

Executive Summary

‘Teacher 2010’ – Research Report

The „Teacher 2010” research project carried out by TÁRKI-TUDOK Inc. in March 2010 was commissioned by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and the Democratic Trade Union of Teachers (PDSZ).

The purpose of the project was to measure the workloads of teachers in different educational institutions (at pre-primary, primary and secondary level). 3380 teachers¹ reported daily how much time they spent on different educational and non educational but education related tasks for 2 weeks in an online diary.

Classroom teachers’ average workload is 51 hours/week which is comparable to the result of other international surveys², but the spread of this average is notable. Both over and under load was revealed from the results: 5.4 percent of the respondents work less than 35 hours a week while 17.1 percent works 60 hours or even more.

According to the international trends, Hungarian teachers spend approximately one-third of their working time with classroom teaching and do 3 hours of administrative tasks. Respondents spend 18.5 hours with classroom teaching, 1.9 hours with non-classroom teaching (e.g. remedial and/or other extra-curricular teaching) and devote 11.9 hours for preparation. Other non-teaching activities such as looking after students during breaks, lunchtime, consultation with parents etc. take on average 9.5 hours a week. Teachers also participate in school management activities for 3.2 hours weekly and spend 6.1 hours with professional activities (in-service training, individual learning).

After the uncertainty of the national educational policy context, teachers rate workload as the second largest problem. 57 percent of classroom teachers noted the magnitude of their workload as a problem, and 43 percent said that the uneven distribution of work is a problem. 39 percent expressed not having available assistants as a big problem.

Although teachers’ weekly workload (classroom teaching time and overall working time) follows the international trend and class sizes are also comparable to the international mean³, they are still highly dissatisfied with their workload. This contradiction is even more manifest after noting that the number of teachers / 1000 students in Hungary is above the international mean⁴ and the net classroom teaching time is among the lowest in Europe, especially on the primary level. This paradox cannot be explained neither with misperceptions of teachers about their workloads, nor the uneven distribution of workload in the individual schools. Hungarian teachers perceptions are rather influenced by the fact that extra work is not compensated and there are no teacher assistants in schools who could take over tasks not requiring high level special skills or requiring other skills than those necessary in a teaching profession.

According to teachers, administrative and organizing tasks are the most critical elements of their workload. A full-time classroom teacher spends 3.5 hours with administrative work, looks after students for about 1.3 hours, and spends 3.6 hours with correcting students’

¹ 2807 teachers from 148 primary and secondary educational institutions and 573 teachers from 100 pre-primary institutions. Teachers’ age and gender distributions are identical with those found in country level data.

²

³

⁴

assignments and/or writing assessments. These “supplementary tasks” make up about 16 percent of teachers total working time.

On the other hand full-time classroom teachers spend on average 3 hours a week on professional development activities. The spread is notable: while 36 percent of the respondents do not spend time at all on professional development, 20 percent devote at least 5 (sometimes even 8-10) hours for such activities. Professional development mostly happens through self-learning and rarely through classroom observation in-house or in other schools. Data also revealed remarkable discrepancy between themes of organized in-service trainings attended and teachers’ expressed demands.

A teacher has on average 2.32 m² space in the Teachers’ Office, but the corresponding spread is again notable. The available space on a desk is on average 0.61 m². 1 percent of the respondents have no chance to use a computer in the school, according to 54 percent of them the number of available computers is sufficient, but 44 percent is not satisfied with the availability of IT equipments. Most teachers are satisfied with the size and lights of classrooms, but only one-fifth of them reported that there is a separate room for teachers to relax during the day. A high proportion (41 percent) of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the hygienic conditions of the school.

In summary, according to our data, a quite adverse working structure has developed in Hungarian schools, which is wasteful and expensive at the same time (as there are quite many teachers in the system), leads to the perception of high workloads and low quality of working conditions (as lot of tasks which are not necessarily teachers’ responsibilities lie on teachers’ shoulders as well). There are also problems with the physical infrastructure as well. The distribution of work is highly uneven and ineffective not only between schools but in the individual schools as well (supplementary tasks take time away from professional activities). More even distribution of tasks, differentiated payment and the use of teacher assistants would significantly improve teachers’ satisfaction as well as their quality of work in the schools.

Judit Lannert