

# The Hungarian educational system and the implementation of the ISCED-97

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## 1 Introduction

The Hungarian educational system went through dramatic changes during the 1990s in consequence of the social, economic and political transformations, which took place during this period. The most important element of the process was the educational expansion, which occurred under the conditions of a sizeable decrease in the population aged 3–22 (see Table A1). Another crucial structural change was the fall of government expenditures on education and the radical reform of administrative procedures. The re-organisation of higher education (in line with the Bologna process) and the establishment of the various adult education programmes are further features of the Hungarian learning environment. The educational system became more decentralized with a more complex institutional system both vertically and horizontally.

## 2 Description of the national educational system

### 2.1 Education under socialism

The socialist educational system had three distinctive levels. Primary education started at the age of 6. At least 1 year in Kindergarten was required before primary education. Primary education was compulsory until the age of 14, i.e. primary education consisted of 8 grades. In secondary education, pupils had three options. The most popular secondary educational institution was the apprentice school which consisted of 2–3 years. Here pupils did not receive ‘maturity’ (secondary school diploma), so they were not eligible to continue their studies at tertiary level, but apprentice school provided a direct access to the labour market. The second most common choice was vocational secondary school, which had 4 grades and ended with a ‘maturity’ exam. The curriculum of this type of school was rather practical than theoretical, more applicable for a direct labour market entry. Vocational apprentice schools were introduced in 1961 and secondary vocational schools were created in 1976. The third possibility was the gymnasium or academic secondary school. This school had a four-year programme of a more general kind and ended with a ‘maturity’ exam as well. Students finishing this kind of school more frequently continued in higher education. The enrolment rate in tertiary education

was relatively low under socialism. Young adults going to tertiary education had two options. The more popular and more vocational-oriented option was the college, which took 3 years. The other option was the university with a 4–6 years curriculum (see also Table 1).

The most dramatic change in the educational expansion during the four decades of socialism was observable among people with primary and lower secondary education: school attendance at these levels of education went up to 95%. This dramatic increase spread over to secondary education in the second half of the socialist era, but less so for the tertiary level. Another important change was the sharp increase of female participation rates in educational institutions and the diminishing educational difference between larger cities and smaller towns. Completion rates have also increased at every level of schooling, while gender differences declined (see also Andorka and Harcsa, 1992; Halász and Lannert, 1996).

## 2.2 Education after socialism<sup>1</sup>

After 1989, the participation in pre-primary education (Kindergarten) became more optional, except in its final year (at age 5), when it is compulsory. A declaration of school-readiness is required for admission to primary school. Schools are obliged to accept all pupils who live within a defined area of the school (*iskolakörzet*); however parents may seek admission for their children at any institution. Most pupils attend public-sector schools which are administered and organized by the local public authorities (municipalities).<sup>2</sup>

Until the early 1990s, schools followed a nationally standardized curriculum; then the system became more liberal and only the core requirements are set. Ideally, students complete the uniform core requirements of general education by the age of 14. Since students are required to study until the age of 16 (for those who began their studies in 1998, this has been extended to 18), more than 90% of them start secondary education of some sort.

In the 1990s, significant structural changes took place both at the primary and at the secondary level of schooling. The former strict boundaries of 8 years primary and 4 years secondary education disappeared. Partly as an answer to the demographic decline in the number of pupils, partly aiming at a higher standard of schooling, an increasing number of formerly four-year gymnasiums introduced six-year and eight-year programmes. Thus, the former transition age of 14 from pri-

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Halász and Lannert 2000, 2003, plus as referred.

<sup>2</sup> Administrative supervision is horizontally shared between the Ministry of Education and other ministries (Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Interior). Vertically, administrative control and responsibility is shared among central, local and institutional levels.

primary to secondary level went down to the age of 12 or even 10. These types of *six- or eight-grade high schools* were encouraged by state policies in the beginning, as system-changing (*rendszerváltó*) schools. This means that the lower secondary level (grades 5–8) of schooling became more heterogeneous, depending on the educational institution and the school programme the student attends. The *six- or eight-grade high schools* obviously see preparation for tertiary education (mainly university) as one of their primary goals. Like in other countries in Europe, Hungary also faces a decline in childbirth and there are less and less pupils in the younger cohorts at the primary level of schooling. In fact, the system-changing schools offer a special curriculum and try to fish out the best pupils, regarding talent and/or social background, from each cohort as early as possible. While at the beginning of the decade only a few of them existed, by 2004/2005 their number reached 265.<sup>3</sup>

