

COMPARISON OF THE TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN SLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY

^aDIANA BORBÉLYOVÁ, ^bALEXANDRA NAGYOVÁ,
^cKINGA HORVÁTHOVÁ

J. Selye University, Bratislavská cesta 3322, 945 01, Komárno, Slovakia

email: ^aborbelyovad@ujss.sk, ^bnagyovaa@ujss.sk, ^chorvathki@ujss.sk

This study was supported by the project ITMS2014 Let's learn to learn better and by the project ERASMUS+ Mentor Training.

Abstract: The main thrust of teacher professional development, which is based on the philosophy of professional renewal and lifelong learning. The concept of lifelong learning (LLL) has triggered major changes in the approach to education and training policy in all developed countries. The study focuses on the system of continuing professional development of teachers in Slovakia and Hungary, analysing its similarities and differences in the existing legislation. Its aim is to critically compare the current system of teachers continuing professional development in Slovakia and Hungary on the basis of qualitative content analysis and using the analytical strategy of constant comparison. The research shows that there are similarities and differences in the teachers continuing professional development systems in Hungary and Slovakia, which have an impact on the formation of teachers' professional competences and that the data obtained can serve as an inspiration for the further development of the teachers continuing professional development systems in each country.

Keywords: Hungary, teachers continuing professional development systems, Slovakia

1 Introduction

The knowledge acquired in the course of obtaining a qualification needs to be supplemented and deepened over time, which implies innovation in education systems. In agreement with Óhidy (2006), this automatically generates the concept of developing in people the need to learn as a skill, as a response to changes in their environment. The birth of the concept of lifelong learning itself is linked to the 1970 UNESCO conference. Later on, the concept was taken up by the European Council, the OECD and the European Commission and gradually became a pedagogical paradigm.

The European Union's education policy principles increasingly emphasise the role of lifelong learning. The idea of lifelong learning has thus become one of the most important pedagogical paradigms in Europe in recent decades. At the start of the new millennium, several international organisations and governments have identified lifelong learning as the driving strategy for education policy in the new era. In the course of numerous analyses and interpretations of social change and development, many experts have concluded that a paradigm shift in traditional educational design is needed. As Coolahan (2002) points out, the new paradigm must ensure that lifelong learning policies are applied to meet the new challenges of a significantly changed civilization.

According to the European Commission (2001), lifelong learning is defined as any learning activity undertaken throughout life with the aim of developing knowledge, skills and competences from an individual, civic/civil, social and/or employment perspective. It includes all levels of learning, sets of knowledge and skills acquired through formal learning, informal learning and non-formal learning (Dunn, 2003; Kasáčová, 2004). The main objective of the Lifelong Learning Strategy (European Commission, 2021) is to complete the system of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance (Lifelong learning strategy, 2020). Lifelong learning is closely linked to adult learning. While school education is compulsory for the child, adult learning is largely self-initiated/determined. And personal intrinsic motivation is an essential part of lifelong learning. Sometimes it is the desire to learn that leads to training, sometimes it is the constant changes in the world, but the aim is always to acquire new knowledge, skills and abilities (Óhidy, 2006).

According to Duță and Rafailă (2014) lifelong learning can be broadly defined as learning that is flexible, varied and available

at different times and places. Lifelong learning supports learning across sectors, beyond traditional schooling and throughout adulthood (i.e. after compulsory schooling). This definition is based on Delor's (1996) four 'pillars' on which education for the future is:

- Learning to know: mastering learning tools rather than acquisition of structured knowledge.
- Learning to do: equipping people for the types of work needed now and in the future including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work environments.
- Learning to live together, and with others: peacefully resolving conflict, discovering other people and their cultures, fostering community capability, capacity and individual competence, economic resilience, and social inclusion and economic resilience.
- Learning to be: education contributing to a person's complete development: mind and body, sensitivity, intelligence, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality.

The philosophy of lifelong learning is also at the heart of the main thrust of teacher professional development, which is professional renewal. We are aware that the concept of lifelong learning has triggered major changes in the approach to education and training policy in all developed countries. And these changes have had (and continue to have) an impact on the shaping and implementation of professional development systems for teachers. It should be noted that the lifelong learning strategy is an integral part of the education policy of each EU Member State and the starting point of the teachers continuing professional development systems. It defines the direction and principles of the professional development system, which are then translated into concrete actions in the form of laws and regulations on teacher training. Participation in teacher training is both an opportunity (it is up to the teacher to decide when and what to study) and an obligation. However, the extent of the obligations usually varies from country to country.

