

# **Parallelism and differences in recruitment for teacher training in Hungary and Poland**

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It is not easy to receive overall knowledge about students in teacher training. Statistical data are hardly suitable to do it and there is also the problem of interpreting this little information: since a teacher's degree is well convertible on the labour market, the students in teacher training and the teachers of the future are not the same – at least in Hungary. Many of the students in the teacher education have never wanted to be a teacher.

We summarize in this study the most important experience regarding the recruitment for teacher training in Hungary, and give some information about the Polish situation based on the experience of Academy of Ignatium in Lublin. Sometimes their survey verifies the Hungarian processes and sometimes it refers to differences. Our study, based on information collected by various methods, is meant to be thought-provoking, and only as the first step in understanding the processes in teacher education in our East-Central European Region.

## **Changes of student numbers in teacher training in Hungary<sup>1</sup>**

In Hungary, there were radical changes after 1990 in the educational field, just like in the political, economical and social structure. The most significant ones involved the decentralization of the governance of education and increased school autonomy. The expansion of education was parallel with these, although partly independent from them, and together these changes totally reshaped the earlier graduation structure: the value of high graduation levels and the high level education programs increased significantly, and the economical changes also modified the ranking of the prestige of different vocations. Therefore the situation of teacher training also has thoroughly changed. Teachers used to work mostly in the public sector, where the salaries did not follow those in the private sector, meanwhile teachers had to work hard, and had more responsibility than earlier because of increasing school autonomy. Though the expansion of higher education slowed down within a few years after the millennium, the number of state-aided places were stable, while the number of students graduating on secondary level decreased – because of demographic reasons. As a result, the social devaluation of the teacher's profession

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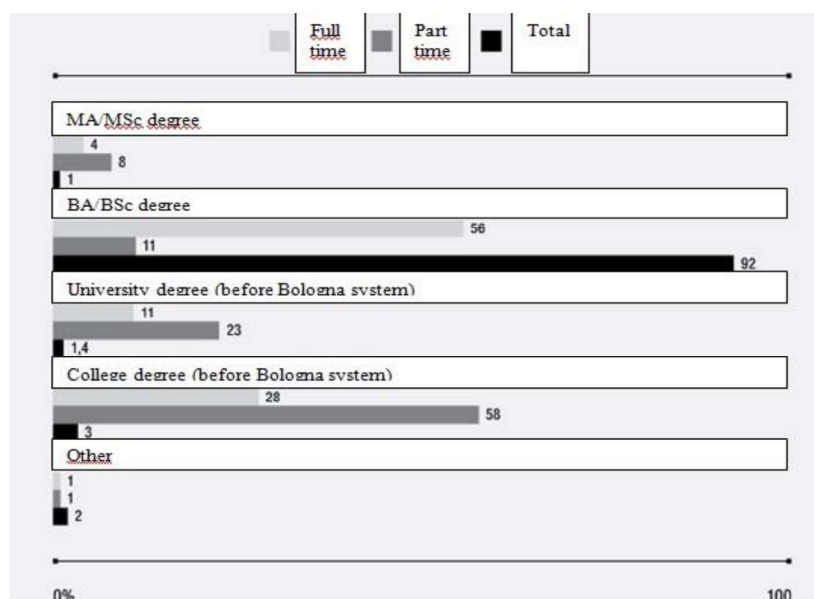
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accelerated and new students came from secondary education with weaker and weaker graduation results and later most of them left the teacher profession. Also nowadays, the best students rather choose other professions, and they can do it, because due to the expansion of higher education they find enough places at other faculties (Kozma, 2004; Polónyi, 2000).

The number of students in teacher education has decreased since 2005/2006, partly because due to the newly introduced Bologna system, the first 3 years of the education are not a part of teacher education, and partly because fewer and fewer students are choosing this profession.