With certain modifications, the possibilities for school continuation after completing the regular 8 years of primary education are still present: students may proceed to three different secondary school programmes. Vocational training went through significant reforms throughout the decade. Vocational school without ‘maturity’ exam became much less popular; and its former 3 years vocational programme now does not involve concrete vocational training in the first two years (in grade 9 and 10, involving students of up to 16 years of age). The acquisition of vocational training usually takes place thereafter in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of education. The role of these schools is mainly taken by the vocational training schools (*szakiskola*), which has replaced the former apprentice schools. This school does not provide ‘maturity’ exam, so students cannot continue their studies in the higher education. During the 1990s this form of education also underwent significant restructuring. From the three-year course of study, at the end of the decade the vocational training school changed to a four-year programme, in which the first 2 years (grade 9–10) are devoted to general education, while during the second 2 years pupils will be prepared for the a concrete occupation (Halász et. al, 2001). At the same time the former vocational secondary schools (*szakközépiskola*) combining general (in the first 2 years, in grade 9 and 10) and vocational (in the next 2 years, in grade 11 and 12) education are also present. But the most popular option now is the general academic grammar school (*gymnasium*). A further important change in the upper secondary level of education is that schools started to offer both general and vocational educational programmes; in many cases there are both vocational secondary and general grammar courses (classes) within the same institution. In addition, more secondary schools started to offer post-secondary programmes with a variety of fields of study for those students who could not enter tertiary education.

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<sup>3</sup> A more recent intention of the Ministry of Education is to support mostly the high schools with a six-grade curriculum because selection at age 10 is considered as too early.

Even after 1990, the Hungarian tertiary education system continued to contain college programmes with a six-semester curriculum and with stronger orientation towards practical knowledge as well as university programmes with an eight- or ten-semester curriculum and with stronger academic orientation. Under the communist era, there were plenty of small state colleges focusing only on one field of education (mostly on engineering or training of school teachers). During the last 10 years many of the small institutions were integrated into bigger universities. Nowadays Hungary has many universities where different branches can be found in different towns but they belong to the same administrative unit. Today (in 2006), national higher education comprises 18 universities and 13 colleges. In addition, there are 2 private and 5 church universities as well as 12 private and 22 church colleges. By 1 September 2006 a two-cycle degree system is supposed to be introduced everywhere which in line with the general *Bologna process*. In this system diplomas have a two-fold function and incorporate academic and vocational qualifications. Students who successfully complete non-university education courses during six semesters are awarded "*főiskolai diploma*" (BA degree). Universities and other university-level institutions can award the "*egyetemi diploma*" (MA degree) to students who successfully complete a further course with four semesters. A higher vocational qualification (*felsőfokú szakképesítés*) is awarded at the end of the second years of non-university vocational higher education to students who passed the higher professional examination (*felsőfokú szakvizsga*) (Halász et. al, 2001, see Table 1).