According to Pavlov (2007), the teachers continuing professional development provides the conditions for the gradual change of teacher competences during professional development. Furthermore, he highlights that continuing professional development fulfils adaptive, motivational, developmental, innovative and reflective functions.

In adapting the EU's multidisciplinary approach to lifelong learning, the EU Member States are not adapting their (education) policies, institutions and their structures mechanically, i.e. not by simply adopting EU standards, but always by taking into account their own national interests (Óhidy, 2021). In most countries, it is generally accepted that teachers should continuously update their knowledge, skills and competences. As CEDEFOP (2016) reports, in some countries, teacher professional development has even become part of strategic priorities, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania.

Experts agree that society's demand for a highly educated, well-trained, committed and effective teaching force has never been more urgent than it is today. At the same time, it is clear that lifelong learning is now placed at the centre of an intense policy debate (Finstrewald et al., 2013). Teaching careers are placed in the context of the changing policy paradigm of lifelong learning. It is also recognised that while the demands on teachers are increasing significantly, there are worrying signs that in some countries the key factors needed to support a quality teaching profession are under pressure. Coolahan (2002) is of the view that there is a need for a systematic and coherent policy on the part of the state to support teaching careers. He highlights that a robust and comprehensive policy supporting teaching careers must be a priority for governments and that policy formulation

and implementation should be undertaken by policy makers in consultation with the teaching community. PISOŇOVÁ (2017) concurs, arguing that teachers continuing professional development should be guided by the interests of educators, the needs of the school system, and should also take into account innovative trends in pedagogy.

Based on these theoretical starting points, we wanted to compare the domestic teachers continuing professional development with that of a country with a similar political-economic status, a member of the EU and the V4, with a similar socio-cultural background and influenced by similar social and cultural factors. We wanted to see how the lifelong learning strategy is reflected in the education and training policies of these countries and what specific characteristics are found. The study therefore focuses on the continuing professional development of teachers in Slovakia and Hungary, examining its similarities and differences on a theoretical level. The aim is to provide a comparative analysis (using content analysis) and thus to compare the current system of professional development for teachers in Slovakia and Hungary. In doing so, to point out specificities that can serve as inspiration.

2 Research sample and research methods

The subject of our qualitative research was the teachers continuing professional development system in Slovakia and Hungary, respectively their identities and differences enshrined in the legislative documents of these countries. In order to clarify the subject of our research, the legislative documents represent our research sample. In relation to our research, these documents were relevant in fulfilling the aim of the research, i.e. to identify the identities and differences in the legislatively established continuing professional development of teachers in two V4 countries - the Slovak Republic and Hungary. The legislative documents that we worked with, are the so-called ready-made documents, which as GAVORA (2015) says, were created outside the researcher's activity. The latter only takes them over and analyses them. The legislative documents were subject to qualitative content analysis of the text, so their selection was carried out by non-stochastic (MASON, 2018), intentional selection. We selected the documents based on predetermined criteria that are directly related to the subject of our research. The finished legislative materials that were relevant to our research needs were:

- *Legislative documents of Slovak Republic:*
 - Act No. 138/2019 Coll., the Act on Teaching and Professional Employees and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, as amended,
 - Decree No. 361/2019 Coll., Decree of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic on education in professional development,
 - Act No. 568/2009 Coll., the Act on Lifelong Learning and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts,
- *Legislative documents of Hungary:*
 - Government Decree 277/1997 (XII. 22.) on teacher training, the teacher qualification examination, and the allowances and benefits of participants in further training,
 - Government Decree No. 326/2013 (VIII. 30.) on the implementation of Act XXXIII of 1992 on the promotion system of teachers and the status of public servants in public education institutions,
 - Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education.