In the Bologna system, which was introduced in 2007 and discontinued in teacher training in 2013, students have to learn mainly professional subjects of their fields on BA/BSc level, and teacher profession subjects on MA/MSc level. It is possible to do full-time or part-time courses in teacher education. Younger students study mainly in full-time BA/BSc courses, most of them coming directly from secondary grammar schools or secondary vocational schools. Their average age is 24. Older students participate mostly in part-time courses, so the average age in these courses is 36. They are mainly teachers who graduated earlier in teacher training colleges and wanted to get a ‘university (MA/MSc degree)’. In both groups women were overrepresented, their proportion reached 75%. The level of degree influenced partly teaching possibilities (a MA/MSc degree is necessary to teach on level ISCED 3), and partly – until 2013 – the official salaries. We summarize in the next chart, who participated in teacher training education.

**Chart 1.** Proportion of students in teacher training by level in full time and in part time courses



Source: Jancsák, 2011a

### **The social background of students in teacher training**

Some youth sociology researches done in recent years (Bauer & Szabó, 2005, 2009) show that the number of students having low-educated parents has decreased in higher education. At the same time, the proportion of students with highly educated parents has increased. This trend can be observed in teacher education, too. More than half of full-time teacher education students have parents with a degree. (Jancsák, 2011a).<sup>2</sup>

The first socialization patterns come from the family, that is why the parents' background is important. It has a very significant importance that 67% of the students in full-time teacher education have at least one teacher parent, and this proportion is 62% in the part-time courses. In both groups the parents are mainly class teachers on level ISCED 1 (36 and 36% respectively), the others are teachers on level ISCED 2 (27 and 30%) or ISCED 3 teachers (27 and 13%).

Most teacher education students came from the Central Region of Hungary (where about one third of the total population lives). The young population living in the Northwest Region (Nyugat-Dunántúl), where the labour market situation is the best except for the Central Region, were the least likely to choose the teacher profession. The students in part-time courses show a significant variance by residence compared to those in full-time courses. They are coming in a lower number from the Central Region, but more from the Southern and the Northern Regions. This means that the inhabitants of regions with a bad labour market situation tend to think of a teaching career to a greater extent than the inhabitants of regions with a good situation. The latter ones, mainly in the Central Region that has the best situation, want to get a degree, but they do not necessarily want to teach. One-quarter of the students are studying in their city of residence. This means that teacher training education is not a good investment: learning in another city is expensive and it may not be worth it. There is no significant difference in this respect between full-time and part-time students.

Receiving a degree is tied to having a language exam, but taking a language exam is a great challenge for many students (many of them do not get the degree or get it only many years later because of this). The language skills of teacher training students is similarly good: full-time students speak at least one foreign language by their own admission, in most cases English language, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them have at least one, and 42% two intermediate or higher level language certificate. This rate is somewhat lower among part-time students. The second important foreign language is German.

