

EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

POST-COMMUNIST ELITISM OR PRE-DEMOCRATIC UNIVERSALIZATION?

Most of the analyses of the East-Central European higher education suffer of two shortages. They either describe higher education as if it were similar to the Western systems (with minor variations). Or they focus on differences as if those differences would basically separate the East-Central European systems from other ones in Europe.

Analyses of the European higher education right before or during the political transition showed no interests in the Eastern part of the continent (*Goedegebuure & Meek 1988*). Comparisons were made between Northern and Southern systems or between Francophon and German traditions (*Cerych & Sabatier 1986*). European traditions were criticised and reforms were initiated in the light of the American experience or in the name of the Asian successes (*Teichler 1988; Gellert 1992*). The Eastern part of the continent (one-third of the population of Europe) remained in shadow.

Higher education were introduced mostly by government experts and leading institutional administrators of the region. Official documents usually described higher education as a special outcome of the existing socialism (*Lechmann 1990*). They emphasized the scientific and professional successes of graduates and professionals coming from the Eastern part of Europe. They stressed the unique effectiveness of the system relied on selectivity. Though critical analyses pointed out the unintended social effects of an elitist system, labour planners were proud that they could avoid professional and youth unemployment under existing socialism (*Peschar & Popping 1991*).

Higher education in East-Central Europe became a professional fashion after the political transition of 1989/90. Analyses of that time described the systems as variations of the European higher education. Trends and processes described in the Western part of the continent became apparent to the Eastern higher education too (*Kotasek 1990; Jablonska-Skinder 1990*). Analysts found that buffer organizations were under creation between ministries and institutions (like they have been showed for the European higher education administration earlier) (*Kozma 1992*). They also found out that management were weak at institutional level and urged the improvement of higher education management in East-Central Europe (*Harbison 1993*). They characterised the student flow from the secondary to the tertiary education according to the pattern suggested by *Martin Trow (1974)*. They criticised the teacher/student ratio and initiated its raise to Western standards. They proposed quality assurance and control and adopted performance indicators (*Barkó 1992*). Only few studies realized that the state of higher education in the post-communist countries are neither unique nor equivalent with the rest of the continent (*Anweiler 1992*). It cannot be presented like an alternative model of higher education development nor can it fully be described in present international terminology. Rather, it is based on traditional institutions and values characteristic to other European regions

during and after World War II. Such a system, however, has never existed in other parts of Europe. Higher education in Eastern Europe was formed out by totalitarian systems that survived the war. They created, for an additional fifty years, an unprecedented order of planned economy, society and culture in the art of the 1930's. According to the leading ideas of the 1930's, those totalitarian systems favored vocational training at elementary and secondary level and developed labor force education. Higher education therefore were kept back in its initial phase where it still served only the few. While on the one hand higher education were saved from mass movements, on the other hand it was under strict control of the national labor planning. It is a system of higher education that faces today the rapid change of East-Central Europe. It also suffers the efforts of harmonization with the rest of Europe.

The present paper contributes to the new comparative analysis of Western and Eastern developments. It describes the late modernization as it happens to a higher education system of the Eastern region. To be late in modernization means that more than one developmental tasks have to solve within one period. The question is if the actors of the Hungarian higher education (administrators, students, teachers and policy makers) are able and prepared to fulfil that unusual task.

The paper concentrates on the access to higher education as a developmental task and a policy issue.

- First, I describe the Hungarian higher education as a typical case of survived elitism in education. An elitist education strictly controls the access procedures and selects its future clientele.
- Second, I show the massification/democratization/universalization process which challenged the system in the course of harmonization with Europe. A massification requires new access controls on behalf of the higher education system and new access strategies on behalf of those who want to step in.
- Third, I present facts of the growing post-secondary education as an organizational answer to that challenge.

Post-secondary education creates a buffer that gives access possibilities for the growing clientele while saves the relatively high standards of university scholarship. Let's look for a balance between increasing social demands and decreasing state support – it is the main idea of the present study.