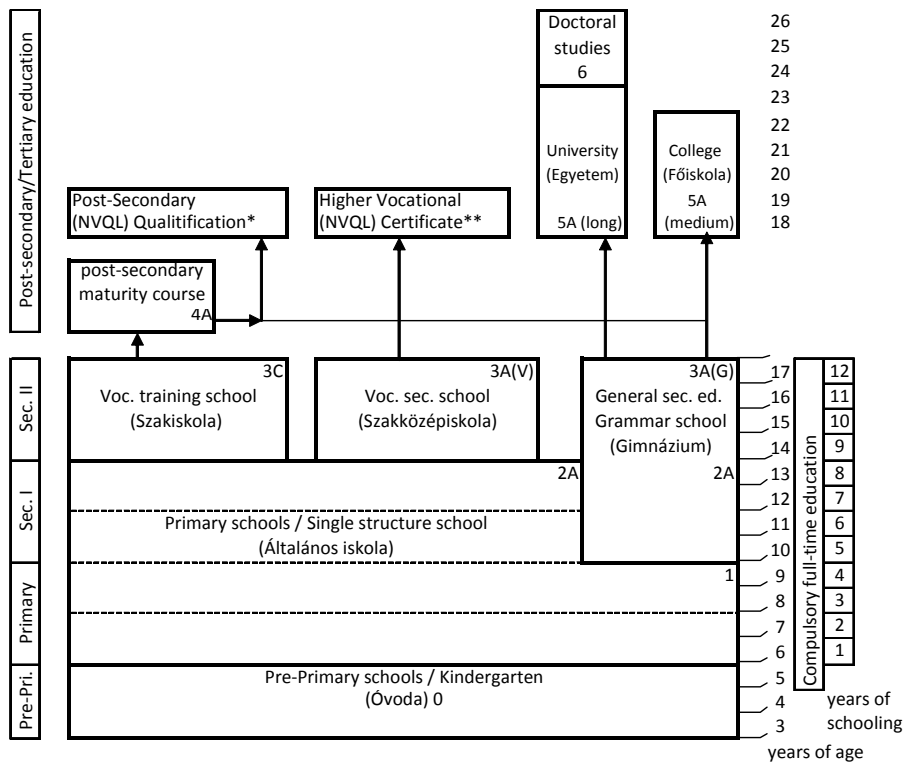
As a new phenomenon, the obligatory use of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) compatible credit system was introduced in September 2003, but several higher education institutions have already been using it since the mid-1990s. According to the rules on the introduction of the credit system, one credit corresponds to 30 hours student workload. The minimum number of credits for a college-level degree is 180, for a university-level degree is 240, for a further specialisation degree is 60, while for the doctoral degree it is 180 (*A Felsőoktatás rendszere Magyarországon*).

An important feature of changes in the educational system after 1990 is that the formerly fully public system (almost only state-run institutions with a few exceptions of catholic schools) has been replaced by a system where both ecclesiastical and other private institutions have emerged – also in the primary and secondary level of education.

The age at which compulsory full time education ends has gradually increased in the last decades. Under socialism, it was age 14, i.e. when pupils were expected to complete basic (primary) education. Later this has increased to 16 and more recently the age for the compulsory full time education became 18. This is, in fact, the age when pupils complete secondary school with a 'maturity' exam (secondary school diploma).

Over the past ten years, each area of education and training – both inside and outside the school system – has been reformed. A new legal and regulation system has been introduced and a new institutional system has been set up in the field of adult training. The National Vocational Qualification List, NVQL (*Országos Képzési Jegyzék, OKJ*) collected by the National Institute for Vocational Training (*Nemzeti Szakképzési Intézet*)<sup>4</sup> offers hundreds of accredited programmes with wide range of entry requirements. About 10% of the NVQL programmes are based on higher edu-

**Figure 1. The current Hungarian educational system from pre-primary to tertiary education**



\* Nem Felsőfokú (OKJ) Szakképesítés (not accredited vocational higher education)

\*\*Felsőfokú (OKJ) Szakképesítés (accredited vocational higher education)

<sup>4</sup> “In July 2002 the Ministry set up the National Institute for Adult Education, which has the task to promote the professional and methodological development of training activities, co-ordinate research and services, and manage the financing of programmes through tenders invited by the Ministry. The Institute operates the Secretariat of the Board of Adult Training Accreditation.” (Ministry of Employment and Labour, 2004)