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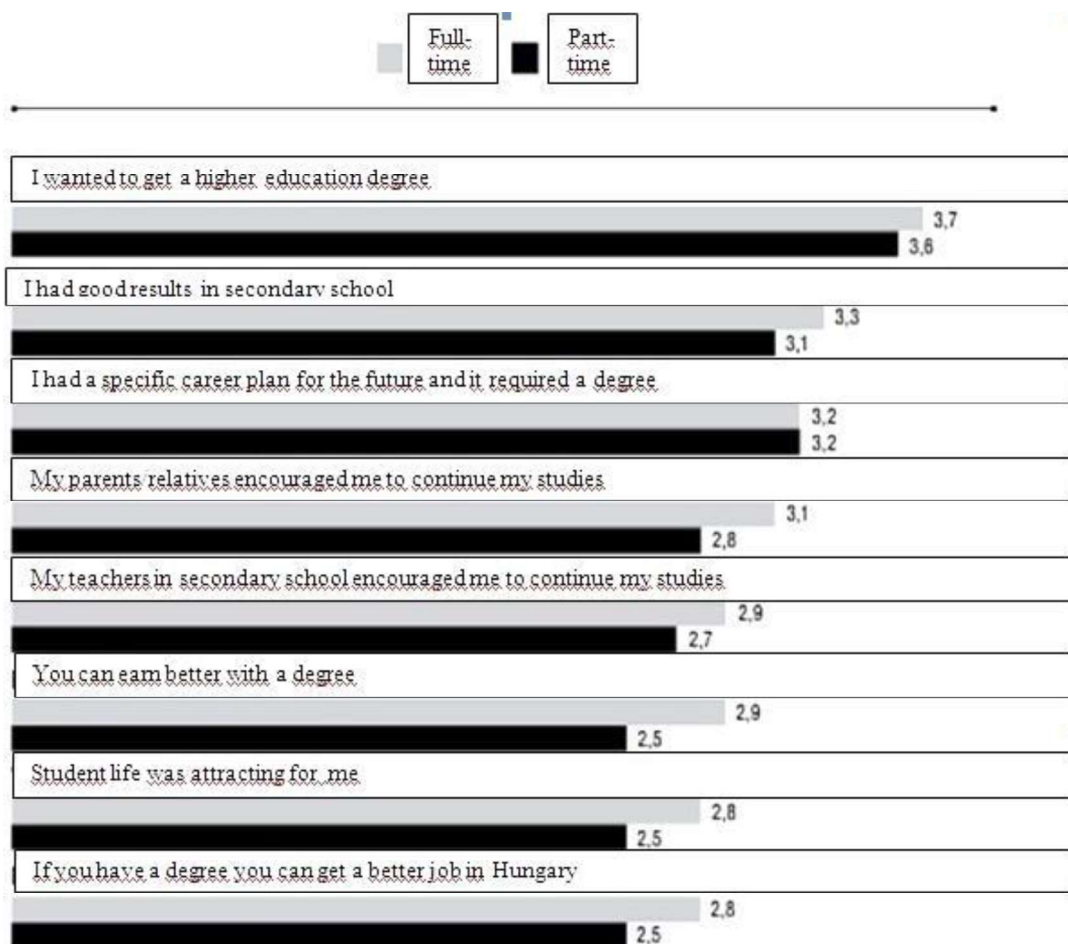
<sup>2</sup> This research and the additional empirical data were based on a survey of the Institute of Educational Research and Development in 2011. 1,211 people were asked from 19 different faculties of 12 different teacher educational institutions (universities and colleges) all over Hungary.

## Students' goals and values

Students entering higher education do not have a clear conception about their future – according to an old teacher education research. What attracts them might be (Kozma, 2004; Nagy, 2001): an interest in the disciplines; affection for children; supply of universities and colleges and the student's way of life.

All this has changed within a decade. In 2011, the primary motivation for 78% of students was to get a degree, 53% of them had a concrete career plan in the future, but 46% of students did not mention (only) aims, but a reason: they had chosen the university because of 'their good results in secondary school'. The recommendation of parents and teachers was also a strong motivation for them to choose the teacher education. The detailed results are shown in chart 2.

**Chart 2.** Motives for continuing education after secondary school (1 – the matter of choice less cost, 4 – the matter of choice much cost), average figures



(Source: Jancsák, 2011b)

Based on a value research, we can say the students in teacher education have mostly individual aims, connected to a secure life and good social connections. The most important value is the *safety of the (future) family, love and happiness and inner harmony*. Non-material values take first priority. Students like the following postmodern values: *creativity, interesting life and variable life*. At the other end of the value range are the traditional values (*the role of nation, belief*) and material values (*wealth, power*). There is no significant difference in priorities for full-time and part-time students. These results about values of teacher training students are similar to those in other surveys, like a survey on national level (Bauer & Szabó, 2005, 2009).

