



Disability Roles: Challenges Concerning the Education of People Living with Disabilities in Hungary

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Abstract: *One of the paths toward the social integration of people living with disabilities is to guarantee their participation in education and employment in the long term. The European Union emphasises the concept of lifelong learning to achieve the goals of improved education levels and the concomitant employability for this group. Although in the past few years there have been positive developments in the conditions of people living with disabilities in Hungary. Therefore, it remains one of the challenges of the Hungarian adult education system to bring about equal opportunities in participation for people living with disabilities. The main dilemma refers primarily to the provisioning of the wide array of learning aids required due to the diverse nature of possible disabilities and the establishment of a supportive and conducive learning environment.*

Keywords: integration, inclusion, people living with disabilities

The current condition of adult people living with disabilities in Hungary

One of the potential and at the same time most challenging segments of adult education is the group of adults living with disabilities. “*In the Census of 2011 490,578 individuals or 4.9 % of the entire population identified themselves as living with disabilities. The number of those suffering from some type of chronic illness is much higher amounting to 1,648,413 people*” (KSH, 2015:12).

In Hungary data is available on people living with disabilities from the 1990s onward; since then the censuses conducted have surveyed this subgroup consistently. In both the 1990 and the 2001 censuses new disability categories were introduced, while the use of some were

discontinued, in respect to the designation of specific conditions. In the table below this practice is clearly visible. The constant re-designation of disability groups has an obvious impact on their ability to participate in educational programs with respect to their special needs and requirements.

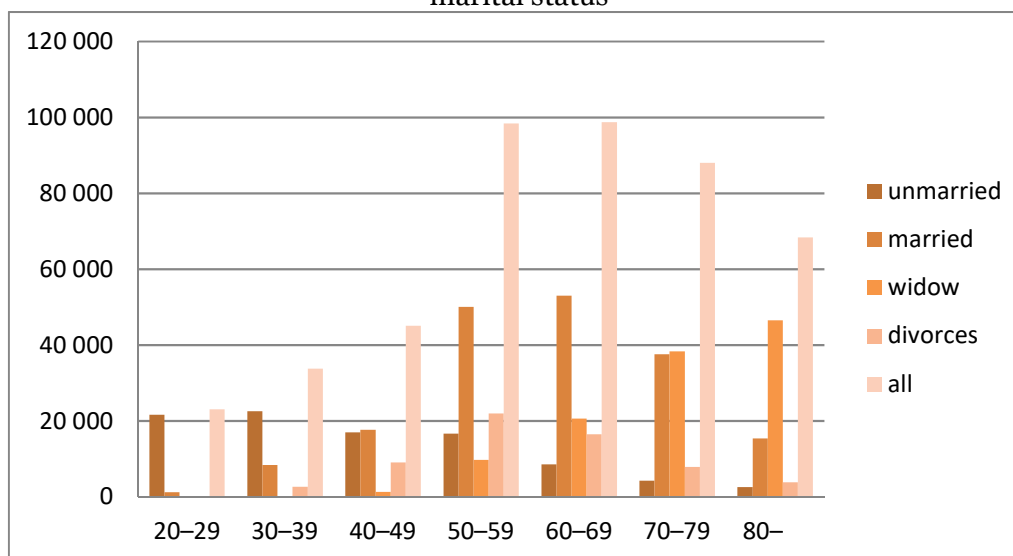
Table 1. People living with disabilities between 2001 and 2011

| <i>2001</i> | | <i>2011</i> | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>type of disability</i> | <i>number of individuals</i> | <i>type of disability</i> | <i>number of individuals</i> |
| physical disability | 225,625 | physical disability | 232,206 |
| missing upper or lower limb | 16,254 | ----- | ----- |
| other physical disability | 30,942 | ----- | ----- |
| vision impaired | 74,492 | vision impaired | 73,430 |
| blind in one eye | 21,529 | ----- | |
| blind | 10,554 | blind | 9,054 |
| mental disability | 59,734 | mental disability | 42,779 |
| hearing impaired | 61,503 | hearing impaired | 63,014 |
| deaf, mute, deaf and mute | 11,488 | deaf | 8,571 |
| speech impediment | 16,225 | speech impediment | 14,528 |
| other | 139,570 | other | 2,277 |
| Total | 577,006 | autistic | 5,120 |
| | | psychiatric disability | 46,265 |
| | | speech impediment | 10,913 |
| | | disability involving internal organs | 46,648 |
| | | undefined | 37,120 |
| | | Total | 490,578 |

(Source: Edited by Ildikó Laki based on KSH data, 2016
http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_fogyatekossag)

Of the entire population 432,398 individuals (or under 5%) are living with disabilities and are over 30 years of age.