Educational Elitism: The Case

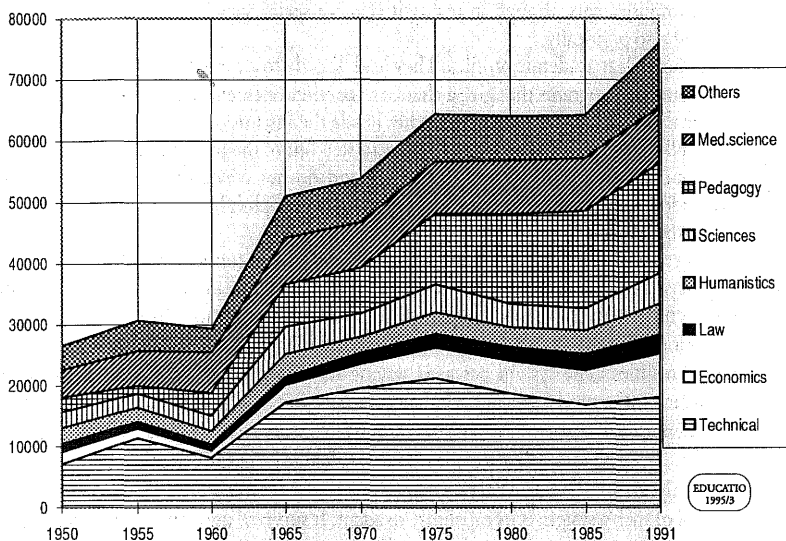
Hungary, like most of the other East-Central European countries has a dual system of higher education. Colleges (*főiskola*) offer professional education and training while universities are mostly for academic education.

- Colleges are characterised by the diplomas they offer and the years of studies they require for them. There are therefore differences among two-year, three-year and four-year colleges of various arts (from teacher training to agriculture and from business to medical studies and health service). (Graph 1)
- Universities differ from each other according to the professions they are preparing for and the structures they developed (or saved). "Professional universities" are existing in the fields of agriculture, industry, economics and business and most of all in the field of medical science. University of chemistry (Veszprém) or heavy industry and mining (Miskolc) until recently were no extremities under Hungarian circumstances.

It is a typical two-track system where tracks (colleges and universities) are not combined.

The system of studies is "unilevel" (there are no graduations before the end of the required studies neither are differences between undergraduate and graduate studies). College graduates faces problems to join the university programs; they have to sit for special (additional) examinations before getting in to the universities. Theoretically, it is true to the university graduates also, though the main flow of students is from the colleges to the universities and not vice versa. Those who have received their diplomas from the universities are not necessarily prepared for positions where college leavers are required. A typical case is the educational system where teachers with university diploma are not allowed to teach at the elementary level which requires an elementary teacher's diploma.

GRAPH 1
Structure of higher education in Hungary, 1950–1990



An unlevel education also means that there are no academic grades separate from the diplomas guaranteed by the state. College and university leavers (those who have completed their studies) receive diplomas rather than graduations. The two systems of evaluations have been unified back to the history of higher education of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a reward, institutions themselves assign state diploma without an independent board of examiners from any of the state administration. Not only colleges but also universities give diplomas of specific professions; practically there is no completed studies in higher education without a diploma of a specific profession (faculties of philosophies release teachers' diplomas, technical universities guarantees engineers' diplomas and the like). The two track system is strictly controlled at the end by institutional management, state administration and labor market statistics.

The system is, furthermore, complicated by its maintenance and steering (Kozma 1992). Since the institutions are not autonomous (in the original sense of the word) they are maintained by government organs. It is not unusual for a European system, especially if it is traditional. The unusual feature is that universities and colleges are maintained and controlled by various ministries like the Ministry of Social Welfare (medical universities and colleges), Ministry of Agriculture (agricultural higher education), Ministry of Finance (higher institutions of accounting), Ministry of Industry (colleges of trades and tourism), Ministry of Internal Affairs (police academies), Ministry of Home Defense (military higher education including a military university) and Ministry of Education (the rest, including technical universities and business higher education).

Institutions are still basically financed by the central state budget. The picture, however, is again mixed. On the one hand, some institutions receive considerable amount of supports from other sources such as industry (the Budapest Technical University) or county governments (the "community colleges", the new phenomena in the realm of post-secondary education). On the other hand, most of the institutions charge their part-time students or those working for their second diploma. In order to restructure the national budget full time students are also charged recently by a minimum fee (at present it is HUF 2000 a month, an equivalent of USD 20). While government decision on higher education fees is still negotiated the growing private sector offers diplomas for fees that are ten or twenty times higher.

