compulsory language courses, but it sets language certificates as a requirement for degrees, the system for which has yet to be properly introduced. From the second year, students have to write a "year thesis", which must be defended in the faculty. In the seventh semester a "year thesis" must still be written, then at the end of the eighth semester, students take their final exams in their field of study and defend their dissertation. Dissertations are generally based on previous "year theses" and have to be 40 pages long. Teacher education students have a six-week pedagogical practice at schools in the last semester.

SUMMARY

It seems that the difficult entrance to higher education remains one of the greatest problems of Hungarian-language education in Subcarpathia. Under the aegis of the Bologna Process, the entrance to higher education is regulated to establish equal opportunities, which paradoxically causes the exclusion of minorities from the system. For instance, entrance exams must be taken in a centralised way, in examination centres. The exam subjects are determined by the ministry; the university receives only a certificate of the results, based on which applicants are ranked. To enter a degree programme, one must sit for an exam in Ukrainian language and literature. Furthermore, the same level of biol-

ogy is required for preschool teacher education as for medical studies. Native language competence is required to perform well in the exam in Ukrainian, which was originally designed as the Ukrainian philology entrance exam. If an applicant does not reach the threshold in Ukrainian, which is determined by a committee each year, he or she will not be granted admission to any degree programme. One cannot take an entrance exam in minority languages (e.g. Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak), except in Russian, which also means that institutions cannot set a knowledge of minority languages as a requirement. Thus, higher education institutions which offer Hungarian-language degree programmes have no information as to whether applicants speak Hungarian.

It is extremely important that under these circumstances the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute should exist and form an important element in higher education. One of the most effective convergence programmes in higher education deals with the funding, the preservation of equipment and property of this particular institution, which is vital for its continuous and stable operation. This effectiveness is explained by the fact that it is mostly Hungarians who apply to the institution, thus the competition is more equal. The disadvantage experienced by Hungarians due to the Ukrainian exam is somewhat decreased in the admission process, as few students apply who have attended Ukrainian-language schools. The existence of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Institute contributed to the establishment of the Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences with the Hungarian Language of Teaching of Uzhgorod National University, which had been initiated in the 1970s but was not recognised by the state until an alternative appeared. The Transcarpathian Institute primarily offers teacher education with Ukrainian accreditation. It is more or less sufficiently funded by the Hungarian government. However, the institution, which does not receive any funding from the Ukrainian government, is not able to offer the number of degree programmes demanded, as would be necessary for the Hungarian community. It would be worthwhile to allocate places for Hungarian students in degree programmes which are only offered in Ukrainian at public institutions (i.e. for the education of lawyers, doctors, dentists, or veterinarians; or the international relations programme), which would be filled through internal competition. For example, scholarships could be awarded to students who study to enter important professions which are in demand among the Hungarian minority. To provide equal opportunities, more programmes could be launched partially or completely in the Hungarian language at public institutions, especially in tertiary-level vocational training, which helps students prepare for university. It is important, however, to avoid parallel and superfluous degree programmes, i.e., Hungarian-language programmes only need to be launched in fields in which there is no other accredited Hungarian-language programme. Furthermore, the Ukrainian government should fund these programmes, as they train professionals with Ukrainian citizenship who will most likely pay taxes in Ukraine. At the same time, the Hungarian government could grant funds necessary for the establishment of specialised libraries and the organisation of field practices, partial training courses, and continuing education in a professional language. When it comes to launching a new degree programme, meeting the demands of the market is a definite preference.

The Law on Higher Education, passed in 2014, declares European higher education values, promises institutional autonomy and liberty, prescribes structural and curricular changes, and emphasises students' and teachers' mobility. The validity of this legislation, as in most cases in Ukraine, will depend on its implementation and execution. Is it pos-

sible to adjust other pieces of legislation and Ministerial Orders to this law? Can those who are affected understand and support the changes? Could the reforms be implemented by officials socialised in the Soviet era, who have been stuck in the same work environment for decades?

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