**Table 1. Description of the Hungarian education system**

Compulsory full-time education			
Under socialism, until age of 14		After mid-1990s, until age of 16	
Educational system	Participation by age	Educational system	Participation by age
Pre-primary ( <i>óvoda</i> ) – one preparatory year is compulsory	age 5–6/7	Pre-primary <i>óvoda</i> – one preparatory year is compulsory (ISCED 0)	age 5–6/7
Primary school ( <i>általános iskola</i> )	age 6/7–14	Primary school ( <i>általános iskola</i> ); grades 1–4: ISCED 1; grades 5–8: 2A	age 6/7–14
Secondary grammar schools ( <i>Gimnázium</i> )	age 14/ 15–18/19	Secondary grammar schools ( <i>Gimnázium</i> ): Upper secondary academic track but sometimes also lower secondary education; grades 5–8: ISCED 2A; grades 9–12: 3A(G)	age 10/12/ 14–18/19
Vocational secondary school ( <i>szakközépiskola</i> )	age 14/ 15–18/19	Vocational secondary school ( <i>szakközépiskola</i> ): ISCED 3A(V)	age 14–18/19 (usually 4 years)
Apprentice school ( <i>szakmunkásképző iskola</i> )	age 14/15–17	Vocational training school ( <i>szakiskola</i> ): <sup>a</sup> ISCED 3C	age 14–18 years (2+2 years)
—	—	Post secondary maturity course ( <i>szakiskolai érettségi</i> ): ISCED 4A	age 18 – 19/ 20 (1–2 years)
—	—	Post secondary vocational course ( <i>szakiskola</i> ): <sup>b</sup> ISCED 4C	age 18–19/20 (1–2 years)
—	—	Higher vocational qualification ( <i>Felsőfokú szakképesítés</i> ): ISCED 5B	age 18–19/20 (1–2 years)
College ( <i>Főiskola</i> )	age 18–21	College ( <i>Főiskola</i> ): ISCED 5A (medium)	age 18/19–21
University ( <i>Egyetem</i> )	age 18/19–23	University ( <i>Egyetem</i> ): ISCED 5A (long)	age 18/19– (usually 5 years)
PhD, DLA	age 23–	PhD, DLA: ISCED 6	age 23– (usually 3–6 years)

Notes: The ISCED assignment is for enrolment and not attainment in the whole table.

<sup>a</sup> Vocational training school (*Szakiskola*) has replaced the apprentice school (*Szakmunkásképző*) in the 1990s. It consists of 2 years general and 2 years vocational courses.

<sup>b</sup> Supplementary, post-secondary vocational course of 1 or 2 years organized by Vocational training school (*Szakiskola*).

Source: Education system after mid-1990's (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2006).

cation diploma, but the majority of the programmes are based on basic education school certificate or a 'maturity' exam.<sup>5</sup> The NVQL covers more than 400 vocational certificates and 440 additional complementary certificates. The aim of the list was to provide a permanent training required by the market economy and promoting vocational programmes among people who have not completed basic education. As a result of this change, the Hungarian education system reinforces the connection between general and vocational education programmes, and also allows horizontal movement of students between these types of programmes.

### 3 The problems of the national educational classification and the ISCED-97

In this section the Hungarian national educational classification is compared to the ISCED-97. For this purpose, we use the data provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO). The Office carries out the (quarterly) LFS in Hungary and the present data is taken from 2004 (combined data from all four quarters) and refers to the population aged 25–64. Both men and women are included in the data. From the N of cases (Total = 5 530 238), we know that frequencies were calculated on weighted data.<sup>6</sup>

The Hungarian national classification and the ISCED-97 do not seem to be very far from each other. Table 2, where absolute figures are presented, indicates that most of the cases are on or close to the 'diagonal'. However, there are few problems to be raised at first sight.

It is clear from the table that HCSO tries to follow the official 'rule' of recoding into the ISCED-97. They make Hungarian category 1 to be equal to ISCED 1, while the Hungarian category label speaks about less than 8 classes and this can be anything between 0 and 7. This category thus aggregates ISCED 0 and ISCED 1. This is not completely in line with the ISCED-97 idea, in fact the HCSO data do not differentiate properly below ISCED 2. It should be ISCED 0 if less than 4 and ISCED 1 if 5–7 years of education.

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<sup>5</sup> Every vocational programme has an identification number which consists of 15 characters. The first two characters indicate the minimum entrance requirement. If the first two digits are 21, this indicates that the requirement is less than 8 grades of primary school; 31 indicates that it is 8 grades of primary school; 33 indicates the 10th grade of general secondary school; 51 indicates 12th grades of general secondary school; 52, 54 or 55 indicates that the requirement is maturity exam; 61 indicates that the requirement is a tertiary degree. In fact, the ISCED level is determined for all items in the NVQL.

<sup>6</sup> Weights applied by the HCSO are always prepared in the way that original Ns are weighted up to the real population size.