Chart 1. Individuals living with disabilities above 20 years of age based on age and marital status



(Source: Edited by Ildikó Laki based on KSH data, 2016
http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_fogyatekossag)

Looking at the age stratification it is obvious that with advancing age people living with disabilities tend to live in marital relationships, whereas the proportion of divorces shows no divergence from that of the general population.

Of the educational levels, a high percentage 26.9% only attended elementary schools, 17.7% possess a vocational certificate without graduating from a secondary school, while 20.3% hold secondary school maturity exams. Consequently, we can surmise that the 30-39 and 40-49 age groups based on their existing educational qualifications can be easily involved in adult education programmes.

Table 2. Highest educational attainment for people living with disabilities above the age of 30 in 2011

| Age group | did not complete the first grade of elementary school | elementary school | | | secondary education with only vocational certificate | secondary school maturity exam | college, university education with a degree | Total |
|--------------|---|-------------------|---------------|----------------|--|--------------------------------|---|----------------|
| | | 1-3 | 4-7 | 8 | | | | |
| 20-24 | 1 415 | 88 | 431 | 3 815 | 1 979 | 3 473 | 388 | 11 589 |
| 25-29 | 1 463 | 127 | 466 | 3 335 | 2 320 | 2 593 | 1 166 | 11 470 |
| 30-39 | 3 315 | 308 | 1 465 | 9 991 | 8 347 | 6 912 | 3 479 | 33 817 |
| 40-49 | 3 053 | 505 | 1 964 | 12 525 | 13 706 | 9 598 | 3 751 | 45 102 |
| 50-59 | 3 154 | 1 035 | 3 122 | 27 436 | 31 785 | 23 431 | 8 421 | 98 384 |
| 60-69 | 2 043 | 921 | 3 825 | 33 207 | 22 770 | 25 333 | 10 645 | 98 744 |
| 70-79 | 1 655 | 1 289 | 13 455 | 49 047 | – | 14 563 | 8 024 | 88 033 |
| 80- | 954 | 829 | 24 221 | 28 173 | – | 8 025 | 6 116 | 68 318 |
| Total | 17 052 | 5 102 | 48 949 | 167 529 | 80 907 | 93 928 | 41 990 | 455 457 |

(Source: Edited by Ildikó Laki based on KSH data, 2016
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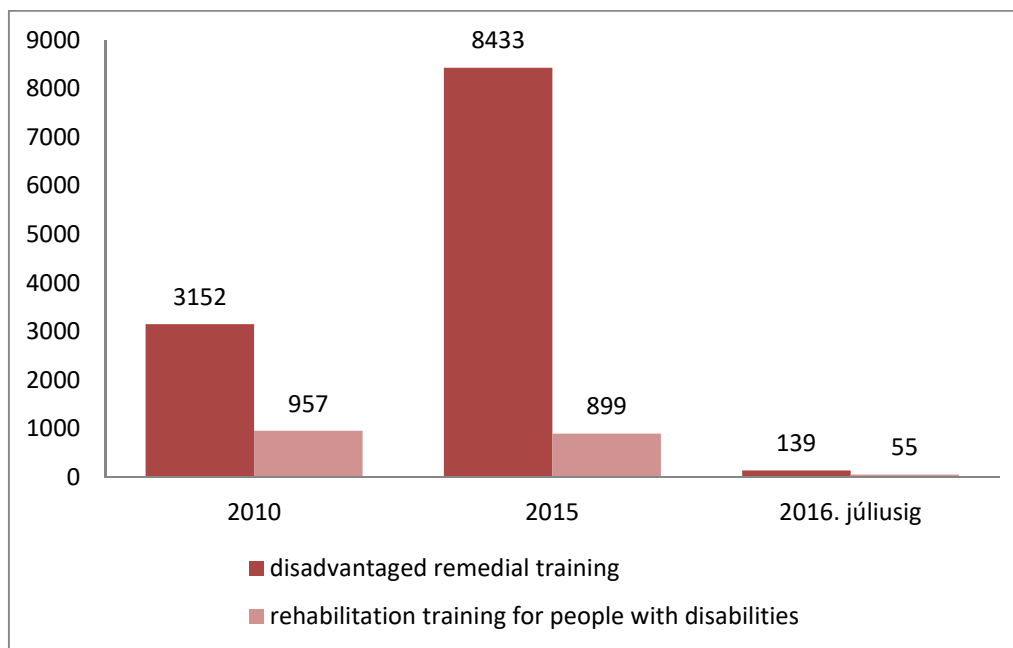
One of the main challenges of the Hungarian adult education system is the active involvement of and offering viable learning opportunities for people living with disabilities. The most pressing difficulty stems from the great diversity of existing disabilities, which often requires a wide array of teaching aids and methods. Another concern is whether we should consider adult education as a classical means of teaching or as a more comprehensive learning setting to instil the still lacking necessary skills in the participants. The latter option aims to “*develop the adult participant’s personality and outlook toward predetermined goals in a structured manner. Another interpretation sees it as the confluence of organized formal and non-formal activities*” (Felnőttoktatási..., 2002:172). In contrast, traditional adult education “*primarily wishes to transmit knowledge to be absorbed by the participants intellectually*” (Felnőttoktatási..., 2002:172).