Hungarian higher education is a case of survived elitism in education. Because:

- There is an administratively controlled selection at the entrance. It is connected with the final examination of the secondary education (Abitur) and administered centrally. The selection is based on academic achievements and accomplishments, though in reality it is also a social selection. In previous years the selection was controlled also politically.
- Institutional programs have clear academic profiles. They lead directly to clearly defined diplomas. There are but few cross roads among programs that give a chance to combine elements of studies, to personalize programs or to change the essential orientation of studies inside the institution.
- There are no ways of collecting credits or any other means to step out of the programs and come back to them later. Colleges and universities are strictly separated and do not create dual levels of the same program. Once the student is accepted at the entrance (s)he will accomplish her/his studies (less than an average 5% of yearly dropouts).
- Examinations are connected with graduations and graduations are closely connected with diplomas. No differences are made between academic degrees and diplomas guaranteed by the state. Diplomas, on the other hand are closely connected to labor needs as they are fixed by administrative forecasts.

The system is not only a case of educational elitism. It is also a case of separation of the academic world from the socio-economic realities. The system per se is serving its own purposes and as such creates an academic cosmos that is not influenced by economic needs or social demands. The separation has been supported (up until the democratic change in the region) by a totalitarian regime. It was, and in a certain respect still is a vehicle for reproducing an elite which is traditionally far from the economic realities and is not necessarily trained for the political arena either.

The secret of the survival of such a system is its capability to adapt. It survived under the totalitarian regime because it fell both in the interests of the regime and the intellectuals outside of the regime. There is a strong tendency that the system would survive under the new conditions (after the political transition) because its new autonomies help saving the elitist structure. If there is a challenge for rapid change it comes outside of the collective game played jointly by the political and the intellectual elite.

Massification: The Challenge

The system works as the channel for the schooling efforts of the Hungarians. And, vice versa, their schooling patterns influence the system. The national system of higher education and the schooling patterns of the society are in a sensitive balance. At the initial phase of a social-educational change the system is rigid which slows down the emerging demands for higher education in the society. In the following steps, the system becomes more and more flexible which gives way to the growth of the social demand. The growing social demand toward higher education means a political tension under which policy makers tend to open up higher education. The mutual effects speed up the changes until the fulfilment of various social demands toward higher education. Simplified as it is, the mechanism of educational growth is characteristic in societies with European type educational systems.

This pattern of the change in the social demands is well known among social statisticians. It is the same pattern which characterizes the growing demand for consumer goods and social services such as television sets, cars, medical aids, housing etc. In those cases as in every other cases the first phase of the changing demands is always controlled by the shortages of the supply. Whereas the growth in demand pushes ahead the growth of the supply. These mutual steps control and direct the demand-supply growth in a given society (Kozma 1993b).

The phases of growth (a stagnating period, a rapid growth and a period of fulfilment) are, furthermore, characteristic in other behavioral changes in the society. It is characteristic to the dissemination of a new fashion as well as the dissemination of news and rumors. Three phases can be described in the spread of information as well as customs and traditions. It seems therefore that the three-phase curve can be applied in various social changes, including those in the schooling patterns. Moreover, the S-curve reflecting the three-phase change is the proper tool for describing growth in a living community.

Although it has originally been invented for biological rather than sociological purposes, the S-curve is a powerful tool of forecasting the given changes. Once the shape of the curve (that is, the tendency of stagnation and increase) is realized we can make forecasts of the coming phases of change. Increase can be forecasted if the end a stagnation period is realized while the point of inflection can be fixed once the trend of increase is calculated. By this way the probability and the coming phases of the (social) change is foreseeable.