As mentioned earlier the method of research data collection was qualitative content analysis of the text. Content analysis of text is an important research method that subjects the communication that constitutes the research data set to analysis (GLÄZER - ZIKUDA et al. 2020). The researcher subjects the text to analysis from different perspectives, extracting content from the text, whether overt or covert (HENDL, 2016). In our particular research, we analysed latent, i.e. hidden, content, applying an inductive method of content analysis of text - a progression from textual material to new theory (SILVERMAN, 2015) - to obtain qualitative data. We subjected the above legislative documents to this

analysis, where we condensed the input text into meaning categories. The qualitative data thus obtained was subjected to evaluation by means of open text coding, where we assigned codes - phrases - according to their internal contexts. The following codes emerged - Nature of the legislation, Consistency with the concept of lifelong learning, Institutions competent to provide the teachers continuing professional development, Teacher career paths, Types of teacher professional development, Rights and obligations of teachers, Funding of professional development, Financial allowances based on participation in professional development. We then proceeded to their interpretation, in which we used a technique called card layout (SKUTIL et al., 2011), where we constructed a new text that clarifies the content of each code. We would state that we carried out the above research steps for the legislative documents of the Slovak Republic and Hungary separately. However, due to the fulfilment of the research objective, at the end of our research work we proceeded to apply the analytical strategy of constant comparison (ŠVARIČEK, ŠEĎOVÁ, et al. 2007), which allowed us to develop a new theory in the form of determining the similarities and differences in the legislatively established system of teacher education in two V4 countries - the Slovak Republic and Hungary.

3 The study results and discussion

In this chapter we will present and analyse in parallel the teachers continuing professional development in Hungary and Slovakia: we will examine their similarities and differences on the basis of the criteria set up.

Nature of the legislation

In Slovakia, the legislation in force is Act 138/2019 on pedagogical and professional staff, which regulates the work of pedagogical and professional staff, their professional development, the monitoring of their professional development, administrative offences and the central register of pedagogical and professional and other staff of schools and school establishments. The first part deals with the rights and duties of teachers. The second part describes the duties of teachers and professional staff. It sets out the prerequisites for employment and the qualifications required. Articles 3 and 4 of the Act deal with the continuing professional development of teachers. It stipulates that teachers working in regional education (nursery, primary, secondary, art, language and special needs schools and schools for children with special educational needs) have the right to in-service training. Article 3 (§ 40-70) deals with the definition of the term 'continuing vocational training' and describes the types of training, the possibilities for funding them and the powers of the competent organisations and institutions. It stresses that professional development may take the form of continuing training, creative activity, self-training and the completion of a professional placement aimed at renewing professional competences. Article 4 (§71-75) deals with controls and infringements relating to continuing training (Zákon č. 138/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov, 2019).

Further legal regulation is the Decree 361/2019 of the Ministry of Education on the in-service training and professional development of teachers, which clarifies certain points of the above-mentioned law. It defines the detailed training programme for the forms of professional development and the modules of the programme. It specifies what the training programmes must contain, including the type, scope, form, objectives, etc. It details the content and scope requirements for each form of continuing training, which ensure the quality of the training. It lists the criteria determining the suitability of organisations providing continuing training. (Vyhláška č. 361/2019 Z. z. Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu Slovenskej republiky o vzdelávaní v profesijnom rozvoji, 2019). The Regulation entered into force on 15 October 2019.

The current law in force in Hungary is Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education, which has undergone several amendments since its entry into force. Point 17 of the Act provides for the support and organisation of training, further training and self-training of teachers within the framework of pedagogical - professional services.

The teacher's career model is regulated by Government Decree No 326/2013 (VIII. 30.) on the career system of teachers and Act XXXIII of 1992 on the status of public servants. The Decree sets out the rights and duties of teachers, detailing the obligations for further training, the requirements for the grading of teachers, the requirements and conditions for advancement to a higher grade, and the conditions for professional practice and the qualifying examination (326/2013. (VIII. 30.) Kormányrendelet a pedagógusok előmeneteli rendszeréről, 1992). The legislation emphasises that continuing vocational training may take the following forms: formal, informal, non-formal, in-school and out-of-school, formal, informal, non-formal; degree courses established and organised by the teacher training faculty of a higher education institution; further specialisation, specialisation courses, examination courses; training and self-training services provided by professional services: accredited courses, short training courses and self-training: study of educational libraries and databases, in-service training, etc.

Consistency with the concept of lifelong learning

In Slovakia, the law and the regulation are in line with the Lifelong Learning Act 568/2009, which includes in the concept of lifelong learning all activities throughout our lives that aim to improve knowledge, skills and abilities. It is based on the principle of continuing training beyond the level of education attained at school. It is worth mentioning the specificity that, since 2008, the term 'school' has also been used to refer to kindergartens under the Public Education Act 245/2008 (Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov).