The concept of *adult education* appears within a school-based formal education system. In this framework it refers to a form of learning that is suitable for the participant’s work, family or other schedules, as well as fits to existing skills and age. (Act CXC of 2011 on Public Education)

The definition of *adult training* can be found in the Act on Adult Education and applies to educational programmes outside the formal school system. An important fact is that the participants have no formal student status vis-a-vis the educational institution of their choice. Any person can engage in such a training programme that has completed the legally mandated minimum educational requirements, but can also participate parallel to the fulfilment of these. (Act LXXVII of 2013 on Adult Education)

In conjunction with the established structures, it should be also emphasized that the principle of independent choice must be guaranteed for the adult participants. Successful learning is based on an active interrelationship with the teaching and training systems and relies on pre-existing skills without which the success of adult education courses could be compromised. A significant dilemma presents itself whereby on the one hand people living with disabilities should be encouraged and assisted to achieve the highest possible level of independence, while on the other the strategies should be devised through which education and training programmes can be adjusted to the specific forms of disabilities. Additionally, it should be explored whether participation in such adult learning schemes truly enhances the value of the disabled individual on the labour market, thereby elevating his/her quality of life. In such cases adult education does not necessarily entail integration as a goal, as opposed to schooling for younger age groups, rather the specific form of disability defines the type of programme that a particular individual is able to attend. According to the OSAP (National Statistics Collection Program) data the number of registered participants in vocational training courses between 2010 and 2015 and until July 2016 was as follows:

Chart 2. Number of registered students in 2010, 2015 and July 2016

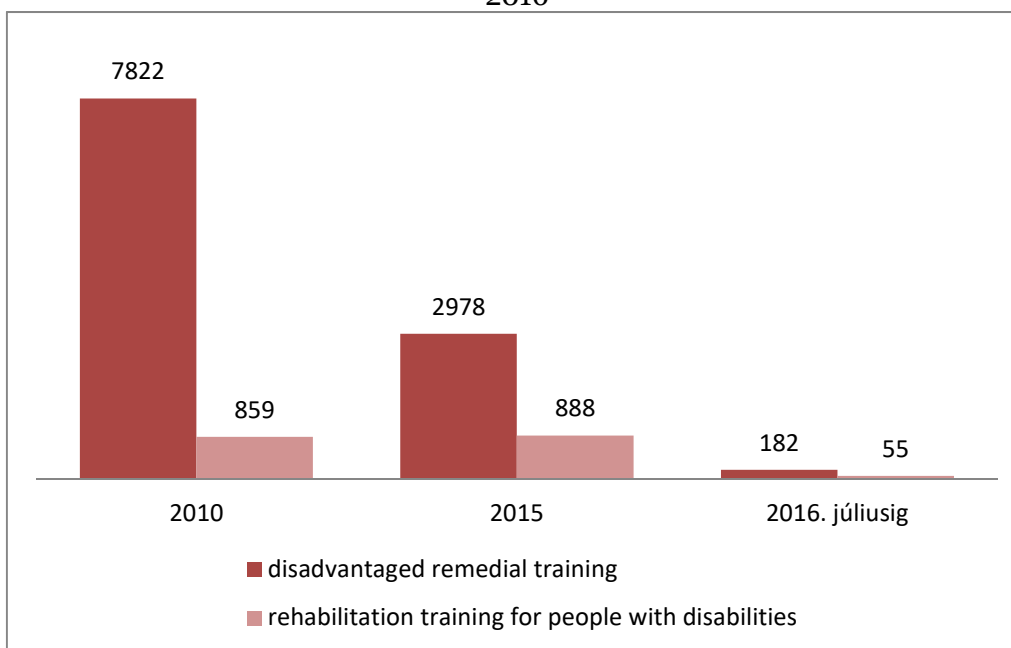


(Source: Edited by Ildikó Laki based on KSH data, 2016; OSAP data <https://statisztika.nive.hu/>)

According to the type of training programmes in 2010 3,152 individuals applied to special development programmes for the disadvantaged, whereas for training courses for vocational rehabilitation of people with altered working abilities 957 applied; in 2015 26.5% more entered training programmes within the auspices of the first group, while of the latter group almost an identical number entered the training system five years later. The number of students registered in these programmes does not reflect adequately the actual level of disabled students in the system inclusive of all the various disability groups, which further complicates the already complex dilemmas of adult education.