**Table 2. Number of persons aged 25–64 with the highest educational level by Hungarian national classification and ISCED-97**

National classification	ISCED-97							
	1	2	3C	3A	4A	5B	5A	6
1. Less than 8 primary ( <i>általánosanál kevesebb</i> )	113,396	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. 8 grades without vocational certification ( <i>8 általános szakképesítés nélkül</i> )	0	1,189,593	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. 8 grades with vocational certification ( <i>8 általános szakképesítéssel</i> )	0	60,211	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Vocational school ( <i>Szakképző/szakisola</i> )	0	0	1,592,623	0	0	0	0	0
5. Secondary general school ( <i>gimnázium</i> )	0	0	0	459,775	0	0	0	0
6. Secondary vocational schools ( <i>szakközépiskola</i> )	0	0	0	1,092,872	95,525	0	0	0
7. Accredited higher vocational degree ( <i>Akkreditált felsőfokú végzettség</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	9,436	0	0
8. College degree ( <i>Főiskola</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	542,465	0
9. University degree ( <i>Egyetem</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	357,705	0
10. Phd., DLA degree ( <i>Doktori</i> )	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16,639
Total	113,396	1,249,804	1,592,623	1,552,647	95,525	9,436	900,170	16,639

Source: HCSO: LFS survey, 2004.

Hungarian categories 2 and 3 are combined into ISCED 2 – these individuals obviously have completed compulsory education (and are eligible for the upper secondary level) or some vocational training (and have direct access to the labour market) but without any ‘maturity’ diploma (upper secondary school exam). In fact, there are very few cases in category 3 and we do not know exactly what kind of ‘vocational certificate’ puts individuals into this category and not into category 4 – which also a) means vocational training, b) has no ‘maturity’ exam and access to secondary level of education, c) provides direct access to the labour market. And Hungarian category 4 goes completely into ISCED 3C – while ISCED 2 is not differentiated. One possibility is that these vocational certificates are at a lower level as they do not require the completion of the 8 grade primary school, and are thus classified as ISCED 2.



It seems that it is difficult to distinguish between ISCED 2C and ISCED 3C on the ground of the Hungarian classification. Some more information, additional variable on vocational training/school is necessary to make a distinction. The best hint for this is whether completed primary level of schooling is a requirement or not: If no, it would be ISCED 2, if yes, it would be 3C. A similar problem appears for category 6. This is secondary vocational school, it ends with 'maturity' exam, makes eligible to tertiary education, but also provides access to the labour market, and this category is divided into two parts according to the ISCED-97: ISCED 3A (vocational) and ISCED 4A. It is not clear what the base of this separation (of 95 525 individuals) is; again HCSO may use some additional information on vocational qualification outside of the classification. In the OECD mappings, ISCED 4A refers to a different way of achieving a maturity diploma, namely post-secondary maturity courses for 3C graduates (second chance maturity). The national classification thus probably puts these cases together with people who completed *matura* in a vocational school. Finally, at the secondary level, category 5 (gymnasium) goes completely into ISCED 3A (general).

In fact, ISCED 3 covers a too heterogeneous population with huge differences according to the prospective labour market careers. Pupils with vocational certification (ISCED 3C) cannot enter higher education; they have to enter the labour market (or enrol in a lengthy post-secondary maturity course). Students in academic or vocational secondary school take a 'maturity' exam, which is an entry requirement to higher education. However, pupils with academic 'maturity' exam who do not have any vocational certificate may have difficulties in the labour market and then frequently acquire some NVQL certification. People having NVQL certification could end up either in category ISCED 2C, ISCED 3C, ISCED 4C or ISCED 5B, depending on the entrance requirements of the programme (UNESCO, 1997). In our opinion it is worth paying more attention to category ISCED 4 which is under-utilized by the HCSO in the Hungarian context. ISCED 4C would be suitable for the post-secondary accredited education (NVQL courses) which have been extended over the last decade and caused a lot of difficulties of the statistical data collections and classifications.