Law 568/2009 on Lifelong Learning defines the following types of continuing education in Slovakia:

- continuing education in an accredited training programme leading to the addition, renewal, extension or updating of the qualifications required to pursue a professional activity,
- retraining in an accredited training programme leading to a partial qualification or a full qualification - professional competence in one or more professional activities other than those for which the qualification was obtained by school education,
- continuous training in educational programmes in which the participant complements, extends, deepens or renews his/her qualifications in accordance with specific requirements,
- hobby education, civic education, education for the elderly and other education through which the learner satisfies his or her interests, participates in civil society and develops his or her personality (Zákon č. 568/2009 Z. z. o celoživotnom vzdelávaní a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov).

The main objective of the Lifelong Learning Strategy in Slovakia is to ensure lifelong learning and to develop a system of lifelong guidance (Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania, 2021). The functional system should facilitate the flexible acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competences through quality education for all citizens, regardless of their current life situation. The Lifelong Learning Strategy was adopted by the Government in 2011 in its Decision 657/2011.

In the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, as the central state administration body responsible for ensuring lifelong learning, has developed the Lifelong Learning Action Plan, which contains concrete measures to help put the theoretical aspects of the Lifelong Learning Strategy into practice. The Action Plan outlines the vision in four main priority areas: 1) providing attractive lifelong learning; 2) providing education relevant to the labour market

and employment; 3) providing accessible guidance services; 4) providing access to lifelong learning (Akčný plán stratégie celoživotného vzdelávania, 2011). Following the 2011 Action Plan, a new document was developed in 2021 - Lifelong Learning and Guidance Strategy for 2021-2030 (2021), which defines the following principles of lifelong learning in Slovakia:

1. Ensuring lifelong access for every citizen to opportunities to improve and maintain skills.
2. Increasing the flexibility of formal education, building a flexible and open system of learning pathways and an effective adult education system.
3. Increasing access to learning opportunities and individualised support for learners.
4. Increasing inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination and applying participatory and innovative solutions with the involvement of Lifelong Learning actors.
5. Building evidence by collecting data and conducting research with a focus on LL for informed decision making and skills system management (tracking graduates, collecting data on VD participants, analysing barriers).

In Hungary, the concept of lifelong learning itself is set out in the document "Strategy for the Long-term Development of Hungarian Public Education" (Harangi, 2003), which includes concepts for public education and adult education. Such concepts include, for example, the adaptation of the education system to the principles of lifelong learning and the creation of opportunities for learning outside the formal learning environment. At the heart of the strategy itself is the creation and provision of lifelong skills and competence development and the creation and dissemination of the necessary opportunities and demand for it. The framework strategy addresses the following themes:

- lifelong learning;
- increasing adaptation to the needs of the learner;
- stimulating motivation to learn, providing second chances;
- developing skills and competences appropriate to needs and age-related characteristics;
- seeking a balance between learning opportunities and learning needs;
- promoting a new learning and innovative pedagogical culture.

The overarching objectives of the framework strategy are therefore to increase participation in lifelong learning by improving access, to strengthen the principles of public education and adult learning, and to develop transparent and recognised learning outcomes and values (European Commission, 2022). Main functions according to the European Commission (2022):

1. Supporting the acquisition of initial education/training and/or vocational qualifications that are necessary for the individual's career.)
2. Support for the acquisition of continuing vocational training and/or higher vocational qualifications (continuing vocational training).
3. Training for employment. This includes retraining and further training.
4. Supplementary training to support the effectiveness of vocational training, job search, more effective work.

Institutions competent to provide the teachers continuing professional development

In Slovakia, the teachers continuing professional development is organised with the approval of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Training courses, with the exception of adaptation training, must be accredited. The implementation of training requires the approval of the Ministry, which must approve the specific training programme. The law requires that the application for a continuing training programme or a module thereof must be submitted in writing to the Minister of Education and that

approval may be obtained for a period of 5 years (Zákon č. 138/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov).

The following institutions are competent to accredit and implement training courses: the state institution designated for this purpose by the state - an organisation established by the Ministry to ensure and fulfil the necessary tasks in the field of continuous training (until 2022 MPC - Methodological and Pedagogical Centre, from summer 2022 NIVAM - National Institute of Education and Youth), universities and colleges, church or religious associations, institutions for continuing education: civil organisations and other legal entities - whose object of business includes training activities.