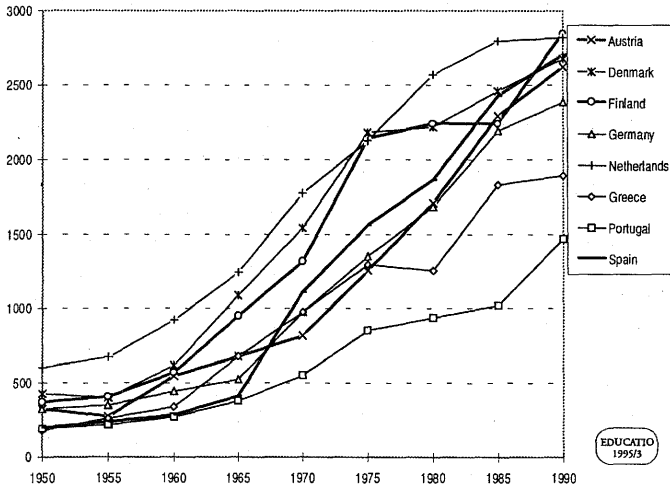
In this paper, like in my earlier analyses I suggest the application of the S-curve as a tool for the projection of the schooling patterns in higher education (*Kozma 1993a*). As it has been referred to in those studies, I develop a hypothesis about the connecting S-curves that describe massification and universalization in a given educational system of a European type. The hypothesis says that once the rapid increase of demands for elementary education comes close to its end, the increasing phase may start in the lower secondary education. Once the higher secondary education is close to be universal in a given society the increase of demands for tertiary education would start. The embracing S-curves at various time points reflect that pattern of educational demand. These patterns of behavioral changes in the society fit to the earlier description about the democratization, massification and universalization process of lower and higher education in various societies (*Trow 1974*).

Educational demands in the East-Central European societies are close to the second phase when higher secondary education faces massification and tertiary education is right before the increasing phase. There are various social, cultural and political explanations that fit to the different societies and may not be the same in different cases. Yet the three-phase pattern of increase may still be characteristic in those societies as it proved to be characteristic in other societies of the continent. In the following part I show some data which support that hypothesis.

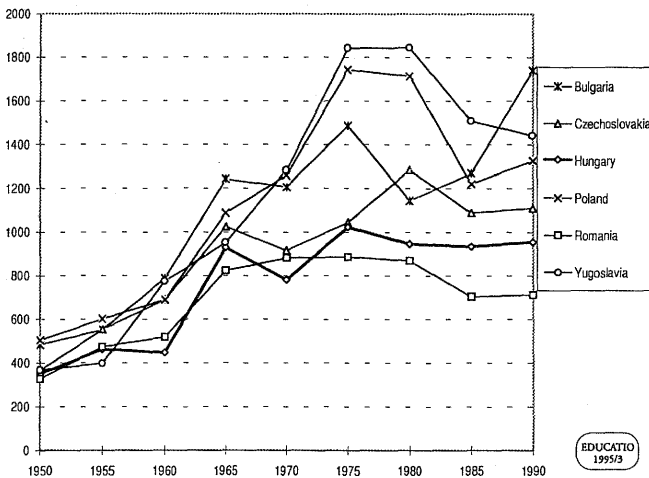
Comparative data of tertiary education in Europe suggest the following (Graphs 2 and 3):

- Tertiary education involved nearly the same per cent of the population in different societies of the continent at the mid of the century. Even in societies at slower economic developments and lower living standards tertiary education covered around five per cent of the respective age groups. It is a phenomenon characteristic to the European societies. Tertiary education (mostly in the form of the traditional higher education) has always been a sign of the European culture and awareness irrespective of its economic effectiveness or the wealth of the national budgets.
- The boom of tertiary education started around the mid of the sixties. The time is significant for several reasons. Economies in the Western societies reached their recovering period and economic developments slowed down to the pre-war rate of increase. Those societies on the other hand massively democratized their secondary education, that is, they opened up their secondary schools for the majorities and mostly abolished selective lower secondary education. Societies and politics in the Eastern countries were recovering from the Stalinist era and after the shock of the Hungarian war and Czechoslovak movement for liberty and independence. One of the outcomes of the international reconciliation was the less rigid control on higher education in those countries.
- Tertiary education underwent its greatest increase during the seventies in Western Europe. It was partly the results of the social democratic (and socialist) educational policies and partly the outcomes of the earlier period of the increasing secondary education. As far as the Eastern part is concerned some developments proved to be similar (like in Poland and Yugoslavia). In the other countries, however, a stagnating period started. Tertiary education in those countries has been kept at the level of the sixties and seventies for the coming decades. The Polish and Yugoslav cases went also back in order to fit to the general picture of the Eastern systems.
- The net result at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s is as follows. Tertiary education in the Western part of Europe is on the way of democratization and universalization. While in the Eastern part, tertiary education is still in its elitist phase. It is still dominated by the university education which creates the almost exclusive model of tertiary education for the policy making in those countries.