If they are not able to enter a university or college, Hungarian youngsters with academic 'maturity' exam but without any vocational qualification often go to accredited adult education programmes. According to the logic of the ISCED-97, these people go into ISCED 5B because they get a lower level of education than college or university programmes provide. However, in Hungary the college and university programmes also differ a lot: colleges offer three-year vocational-oriented programmes, universities offer five-year theory-oriented programmes. These differences are crucial, but – following the ISCED-97 rule – both college and university graduates end up in ISCED 5A in Table 2. It is therefore crucial that the distinction between tertiary programmes of different durations and of different orientation in the curriculum (here "medium" and more vocational oriented for College degrees

and “long” and more academic oriented for university degrees), as included in the ISCED-97 framework, is actually used in statistical reporting and analyses.

A summary of the (problems of) fit of the Hungarian classification and the ISCED-97 is provided in Table 3 as ‘officially’ described.

**Table 3. The (problems in the) fit between the ISCED-97 and the Hungarian system of education**

ISCED	Hungarian classification
0	Pre-primary education (3 years) ( <i>Óvoda</i> )
1	Primary school, uncompleted (in principle 1–4 grades, in practice up to 7 grades) Primary school, special education, uncompleted (in principle 1–4 grades, in practice up to 7 grades)
2A	Primary school, completed (in principle 5–8 grades) in eight-year primary school programme or six-year/eight-year secondary school programmes General school upper level in part-time ( <i>Felnőttek általános iskolája, 8 évfolyam</i> ) Basic-lower secondary education with art/music pre-vocational programmes ( <i>Művészeti általános iskola</i> )
2B	Second chance programmes for late matures preparing for Level 3 education ( <i>Felzárkóztató általános iskola</i> )
2C	Vocational programmes requiring less than 10 years of completed general education. NVQL training in programmes that do not require basic education. ( <i>Szakiskola alapfokú iskolai végzettség nélküli szakmákra</i> ) Special education for pupils with special health problems ( <i>Speciális gyógypedagógiai iskola</i> )
3C	Vocational school with vocational certificate. Vocational programmes preparing for NVQL examination where entry requirement is the completion of basic education Basic education programmes in vocational school, grade 9–10 ( <i>Szakiskola általánosan képző 9–10. évfolyam</i> ) Vocational programmes preparing for NVQL examination, ending with NVQL vocational certificate ( <i>Szakiskolai szakképző évfolyamok és programok</i> ) <i>The labour market value of these certificates is not equal to that of the secondary vocational school, so 3C should not be aggregated with ISCED 3A.</i>
3A	Grammar school, 9–12 grades. Academic secondary school ( <i>Gimnázium 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) Bilingual upper secondary school, 9–13 grades ( <i>Kéttannyelvű gimnázium/szakközépiskola 9–13 évfolyam</i> ) Secondary vocational school – premature stage, 9–12 grades ( <i>Szakközépiskola 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) Upper secondary education with art/music, 9–13 grades ( <i>Művészeti szakközépiskola 9–13 évfolyam</i> ) Upper secondary part-time programmes, pre-mature courses for adults, 9–12 grades ( <i>Felnőttek gimnáziuma 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) All programmes provide a certificate from a ‘maturity’ examination

**Table 3. The (problems in the) fit between the ISCED-97 and the Hungarian system of education (continued)**

ISCED	Hungarian classification
3B	Upper vocational secondary part-time programmes, 9–12 grades <i>(Felnőttek szakközépiskolája 9–12 évfolyam)</i>
4C	Post-secondary vocational programmes, full-time, in NVQL programmes <i>(Szakképző évfolyamok és programok érettségire épülő OKJ szakmákban)</i> Post-secondary Vocational programmes part-time, in NVQL programmes <i>(Szakképző évfolyamok és programok érettségire épülő OKJ szakmákban)</i>
4A	General secondary programme for vocational graduates. The programme provides a certificate based on ‘maturity’ examination <i>(Szakmunkások érettségire felkészítő középiskolája).</i>
5B	Post-secondary vocational programme accredited by the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (courses by NVQL) <i>(Akkreditált OKJ iskolai rendszerű felsőfokú szakképzés)</i> Vocational programmes with an entrance requirement of Level 5 qualifications <i>(Szakképzés felsőfokú végzettséget igénylő OKJ szakmákra)</i>
5A	Colleges and universities – <i>combined disregarding hierarchical differences</i>
6	PhD; DLA

Note: Problematic points added by the authors and highlighted in italics.

Source: Education system after mid-1990’s (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2006).