In Hungary, the Government Decree 277/1997 specifies the conditions for the regulation of the programme of teacher professional development determines the validity, content and requirements of the programme, approved by the Education Office. The Education Office keeps a register of those authorised to organise teacher professional development courses. The organisers shall be required to draw up a list of approved training programmes. Among the bodies authorised to organise continuing training are colleges, universities, college and university departments, and the pedagogical training centres of the Education Office, with 15 seats. The Office decides on the eligibility to organise continuing training and on the granting of the necessary authorisation to establish such training on the basis of a proposal from the Accreditation Board for Continuing Teacher Education (277/1997. (XII. 22.) Korm. rendelet a pedagógus-továbbképzésről, a pedagógus-szakvizsgáról, valamint a továbbképzésben részt vevők juttatásairól és kedvezményeiről).

Teacher career profiles

In both countries, they play an important role in the completion of a course, as certain courses require a qualification in a particular career path.

In Slovakia, the law provides for the following classification:

- Beginning teacher: on the first day of employment (within 5 days), the teacher starts adaptation training under the guidance of a mentor teacher. The adaptation training will normally last for one year, up to a maximum of two years. It ends with a presentation and a final interview in front of a 3-member panel.
- Independent teacher: on completion of the adaptation training, the teacher becomes an independent teacher.
- First teacher with attestation: the first attestation can be completed after five years of teaching practice. It is completed by a portfolio defence and an examination.
- Second attestation: the second attestation may be obtained after a further five years of professional practice. It concludes with the defence of a portfolio and an examination. The second attestation is equivalent to the award of a third degree (PhD) for the purposes of classification in the pathways (not otherwise) (Zákon č.138/2019 o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov).

In Hungary, the available career paths for teachers are as follows:

- Trainee I: teachers with less than two years' professional experience. The teacher must have a 'pass' mark in a qualification examination in order to progress to the Teacher I level. The qualification is based on the analysis and evaluation of two sessions and an assessment of the teacher's portfolio.
- Teacher I: A rating obtained in the traineeship examination.
- Teacher II: teachers who have nine years' experience in teacher I and have passed the qualifying examination may enter this category. The assessment includes a portfolio of previous professional experience, a portfolio defence, an

evaluation of a teaching session, an institutional self-evaluation, a national pedagogical-professional audit, a summative evaluation.

- Master teacher: after six years of professional experience at the level of teacher II and a successful teacher qualification examination, a teacher may be placed in this category. The Master teacher is involved in the professional management of the trainee teacher, in various research and development activities, in the organisation of in-service training, and in the preparation of the trainee teacher for national or international academic, professional, artistic and sporting competitions.
- Research teacher: to enter this category, a research degree in a field related to the education and professional qualifications, a university degree (Dr. univ.), regular professional publications and fourteen years of professional experience are required (Simonics, 2016).

Types of the teacher professional development

In Slovakia, the following types of teacher professional development are distinguished:

- qualification training to obtain a new pedagogical qualification (qualification), or to obtain a (special) teacher qualification or to extend your professional qualification,
- management training, aimed at acquiring the competences needed to carry out management activities,
- specialisation training to prepare for specialised teaching activities,
- adaptation training (for beginner teachers), aimed at acquiring the professional competences needed to become an independent teacher,
- pre-accession training, which aims to acquire the professional competences necessary to move to a higher career: preparing the teacher for the 1st attestation (Note: attestation = Hungarian qualifying examination),
- innovation training, aimed at improving, extending, deepening, innovating and renewing professional competences,
- updating training aimed at maintaining, preserving and updating existing professional competences (knowledge, skills, abilities). A certain number of hours per year are compulsory. Minimum scope defined by law. (Zákon č. 138/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov, 2019).