GRAPH 2
Number of students per 100.000 inhabitants, Western Europe, 1950–1990



GRAPH 3
Number of students per 100.000 inhabitants, Eastern Europe, 1950–1990



Hungary with its elitist system of higher education fits well to the general picture. Let us mention that university graduates from countries like Hungary or Romania may get the best results at international intellectual competitions. The same is true to the secondary students, Romanians and Hungarians are among the bests in the world in sciences and mathematics. Eastern Europeans (together with South-East Asians) may not face troubles to get in to the world's most famous higher education institutions or to receive the highest stipendia for post graduate studies. It is the typical results of the selective and elitist systems which may produce the best few though not necessarily the reliable average students.

Lesser words have been mentioned about the small boom of the 1960s in Hungary. It was the period of solid increase in the educational system. The 1961 Educational Act (based on the 1958 party decree as well as the New Deal of Chrushtsev) decided to universalize the upper secondary education. A new type of secondary school was established with the name of secondary professional school (a combination of academic education and vocational training). Most of the former professional and technical schools became parts of the new system and had to give up their earlier elitist characters. Some of them however were upgraded and became higher educational institutions. It happened to some of the technological schools and all of the teacher training institutions. Technical education and teacher training became parts of a growing tertiary education sector though they remained outside of the respectful university sector.

The result has been a tertiary education network with professional “universities” and several colleges for technical, agricultural and teacher education throughout the whole country (around 100 higher education institution altogether). Those institutions have few students only and their teacher/student ratios are far from being economical or effective. On the other hand however, those institutions are close to the public in the countryside. They attract those social groups which have traditionally been far from any higher education chance. They give a permanent push to the local secondary education which feel themselves in competition. And the local higher education institutions also fall in the interests of the local government which can be supportive to their “own” institutions. The upgraded technical, agricultural and teacher training institutions up until recently survived the policy changes and remained as the remembrance of a limited boom in the history of the higher education in Hungary.

A new boom of higher education started after the political transition. It proved to be the most significant in the history of the Hungarian education. The increasing numbers and rates of students suggests that a new period has started in the growth of the tertiary education. It may be considered as the beginning of a rapid increase. The following arguments support this statement.

- The massification of upper secondary education started in the mid-1970s in Hungary. The rate of upper secondary students in their age group jumped from an earlier 38% to 49%. It is still growing and is presently close to 55%.
- The quantitative increase of upper secondary education is followed by a qualitative change of the system. Apprentice education (vocational training at the upper secondary level) was gradually decreasing while professional and technical education was increasing during the 1980s. In some parts of the country, however, professional and technical secondary education also started to decrease while academic upper secondary education (gymnasia) increased. In the Budapest area as well as in the North Western region of the country, apprentice training changed to upper secondary education and professional training is gradually organized at the tertiary rather than the upper secondary level.
- The process of massification in upper secondary education is different in the various regions of the country. In some regions (especially in the Budapest agglomeration) the process reaches its peak. It shows a character which is close to the secondary education of some Central European region (Upper Austria, Bavaria, Northern Italy) (*Kozma 1993b*).
- The political changes abolished the political-administrative control on higher education institutions. Rather, an ideology of the European harmonization took place. It suggested that the growth of student numbers would be part of the European harmonization since most of the Western systems included around 20–30% of the respective age groups as their students. In the line of this argumentation a massive increase in the students’ numbers occurred.
- A demographic wave hit the system in the early 1990s. The two impacts – harmonization together with a political tension to get in to the system – caused a rapid increase of full time places at the universities and colleges throughout the country. The new policy also created a competitive atmosphere where institutions ran for more students because of the per capita finance and because of the fear that the neighbouring institutions would hunt more students and more financial support.

Those factors listed caused a rapid increase of the student rates in the higher education system. Perhaps it is a side effect of several policies that have been applied to the system at the same time point. In this case the rate of students should go back to its former level of stagnation as a marginal phenomenon. There is,

however, a chance that the statistics referred to reflect an essential change in the behavior of the society toward higher education. In this case the higher education system has to prepare itself for the massification process that begins in the mid-1990s in Hungary.

Post-Secondary Education: The Response

With the second argument in mind let us see over the main policy alternatives applicable to the Hungarian system. They are as follows:

- Policy A: to slow down the process under the present economic constraints;
- Policy B: to increase the system quantitatively while keeping its present organization and rationale; and
- Policy C: to increase it qualitatively, that is to build up new ways for mass tertiary education.