Based on several value orientation surveys, students can be ordered into different value groups. The social backgrounds of these groups are different as well, each group has a different character according to gender, residence type and the family's intellectual or pedagogical background. Female students – in contrast to males – have a specific character: they like material values least of all, but they like so called universal values (e.g.: happiness, family security, pacific world etc.). There is not a very big difference between students according to their residence, but those living in small villages do prefer traditional values, while those living in Budapest, material values. There are similar differences according to parents' background: students with less educated parents (*first generation of intellectuals*) rather like universal and traditional values, meanwhile those with highly educated parents prefer postmodern values. There is a difference between religious and non-religious students. The previous ones like traditional values and the latter ones postmodern and material values (Jancsák, 2011b).

### **Directed recruitment of teacher training/profession<sup>3</sup>**

To meet the needs presented by the project, the authors conducted a research among undergraduate students at the Academy of Ignatianum who had just started to study. The date of the research was the beginning of October 2012. The researchers used an electronic survey and the size of the sample was 95.

The profile of the candidate to the teacher profession has been recently changing in Poland. Nowadays, in the era of information, the labour market needs more and more professional technical workers and consequently the number of teachers is getting smaller. According to statistical data, many young Polish citizens – both from the large cities and towns – have mainly chosen educational institutions of a high professional level and courses connected to electronics and law. Facing a demographic minority and the fact that many higher education institutions are

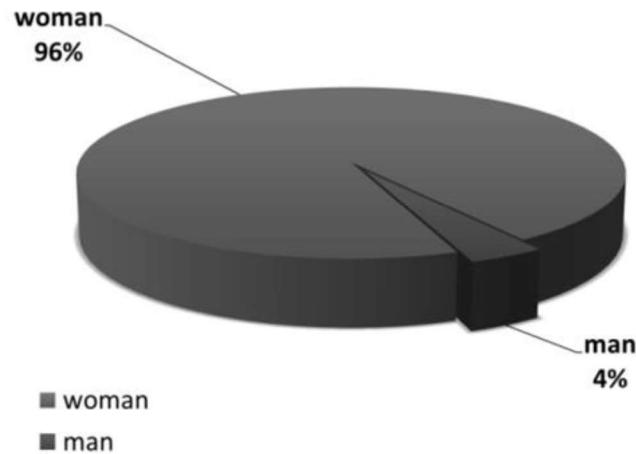
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connected to the labour market, the best institutions in higher education have to know what their prospective students expect from higher education to adjust their educational offer to their needs.

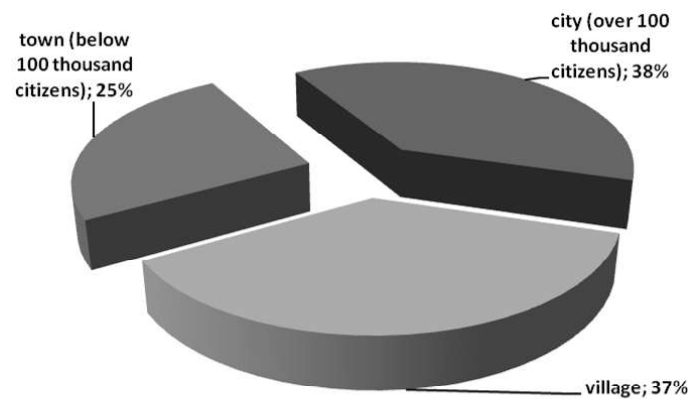
According to the authors' research, the great majority, 96 % of candidates to the teacher profession are women, while men constitute a minority – 4%.