In Hungary, the Government Decree 277/1997 requires the Education Office to maintain an online register of teacher training courses. The lists are maintained through the online platform PedAkked (Pedagogical Accreditation System for Continuing Education and Training), which contains a list of available continuing education and training courses for teachers, as well as other documents and lists related to the use of the system. The Decree specifies how and in what form the weekly and other continuing training courses can be completed (277/1997. (XII. 22.) Korm. rendelet a pedagógus-továbbképzésről, a pedagógus-szakvizsgáról, valamint a továbbképzésben részt vevők juttatásairól és kedvezményeiről). Methods of completing teachers professional development:

- accredited training courses (most often 30-120 hours, less often more),),
- continuing vocational training leading to a specialised diploma or diploma equivalent to a specialised diploma,
- training to obtain an additional qualification (e.g. a teacher's diploma for a new profession, and higher or tertiary-level training announced by the Register of Occupations replacing the National Training Register,
- additional courses recognised by the Regulation (e.g. ECDL, language training abroad).

Rights and obligations of teachers

In Slovakia, Article 3 of the Law 138/2019 gives all teachers the right to in-service training. As of 2019, Article 4 obliges them to maintain and annually update their professional knowledge by attending updating training courses (Zákon č. 138/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov).

Given the constant changes and innovations in the school sector, it is essential that teachers participate in in-service training to meet these obligations. Teachers' professional development is governed by the institution's professional development plan. This four-year plan is drawn up by the Director of the institution. The sources of the professional development plan are: the competency profile or professional standard of the school staff (available on the Ministry's website), the strategic plan or concept (action plan, development plan) of the school or school establishment, the training expectations of the teaching staff (based on the law), the results of the staff evaluation, the analysis of their personal professional development plan and their training needs. As stated by Pupíková (2020), teachers' personal development plans are prepared for one year, including self-training and planned professional development.

In Hungary, Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education provides, among other things, for the compulsory participation of teachers in seven-yearly in-service training and the introduction of a professional examination. The Act stipulates that it is the fundamental duty of teachers to participate in continuing education (2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről). Teachers are obliged to participate in the required continuing education and have the fundamental right to improve their professional knowledge and skills by attending continuing education. The obligation to undergo continuing training can only be fulfilled by attending training courses whose programme has been approved by the Education Office. The further training obligations of teachers are laid down in the continuing training programmes drawn up by the institutions and approved by the teaching staff concerned.

The Government Decree 277/1997 (XII. 22.) on teacher training, the teacher qualification examination and the allowances and benefits of participants in continuing education details the professional development obligations of teachers in Hungary. The decree defines two basic forms of teacher training: compulsory in-service training every seven years and in-service training in preparation for the teacher's professional examination.

The Regulation stipulates that, after obtaining a diploma entitling a teacher to teach, he or she must undergo in-service training every seven years until the age of 55. If he/she has not voluntarily undergone in-service training during the seven-year period, he/she must attend a compulsory refresher course. Of course, teachers can take part in more than one such course. The Regulation also lists the fields and types of training which are covered by the system of seven-yearly in-service training, and the learning requirements which must be met. It also stipulates that the training must involve at least 120 hours of classroom training. One lesson lasts 45 minutes (277/1997. (XII. 22.) Korm. rendelet a pedagógus-továbbképzésről, a pedagógus-szakvizsgáról, valamint a továbbképzésben részt vevők juttatásairól és kedvezményeiről).

The professional development obligation may be fulfilled as follows:

- 30-60-120 hours accredited teacher training programme,
- teacher qualification,
- a higher education course (bachelor's, master's or specialised further education, partial knowledge course) giving access to a teaching profession;
- participation in complex development projects, in cooperation with the teaching staff, which can be measured in terms of pupil outcomes;

- training for ICT development,
- foreign language training (Education Office - Options for fulfilling the obligation to undergo continuing training, 2012).

Up to 25% of the continuing education obligation can be fulfilled through participation in a research fellowship programme, professional support for a trainee, self-training, at least 5 but no more than 30 hours of non-accredited continuing education, and advisory activities for the teaching community (Pedagógus továbbképzések, 2020).

The detailed conditions for in-service teacher training are also set out in the Government Decree. It stipulates that the heads of the institutions must draw up a five-year in-service training programme, which is prepared on the basis of a joint decision of the pedagogical programme and the teaching staff, and the maintenance authority then decides whether to approve the in-service training programme.

The Decree also specifies the conditions for the organisation and monitoring of continuing training, the criteria for the evaluation of programmes, and the details of the teacher qualification examination. The teacher qualification examination is a prerequisite for teachers to become Master teachers. Further conditions for progression to a higher grade are the completion of the required length of professional practice and the completion of a teaching portfolio. The Master Teacher qualification complements and deepens the knowledge, skills, competences and abilities acquired during university/college education. Preparation for the teacher qualification examination is possible within the framework of specific further training courses, which can only be organised by higher education institutions.

