Effects of the Bologna process on the motivation of secondary school-leavers behind their choice of higher education institutes – Hungarian case study

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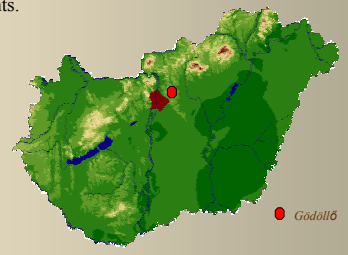
BOLOGNA PROCESS IN HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Having signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, Hungary committed itself to taking part in shaping the European Higher Education Area and to introducing the multi-cycle education system. The most striking feature of the new system is that as of 1 September 2006 the fundamentally dual education system has completely been replaced by the Bologna-type system of education (apart from some special programmes), whose linear, multi-cycled programmes are the bachelor's (BA), the master's (MA) and the doctorate (PhD) programmes. (Figure 1) Changes in the training system have presented new challenges not only to higher education institutions, but also to those intending to continue their studies in higher education. A new strategy had to be selected for further study to replace the strategy developed in previous years and decades, which had often been followed by parents.

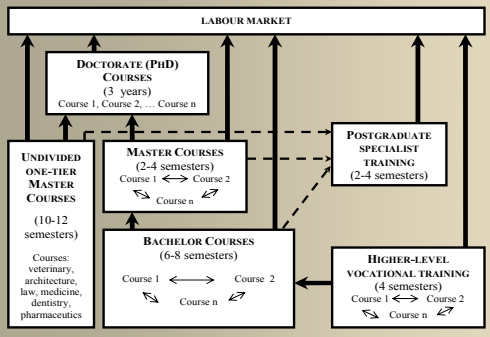
In the old system students had to decide at the age of 17 or 18 what they wanted to study and in which form, because movement between specializations or training levels was not guaranteed. Both students and higher education institutions waited with baited breath in 2006, intensely monitoring the changes in applications produced by the new situation, as generated through the Bologna process. Many were uncertain about whether to study at college or university, since the same undergraduate specializations were advertised in both institution types.

The objective of our study, two years after the launch of the new (Bologna-style) training system, was to ascertain whether the motivations of applicant students in selecting institutions had changed, whether the change in structure of specializations had made an impact on the motivation intentions of applicants, and whether the effects of such changes were noticeable on an institutional level.



Szent István University, Gödöllő, is situated in Hungary's most advanced central economic region, in which one third of the population, and half of all enterprises are concentrated.

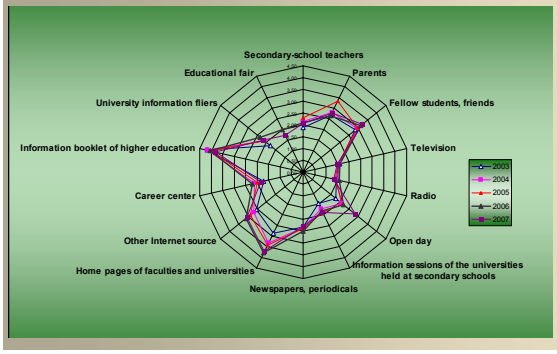
Figure 1: Hungarian linear training structure



EVALUATION

The first stage of evaluation was to calculate statistical indicators describing the entire database (frequency, relative frequency, reply distribution analysis, average and spread of scaling questions). We then conducted the evaluation and comparison of sample segments. We used the chi-square test (nominal questions) and variance analysis (scaling questions) to demonstrate significant correlations and differences (at a level of 95%). We employed factor analysis (performing varimax rotation where justified) to examine the internal structure of scaling question groups. Based on motivation factors we also created respondent segments through cluster analysis (k-average method).

Figure 2: Importance of information sources



MOTIVATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICANTS

The (questionnaire) survey has been run continuously since 2003 at all specializations (economics, agricultural economics, philosophy) and branches (full-time, correspondence) of Szent István University, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, at the start of term and among first year students.

The fundamental objective of the motivational survey carried out among successful candidates was to ascertain factors influencing selection of the institution, specialization and institution location, and the importance thereof, and to chart students' ideas and expectations with regard to university education and life.

The ***major structural elements*** of the questionnaire are as follows:

- survey of demographic data of participants in the study;
- survey of social value factors;
- analysis of factors influencing selection of university, faculty, specialization;
- determination of information gaps and frequency data for sources of information used in further study;
- estimate of anticipated costs of further study;
- in respect of given specializations, assessment of major higher education competitor institutions.

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS

Some interesting results are as follows:

- "professional prestige" plays the most important role in social regard for the selected profession (specialization);
- factors influencing selection of the institution/faculty/specialization/branch, it can be stated that, when comparing individual years, the 5 most important and 5 least important 5 parameters were identical, with minimal deviation in their order;
- full-time students attribute greater importance to events organised by higher education institutions than students on correspondence courses
- correspondence students gave priority to the following factors, in order of preference: careers advisers, secondary school teachers, newspapers, and journals.
- factors related to sources of information, the number of factors showing significant deviations considerably increased after 2006;
- typically around two thirds of students only submitted their applications in the final week.

The relatively rapid conversion to the Bologna system definitely generated information difficulties and shortages for applicants, secondary school students and parents, which enhanced the number and importance of available sources of information.

The changes can be explained in part by conversion to the Bologna system, though not by means of the Bologna system.