**Chart 3.** The gender

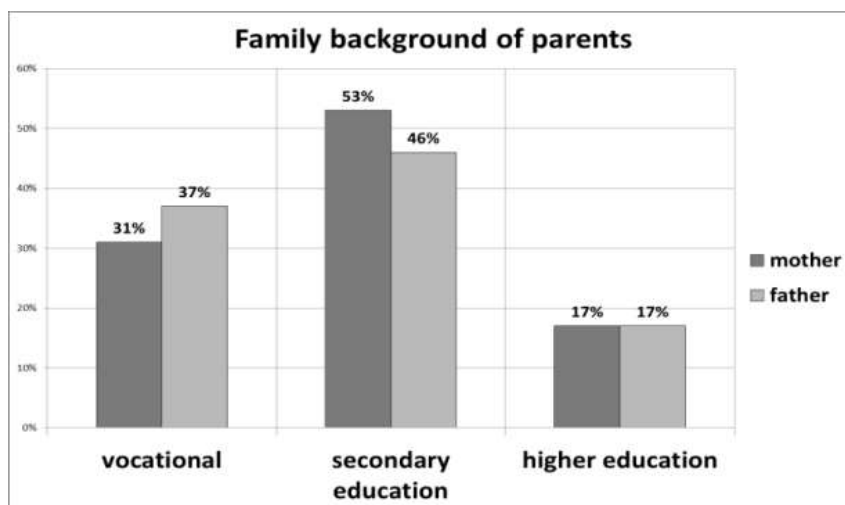


Most of our students are from cities over 100 thousand citizens – 38%, and villages – 37%, fewer come from cities with less than 100 thousand citizens.

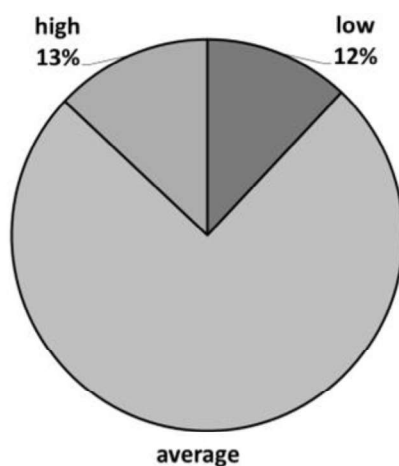
**Chart 4.** The place of living



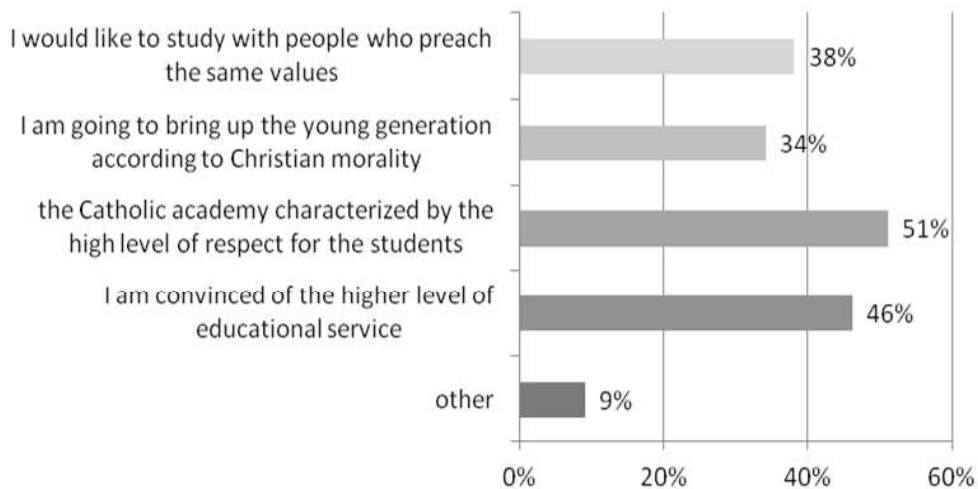
As for their family background, we asked the students some questions about the level of education of their parents and the family's economic status. Most of their parents have a general secondary education graduation: mother 53 % and father 46 %, fewer of their parents had completed only vocational education: mothers 31% and fathers 37% and only 17 % of both genders have a degree.