The present economic constraints will slow down the present boom in higher education. The national government like other governments in East-Central Europe has to restructure the central budget. They cut off welfare expenditures including higher education. It does not mean necessarily that financial administration recognize higher education as welfare issue. In any case however it means that the central budget would not be able to cover all the higher education expenditure (like it has covered them as parts of a social welfare system). It is especially true facing a higher education boom. As long as the system remains elitist the central budget might be generous to it. Even if it was against the equality principle (higher education of the elite received a major state subsidy) it was for the social peace and international respect (to keep intellectual competitiveness on the international stage). In case of a booming higher education however state subsidies would tremendously grow together with the rapidly increasing demands for higher education. By this way higher education would turn to be an element of the social welfare service which is a new one among the traditional human rights for welfare and the quality of life. Central budgets in East-Central Europe, especially under neo-liberal economic influences would not be ready to finance an expanding higher education of that kind.

What would happen than to the higher education boom? If Policy A is feasible it would slow down the boom of the early 1990s and would postpone it to the next decade or so. Of course higher education would survive. It would however survive in its present elitist form. The economic constraints throughout East-Central Europe contribute to the existence of an elitist tertiary education which is profitable not only for the intellectual but also for the economic elite.

Policy B represents a tertiary education expansion within the present organization frames. In other words it is a policy that would support the present structure of the higher education in Hungary and would plan to open it up for additional groups in the society. The aim of that policy is twofold: one, to stabilize the traditional higher education and two, to turn it into a democratic and universal system. In an extreme form the policy aims to stabilize the present system in order to make it valuable for a universalization. Or, in a more extreme form, the policy refers to democratization in order to gain more state support to stabilize the traditional system. It is a policy which is represented by the leading interest groups of the Hungarian higher education especially the Rectors' Conference. It is associated with additional policies which aims to expand the influence of the universities on colleges and research institutions (the Academy of Sciences). A characteristic policy which has emerged from those ambitions is the idea of the *universitas*. It means a consortium of universities, colleges and research institutes in one location with a governing body and an administrative unit.

Several arguments support the creation of such consortia like making better use of laboratories, libraries, computing centers, giving larger chances for faculties to develop their own programs and researches within a larger organizational framework, creating intellectual centers in various regions of the country with more human capacities and better facilities, forming out large size institutions with student/teacher ratios compatible with Western ones, making a professional management with effective economic units etc. Behind those arguments, however, it is clear that the *academic oligarchy* (Becher 1989) tries to keep various institutions and their diversified programs under its own control.

The *universitas* consortia though unintended served the unification of small institutions and the abolishing of the country colleges. It also worked against the diversification of tertiary education and the professionalization of research and development. If one top management wants to control the autonomous institutions around it the whole process might turn into bureaucratization. If the university runs for every alternative programs it may block the individual ambitions of teachers and faculty.

Those arguments, however, may not be true. The real challenge is the stabilization of the traditional structure of tertiary education. The permanent temptation of the academicians is that they can save the traditional organizations while modernize the teaching, learning and research activities behind the doors.

An alternative policy (Policy C) is to develop the new structure of tertiary education in the country. The core of this new structure might be the post-secondary rather than the university education (*MacKenzie 1975; Kiivinen & Rinne 1990*). Here are the basic arguments for Policy C.

- There is a growing demand for further rather than higher education. The interest of the youth (and the families) is to secure upgraded studies after secondary graduation. For most of them, college and university programs are far from the everyday realities. They want professional training and human development in intellectual circumstances.
- Professional education and training in a growing number of fields needs secondary rather than elementary school graduations. Apprentices with elementary school education have lesser chance on a competitive labor market than their colleagues with secondary school education. The dynamic sectors of economy needs more general education and practice oriented vocational training.
- Post-secondary programs may easily be organized within various organizational frames. They can be organized within secondary schools as well as country colleges and university centers. Post-secondary education is flexible and can therefore be close to the student's location.
- Post-secondary education is sensitive to market incentives. It can easily be marketized and even privatized.

By this way tertiary education is booming even under economic constraints and economic restrictions.

Post-secondary education seems to be a bridge over the gap between economy and (higher) education.

A short comparison based on UNESCO statistics (1980 data) show the development and the shortages of post-secondary education in Hungary (Table 1). The country together with neighbouring Austria registered no post-secondary education and released therefore no graduation or diploma at that level. In the Western systems, in contrast, 40–50% of the graduates have been graduated at post-secondary level. The case of Denmark gives the most impressive contrast. The rate of graduates among employees are nearly the same. Yet there are 34% post-secondary graduates in Denmark while only 10% in Hungary.