Funding of professional development

In Slovakia, training is mostly self-financed, but there are also training courses funded by the European Union or other projects. Courses organised by civil organisations and private institutions are usually paid, while most of the training organised by the Ministry is free of charge.

The training courses indicated in the institution's professional development plan are usually financed by the provider, as are updating and adaptation courses and some qualification courses. At present, the costs of the qualification training, the basic module of the management training and the pre-accession training are usually reimbursed by the teaching staff. Additional training may be reimbursed by the organiser itself, the EU, the maintainer or other physical persons, according to the criteria specified (Zákon č. 138/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov). However, if the teacher has enrolled in a leadership training course as described in the professional development plan with the approval of the teacher's supervisor, he or she does not have to pay the course fee.

In Hungary, the financial basis for teacher training should be planned in the funding sub-programme. If the in-service training takes place within the framework of the public service provision of public education, the in-service training is free of charge. The costs are borne by the central budget, the maintaining authority and the employer. Support for in-service training planned under the funding sub-programme and for in-service training beyond that required for teacher certification may not exceed eighty per cent of the costs. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, such as reimbursement from private individuals or from the maintainers' own resources or from funds obtained through a call for proposals (A pedagógus-továbbképzéssel kapcsolatos szabályok módosításai, 2014).

Financial allowances based on participation in professional development

In Slovakia, up to 12% of the basic salary is paid as a salary supplement for further training, 6% for further training, 12% for the state language examination and 3-3% for specialisation and innovation training. The salary supplement is valid for seven years (Zákon č. 138/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch a odborných zamestnancoch a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov). Of course, if a teacher moves up from one career to another, his or her salary grade changes. This is conditional on completion of adaptation training or attestation.

In Hungary, there is no financial reward for completing professional development (326/2013. (VIII. 30.) Korm. rendelet a pedagógusok előmeneteli rendszeréről és a közalkalmazottak jogállásáról szóló 1992. évi XXXIII. törvény köznevelési intézményekben történő végrehajtásáról). The only change in salary is when a teacher moves up the career ladder. This can be achieved by completing the following activities: obtaining a school-leaving qualification, a state-recognised vocational qualification, a vocational qualification, a doctorate directly related to the performance of the work of an educator or teacher, a scientific degree, an academic degree, membership of an academy, professional practice, publication activity, passing a qualifying examination.

4 Conclusion

On the basis of the facts presented so far, which have focused on the examination of the professional development systems of teachers in the two countries on the basis of the legislation in force, and in order to make the differences and parallels between the two systems more transparent, we have summarised in a table the main features - similarities and differences - that are relevant (see. Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of the continuing education system in Slovakia and Hungary on the basis of the legislation in force

Viewpoints	
Nature of legislation: law and government decree	
Slovakia	✓
Hungary	✓
Consistency with the concept of lifelong learning	
Slovakia	✓
Hungary	✓
Institutions competent to provide the teachers continuing professional development	
Slovakia	National Institute of Education and Youth, universities and colleges, church or religious associations, institutions for continuing education: civil organisations and other legal entities - whose object of business includes training activities
Hungary	State institutions, colleges and universities, other organisations
Teacher career profiles	
Slovakia	Similar names, but there are some differences in the expression and number of career positions (SK: 4; HU: 5), but the breakdown itself and the content of each career position are almost identical. The number of mandatory years between the following career paths differs significantly (longer periods in Hungary).
Hungary	
Types of the teacher professional development	
Slovakia	detailed breakdown
Hungary	indication of content and functional options
Rights and obligations of teachers	

Slovakia	Based on a 4-year institutional in-service training plan and the teacher's annual staff training plan; mandatory annual updating training for a given number of hours (currently 10 hours per year, from 2023 20 hours per year for non-accredited training)
Hungary	Compulsory weekly training (120 hours of accredited training) + on the basis of institutional training programmes
Funding of professional development	
Slovakia	free of charge and reimbursement; only the conditions differ
Hungary	
Financial allowances based on participation in professional development	
Slovakia	salary supplement (min 3%, max 12%) only for certain types of accredited training
Hungary	no allowance