Previous Hungarian and non-Hungarian statistical analyses indicate that with advancing age the propensity to enter the adult education system becomes more muted, thus it can be assumed that only certain age groups (younger groups in the author's opinion) show genuine interest in this type of learning. For those who participate, their mobility and initiative can serve as a possible vehicle to meaningfully better their lot.

Chart 3. Number of graduates of training programmes in 2010, 2015 and July 2016



(Source: Edited by Ildikó Laki based on KSH data, 2016; OSAP data <https://statisztika.nive.hu/>)

During the period under examination it seems that the number of graduates far exceeded that of the newly admitted participants. In 2010 7,822 participated in the special development programmes for the disadvantaged, which amounts to only 1.1% of the entire number of school graduates (in 2010 652,587 finished their education); this number in 2015 reached only 0.4% in comparison to the total sum of graduates – 737,625 individuals.

From the above data, however, it is rather difficult to establish to what extent people living with disabilities are present in the vocational training system since the Hungarian adult education system currently does not possess any specific information concerning people living with disabilities, and especially not on the type of disabilities that may be present.

The data above focused on the existing shortcomings of the Hungarian adult education system in this area, which entails both the institutional structure of the system as well as the inadequacy of special education programmes, tools, and methods. The types of training programmes are characterized by the Act on Adult Education as follows:

- vocational training programmes that are state recognized and are part of the OKJ – National Qualifications Register,
- other supported vocational training courses,
- supported general language and other specialized language courses,
- other supported training courses that are not included in the first and third categories.

The Act on Adult Education, however, does not regulate a number of training fields that characteristically adults are involved in. Such are, among others, training programmes related to law enforcement or offered by the military, certain training programmes for civil servants, specialized courses

for healthcare professionals as well as additional training for teaching faculty members (Felnőttoktatás..., 2014:5).

Training programmes for adults can be classified according to their intended goals, therefore we can identify:

Work related training courses, these aim to help the participant to gain a new or retain an existing work position – such programmes normally include some form of special qualification, which are either recognized by the state or may not carry such recognition. The second case may pertain to internal training courses of an organization or company or that the recognition is extended only within a given economic field or sector.

The so-called *general skills and language training courses*; these are mainly competence development programmes with skills gained that can be utilized not just in a narrow professional setting but in the participant's life in general.

Finally, the so-called *hobby or leisure activities related courses*; their primary goals are not related to the workplace or professional development, rather to some free time activity of the participant, e.g. sports, music, arts and crafts (Felnőttoktatás..., 2014:5).

In the case of people living with disabilities the basic skills development aspect of adult education must be further emphasized. Both Hungarian and other European research data clearly indicate that there is still a high proportion among those living with disabilities who are entirely excluded from public and higher education, therefore some of these affected individuals may look for adult education as a possibility to improve their education levels and possibilities.

The European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 via the renewed commitment for the realization of a fully accessible Europe in relation to education recommends the improvement of the educational standards of people living with disabilities as follows:

“In the 16-19 age group the rate of non-participation in education is 37% for considerably restricted people, and 25% for those restricted to some extent, against 17% for those not restricted.” And: “EU action will support national efforts through ET 2020, the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training¹⁸, to remove legal and organisational barriers for people with disabilities to general education and lifelong learning systems; provide timely support for inclusive education and personalised learning, and early identification of special needs; provide adequate training and support for professionals working at all levels of education and report on participation rates and outcomes” (Európai..., 2010:10).

The above papers mainly envision the improvement of the education standards, school attendance and employment rates of people living with disabilities through the strategy of lifelong learning.

Summary

Based on the above data it can be unequivocally established that the educational level of people living with disabilities is far below that of the general population. If we survey specific groups living with different forms of disabilities, the level of divergence varies, but is nevertheless present. Roughly half of all people living with disabilities still only have elementary schooling, one-fifth hold secondary school maturity exams and of these only a fraction enters higher education. Meanwhile, in the adult education system, due to the inadequacy of relevant statistical data, they are not clearly visible.

The Hungarian adult education system in relation to people living with disabilities is only in the early stages of development. Yet, it is an indispensable goal in the 21st century to elevate the participation in the educational system of disabled people, especially those who have never even been part of the system or concluded their studies for some reason prematurely. As part of this process it is necessary to move from the mere principle of integration to its automatic application in institutional settings, while simultaneously the methodologies and contents for such curricula must be prepared. Upon the successful completion of such education/training programmes the value on the labour market of people living with disabilities may increase, also contributing to elevated social standing and quality of life. Adult education through the involvement of people living disabilities can contribute to the strengthening of social integration, offer the possibility for the realization of equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups and by doing so it can become an integral instrument for social advancement and deepening of positive values.

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