TABLE 1
Number of graduates per 1000 employees about 1980

Country	College/University graduates	Post-secondary qualification	All	Post-secondary %
USA	117	1796	353	50
Belgium	104	52	156	30
Hungary	74	8	82	10
France	73	58	114	51
GB	70	57	127	45
Finland	58	44	102	43
Denmark	56	29	85	34
Austria	48	–	48	–

Calculated on UNESCO statistics

Tót (1993) argues that it is caused partly by statistics. Educational statistics in Hungary (like in Central Europe) do not register post-secondary education. If they do they do not register it as higher education. Tertiary education as a statistical category is lacking at all. According to *Tót*, post-secondary education is a

rich field though unknown to statisticians and educational administration. If they know about post-secondary education they know only parts of it, that is programs organized by the existing higher education institutions. However most of the programs (and the best ones) are organized by the economy and/or by private training enterprises.

The good news about it is that there is a large and growing market for post-secondary education in Hungary. It is an activity that is expanding under economic constraints, central budgetary deficits and financial limitations. It is also an activity which positively respond to youth unemployment on the one hand and the privatization of the economy on the other. The bad news is that the market incentives are not strong enough to screen out unreliable post-secondary programs. There is no accreditation procedures as yet at the post-secondary level. It is likely that the whole field may turn to the wastage of time and energy. Policy C therefore has to concentrate on the growing market of post-secondary education in Hungary in order to regulate the market and turn the post-secondary education into the part of the national system of tertiary education. Here are some necessary steps.

- To organize a network of institutions throughout the country that would host post-secondary educational and training programs (*Brint & Karabel 1989*). It is especially important in regions with few or no higher educational capacities. Post-secondary education might be organized on the basis of the present colleges of education or agriculture (the most expanded networks of colleges in the countryside).
- To adopt accreditation procedures at the post-secondary level. Accredited programs must become standards. By this way quality assurance at the post-secondary level has to be maintained.
- Professional education together with vocational training have gradually be post-secondary education from its present status (post-elementary). Government policy has to support at least 10-year school obligation after which (not instead of) professional education and vocational training may start. At present, there is an 8-year school obligation before professional education and vocational training. Instead 12-year obligation is feasible in the foreseeable future.

Summary

The system of higher education in East-Central Europe is essentially European in its origin. However it is in its elitist developmental phase. Comparative analyses have to understand both the essential European character as well as the developmental phases. To maintain the system in its elitist phase was a hidden agreement among the political and the intellectual elite of the former regime. The 1989/90 political transition broked up the hidden agreement. Higher education in East-Central Europe faces the challenge of rapid modernization today under economic decrease and financial constraints.

One of the statistical characteristics of that rapid modernization is a new boom in higher education. It is forecasted that higher education in Hungary after years of quantitative stagnation faces rapid growth in student number and participation rates. Higher education expansion is one of the necessary steps toward the harmonization with the rest of the continent and the participation in the European Union. It is also a change in the social attitudes that needs planning and balancing policies.

Three policy alternatives have to be identified as existing and possible responses to the dilemma. Policy A is a restrictive answer. It postpones higher education expansion because of economic constraints. Such a policy would, however save the system in its present elitist form. Policy B is an expansive answer. It stabilizes the system in its present organization while expand the number of students within the system together with growing state subsidies. It is an answer which comes from the 1960s and 1970s and was characteristic to that time in Europe. Policy C concentrates on the post-secondary education as the most dynamic element of the tertiary education. It keeps the university system in its present elitist form while democratize the pre-university education. The Hungarian system is moving in this direction. Yet, some government interference is needed to regulate the growing market of post-secondary education.

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LEARNING TO STUDY

Having been in Hungary for only a year it might seem presumptuous of me to offer my opinions upon what I perceive to be the shortcomings of the Hungarian education system. Let me, therefore, explain why I feel qualified to do so. I had the good fortune (or bad – depending on which way you look at it) to be trained to teach English as a foreign language by a company in England going under the name of European Training and Communications (ETC). Subsequently armed with my TEFL Certificate and with the promise of a job in exotic and far away climes, I was invited into the office one day to be told that there was a position for me in Hungary should I decide to accept it. “Isn’t there anywhere else?” I asked plaintively. A somewhat