**Chart 5.** Graduation level of parents

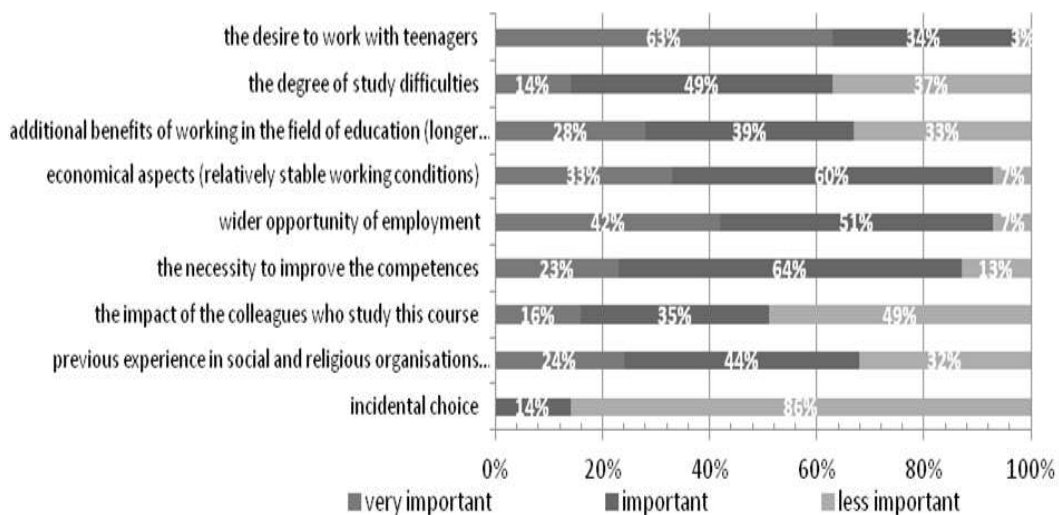
Most students – 75 % of them declared that their family’s economic status is average, 13% said that it is high and 12% that it is low.

**Chart 6.** The financial status of family

Nearly half of the students, 51% answered that they had never enrolled to another higher educational institution. The Academy of Ignatianum is a Catholic institution and the authors found the question about the motivation to choose that kind of institution very important. The research has depicted that the most significant motive of the students was the fact that they found the Catholic academy one that respects their dignity and needs – 51 %, subsequently 46 % of them are convinced that the level of teaching at the Catholic higher educational institution is very high, 38 % admitted that they want to study with colleagues that proclaim the same values, 34 % of them had chosen the Catholic institution to bring up children and teenagers according to Catholic values, 9 % had other motives.

**Chart 7.** The motive to choose the Catholic higher educational institution.

According to the “motives range of studies”, students show the desire to work with teenagers (63 %). The level of difficulty was important for them when they had chosen the educational studies course (49%), the fact of having extra benefits such as longer holidays, is quite important. The economic aspects such as relatively stable working conditions (60%), wider opportunity of employment (51%) and the necessity to improve the competences are also significant factors for most students.

**Chart 8.** The motives range of studies.

To conclude, candidates to the teacher profession come from a family of average economic status. Most of their parents are not intellectuals, that is, they do not have a degree. Half of them planned to go to other higher educational institutions. The most important factor for them to choose the Catholic academy was connected to being convinced of its high level of teaching and treating the students very well from



a pedagogical point of view. The candidates had decided to study a pedagogical course because they wanted to work with teenagers, improve their competences, have quite stable work with some additional employment opportunities, and some extra benefits such as longer holidays.

## **Conclusions**

Though we have had a restricted possibility to compare teacher training students living in Hungary and in Poland, we can say profession is a very important thing for most of them in both countries. It is also important for them to be among their peers, which is a peer pressure of attending a higher institution, but its importance is smaller in Ignatium in Lublin than in Hungary. It is interesting that students in teacher education in Hungary have a better social background than students in Lublin. In our interpretation, this means that Polish students use teacher training to step up in social hierarchy, while Hungarian students choose teacher training because they have a teacher family background and a calling for this profession, or they want to have a degree, any degree, to get a job, any job later. These facts show that teacher prestige is somewhat higher in Poland (at least among the students of Ignatium in Lublin) than in Hungary.

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