#### 4 A comparison of three different versions of ISCED

In this section, we formally compare three versions of the ISCED classification: two of them are based on the Hungarian LFS data from 2004 (the HU\_ISCEDA is calculated by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, EU\_ISCED uses the EU-LFS-data provided by EUROSTAT), and the third scheme (HU\_ISCEDB) applies the data of the first wave of the Demographic Panel Survey carried out by the Hungarian Demographic Institute in 2001 and 2002. All samples cover the 25–64 years-old population. The EU\_ISCED distribution rests on unweighted data, unlike the Hungarian ones. In order to improve comparability, we added together the quarterly figures (absolute numbers) from EU\_ISCED 2004 tables for each ISCED category and calculated the relative frequencies (practically we produced the weighted means). The results are displayed in the Table 4.

The distributions are very similar to each other, with the exceptions of ISCED 2 and ISCED 5A, where there are quite substantial differences between the two HU\_ISCED and the EU\_ISCED classifications. The proportion of people having ISCED 2 qualification is higher in the EU\_ISCED classification than in Hungarian ones, while the proportion of people in ISCED 5A is higher in the HU\_ISCED classifications. We

do not know the exact cause of these discrepancies. In addition, although we had doubts about the content of ISCED 2 in the Hungarian classification and we also criticized the content of ISCED 5A (combining both college and university), the deviations can hardly be explained by these problems – especially because the ‘neighbouring’ categories (ISCED 1, ISCED 3C or ISCED 5B) do not deviate in the two classifications.

**Table 4. Proportion of people (aged 25–64) in the different ISCED categories, 2004 (in per cent)**

	1	2	3C	3A	4C	5B	5A	6	TOTAL
EU_ISCED	2.6	25.4	29.5	28.2	1.6	0.2	12,2	0,2	100
HU_ISCEDA	2.0	22.6	28.8	28.0	1.7	0.2	16,3	0,3	100
HU_ISCEDB	2.9	21.0	29.4	28.1	2.5		16.1		100

## 5 Proposed changes of the application of the ISCED-97 to Hungarian data

In this last section, we summarize the proposed changes in the ISCED-97 classification – also in line with the problems of the coding practices related to the Hungarian educational system. The proposal is summarised in Table 5 where the left column shows the ‘official code’, while the right column includes the suggested ‘optimal codes’.

We have a problem with coding the Hungarian classification into ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 and this is mainly because the Hungarian classification itself does not differentiate very well. When the classification makes a difference only between completed (8 grades) and uncompleted (0–7 grades) of primary schooling, the distinction between ISCED 0 and 1 cannot be made properly. It would be helpful to know how many years of education a respondent with less than 8 years of schooling had, or whether the respondent attended a primary school with an eight-grade curriculum or moved after the 4<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade to a system-changing high school with a six-grade or eight-grade programme, but this information is usually missing. Thus the distinction between ISCED 0 and 1 is arbitrary in most cases.

We propose ISCED 2 to cover the grades 1–2 or 1–4 of the eight-year and six-year general secondary programmes and vocational programmes requiring less than 10 years of completed general education. ISCED 3C covers basic education programmes of the vocational school and any vocational programmes preparing for NVQL examination where entry requirement is the completion of basic education. However, programmes covered by this category do not provide ‘maturity’ exam

(upper secondary school certificate) but direct access to the labour market. This means that those vocational school programmes, which go into ISCED 3 in the 'official' system do not differentiate properly between the levels of ISCED 3A and 3C and this is particularly problematic in the Hungarian context.

ISCED 4 is kept for those post-secondary programmes where the entrance requirement is the secondary school diploma but the programme does not provide a degree from tertiary education.

We believe that tertiary schools are more stratified in Hungary than it is coded in the ISCED-97 and putting both colleges and universities in to the same category of ISCED 5A does not fit the Hungarian realities. The recently introduced Bologna-system makes the distinction even more pronounced. We propose that the present ISCED 5B, i.e. any post-secondary vocational programmes accredited by the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (courses by NVQL) and vocational programmes with an entrance requirement of a Level 5 qualification ought to go into a new ISCED 5C category. Then college degrees – or in the future the BA degree – should go to the category of ISCED 5B because it represents a somewhat lower level of education than university programmes (in the future MA degrees). Thus, ISCED 5A would cover only the university diploma holders with an MA degree and thus access to ISCED 6.