From the above table we can see that the professional development of teachers in the Slovak Republic and Hungary is enshrined in legislatively binding documents - laws and decrees. These documents lay down the conditions, requirements, content, scope and organisation of teacher training. We would like to remind you that both training systems can only propose or recognise accredited training (the exception in Slovakia is updating training, which is the responsibility of the institution or provider). In contrast, while in Hungary a long-standing law on continuing training is being amended, in Slovakia several new laws and regulations have been in force for the last 15 years. At institutional level, both countries have a longer-term training plan - Professional development plan for teaching staff, which is four years in Slovakia and five years in Hungary. On the basis of this, the school director in Slovakia has to issue an annual training plan for pedagogical staff.

Based on our analysis, it is evident that the legislative documents on teachers' professional development in both countries compared respect and build on the concept of lifelong learning. It can be concluded that both education systems address the teacher career model in the context of the lifelong learning strategy, which outlines the career opportunities for teachers.

Although the names of the career paths are different, parallels and similarities in their nature were found. Although there are one more (5) career paths in Hungary than in Slovakia, where the law specifies 4. In both countries, teachers start as trainee teachers, from which they can move to a teaching career after a professional qualification. The first stage is called adaptation training in Slovakia and then the person moves to an independent teaching career. Currently, in Slovakia, it is possible to move up to a higher level after a specified length of professional experience (this was not the case until 2019), similarly to Hungary, but the time allowed differs between the two countries (in Hungary, the length of the training required to move up to a particular level is much longer: 2-9-6 years, while in Slovakia it is 1-5-5 years).

Already in Slovakia, the current law requires teachers to prepare a portfolio of their professional achievements, similar to Hungary. In Slovakia, before 2019, a completely different system was in place: the number of credits obtained for the training (60 credits or 30 credits and completion of preparatory training for the attestation) could be redeemed for the attestation, which consisted of an assessment of the work written and an examination.

The table shows that the education laws of both countries provide that teachers have both the right and the obligation to train themselves. However, in terms of in-service training, we found more significant differences between the two countries. In Hungary it is compulsory for teachers to undergo a seven-yearly in-service training by completing accredited course(s), while in Slovakia this is set out in a completely different form: annual

updating training (non-accredited) is compulsory for a certain number of hours, and management training for head teachers (accredited). The difference is also that the Slovak legislation outlines in detail the types of continuing training - qualification training, management training, specialisation training, adaptation training, pre-accession training, innovation training, updating training, whereas the Hungarian regulation only outlines the possibilities of continuing training in terms of content and function - accredited continuing training, continuing vocational training leading to a vocational examination or a diploma equivalent to a vocational examination, training for the acquisition of further qualifications, additional courses approved by the regulation.

There are no significant national differences in terms of providers of teacher professional development. In both countries, universities, colleges and other institutions can be providers, subject to accreditation.

However, as mentioned above, in Slovakia, updating training is organised as a simple training programme from 2019 onwards, which does not need to be accredited. It is organised by the employer or the school and is a valid, directly binding form of professional development for teachers.

We found a significant difference in the cash allowances for professional development, as while in Hungary there is no allowance for completing, in Slovakia there is a payment supplement for completing certain types of professional development.

The above shows that there are some differences in the teacher professional development systems of the compared countries. We consider the most significant differences to be in the obligation for teachers to participate in training and the subsequent financial remuneration. On the positive side, we perceive the fact that in Slovakia teachers are obliged to participate in updating training at least once a year. We dare to say that in Hungary, where teachers are obliged to attend in-service training once every seven years, it is not sufficient due to the constantly changing cultural and social conditions, the development of science and technology and the related development of educational constructs.

The positive aspect of the Slovak system compared to the Hungarian one is also in the financial remuneration of teachers. Financial remuneration is perceived as a certain motivational factor that increases teachers' willingness to participate in various forms of further education, which is also confirmed by the research of Pisonova (2017).

In conclusion, we would like to suggest that the results of our research can be an inspiring framework for developing the system of teacher professional development in the compared countries. At the same time, our results are useful and necessary for colleges and universities that cover the education of future teachers on the territory of the Slovak Republic. The results may be of particular importance for colleges and universities that provide undergraduate training for future teachers who are citizens of Hungary or students who will pursue the teaching in Hungary.

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