**Table 5. Proposed changes of the application of the ISCED-97 for Hungary**

Current ISCED	Hungarian classification	Proposed ISCED
1	General School primary level (1–4 grades) General School primary level, special education (1–4 grades)	1
2A	General school upper level (grades 5–8) General school upper level in part-time ( <i>Felnőttek általános iskolája 5–8 évfolyam</i> ) Basic-lower secondary education with art/music pre-vocational programmes ( <i>Művészeti általános iskola</i> ) Grades 1–2 or 1–4 of the eight-year and six-year general secondary programmes	2A
2B	Second chance programmes for late maturers preparing for Level 3 education ( <i>Felzárkóztató általános iskola</i> )	1
2C	Vocational programmes requiring less than 10 years of completed general education. NVQL training in programmes that do not require basic education ( <i>Szakiskola alapfokú iskolai végzettség nélküli szakmákra</i> ) Special education for special educated pupils ( <i>Speciális gyógypedagógiai iskola</i> )	2C

**Table 5. Proposed changes of the application of ISCED-97 for Hungary (continued)**

Current ISCED	Hungarian classification	Proposed ISCED
3C	Vocational school with vocational certificate. Vocational programmes preparing for NVQL examination where entry requirement is the completion of basic education Basic education programmes of the vocational school ( <i>Szakiskola általánosan képző 9–10. évfolyam</i> ) Vocational programmes preparing for NVQL examination ( <i>Szakiskolai szakképző évfolyamok és programok</i> ). At the end NVQL vocational certificate	3C
3A	Grammar school 9–12 grades – Academic secondary school ( <i>Gimnázium 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) Bilingual upper secondary school 9–13 grades ( <i>Kéttannyelvű gimnázium/szakközépiskola 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) Secondary vocational school – premature stage 9–12 grades ( <i>Szakközépiskola 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) Upper secondary education with art/music ( <i>Művészeti szakközépiskola 9–13 évfolyam</i> ) Upper secondary part-time programmes, pre-matura courses for adults ( <i>Felnőttek gimnáziuma 9–12 évfolyam</i> ) All programmes provide a certificate from ‘maturity’ examination	3A
3B	Upper vocational secondary part-time programmes ( <i>Felnőttek szakközépiskolája 9–12 évfolyam</i> )	3B
4C	Post-secondary Vocational programmes full-time ( <i>Szakképző évfolyamok és programok érettségire épülő OKJ szakmákban</i> ) Post-secondary Vocational programmes part-time ( <i>Szakképző évfolyamok és programok érettségire épülő OKJ szakmákban</i> )	4C
4A	General secondary programme for vocational graduates. The programme provide a certificate of the Maturity examination ( <i>Szaktanársok érettségire felkészítő középiskolája</i> )	4A
5B	Post-secondary vocational programme accredited by the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (courses by NVQL) ( <i>Akkreditált OKJ iskolai rendszerű felsőfokú szakképzés</i> ) Vocational programmes with an entrance requirement of Level5 qualifications ( <i>Szakképzés felsőfokú végzettséget igénylő OKJ szakmákra</i> )	5C
5A	Colleges	5B
	Universities	5A
6	PhD; DLA	6

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## Annex

**Table A1. Students in full time and part-time education**

School years	Kinder- gartens	Primary schools	Vocational schools	Special vocational schools	Secondary general schools (gymnasium)	Secondary vocational schools	Tertiary education (college and university)
1980/1981	478,692	1,213,404	166,740	1,119	124,618	208,952	101,166
1990/1991	391,950	1,177,612	222,204	3,152	142,247	217,787	108,376
1995/1996	400,527	992,766	172,599	5,367	186,671	261,838	195,586
2001/2002	342,285	947,037	126,367	6,631	223,474	292,646	349,301
2004/2005	325,999	890,551	126,908	8,369	238,850	290,139	421,520

Note: Up to 2000, data of vocational schools (column 4) refer to the data of apprentice schools, shorthand-typing schools, health- and other vocational schools.

Source: Statistical Yearbooks of Education (Ministry of Education and Culture).