

230 YEARS OF THE STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT

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Our university was founded in 1635 in Nagyszombat by Péter Pázmány. At the beginning, the Universitas had two faculties, the Faculty of Art and the Faculty of Theology. The Faculty of Law was founded 32 years later, in 1667.

The age of foundation and descriptive statistics

Following the suppression of the Order of Jesuits, Maria Theresa donated the whole property of the Jesuit College of Nagyszombat to the University of Nagyszombat, which a little later, in 1777, was moved to the capital of the country, Buda, into the recently built royal palace. A pompous opening ceremony was held in Buda in the honour of the new university, “organized with such elegance and splendour as these crowds have not been able to witness since the wedding of King Matthias and Beatrix.” This event coincided with the nomination of the Jacobin-hearted Adalbert Barits, the first teacher of the statistics department established on the principles of Maria Theresa’s education act of 1777, the *Ratio Educationes*.

In this essay I would like to discuss the history of the 230-year-old department and the work of some of our fellow professors participating in teaching the subject.

Barits was a student of Sonnenfels in Vienna, and his lectures on statistics bear Achenwall’s influence. It was during his era that the number of years of the education of law was raised and statistics was taught in the fourth year instead of the third. He deserves credit for his work in achieving this step. In his essay titled *Nonnihil de educatione iuventutis...*¹ he criticizes the work of the delegation of education and calls attention to the situation of public education in Hungary at the end of the 18th century. As far as our subject is concerned, – Barits writes in his work above –, there are some who would prefer statistics to be taught in the first and second years. This, in his opinion, is absurd, as *the*

¹ *Nonnihil de educatione iuventutis, scholasticae et studiorum reformatione in ditionibus Pannonicis, Pampeloniae, 1792.*

attendance of statistics lectures can be best utilized by those who are already skilled in some other legal subject. Teaching it in the first or second year would be similar to teaching higher mathematics in the first years of secondary school. “Just as the mastery of this subject supersedes the strength and ability of children, so would the student of law in his first year, having just finished his secondary school and not being provided with any legal knowledge, be incapable of grasping or mastering any subject with reference to political affairs...”²

Barits did not write studies on statistics and neither did his successors Mátyás Mészáros and Pál Hajnik. They were followed by Márton Winkler and Jurjevich who was transferred to Pest from the Academy of Law of Zagreb and whose work entitled “*Theoria statisticae*” gives evidence of a comprehensive knowledge of the contemporary literature written in the topic of statistics. During his time statistics was a two-semester subject, the first semester based on the education of the statistics of Hungary, while in the second semester the statistics of European countries and other continents was taught. The number of the lessons was the same as that of civil law and public administrative law.

Márton Schwartner, author of the excellent work entitled “*Statistik des Königreichs Ungarn*”, was a co-applicant for the department of statistics with Jurjevich, but his nomination was out of question, as he was already a professor of diplomacy at the faculty of arts.

The period preceding the war of independence is also significant from the point of view of teaching statistics, because as from June 6, 1844, the language in which the subject had to be lectured changed to Hungarian from the previously used Latin and German. After Jurjevich retired, the first teacher to teach in Hungarian was János Henfner, tutor of Roman- and criminal law. His manuscripts, which contain the text of the first lecture on statistics presented in Hungarian are preserved in the university library.³

The first decades of the academic education of statistics and even the statistics lectures of the first half of the 19th century are characterized by Conring, Achenwall and Schlözer’s approach to state sciences.

As Hefner was only an assistant teacher, the faculty of law in Vienna proposed Sándor Konek, who was a trainee draftsman at the Hungarian Chamber of Court, for the position of head of the statistics department. However, it was not him, but Sándor Lahner from the Academy of Law of Eger, who was designated to the post by the monarch. After the suppression of the fight for independence the number of statistics lessons was reduced to 1 per week, as the

² See.: Eckhart (3), pp. 199.

³ Henfner János: *Statistics*, Manuscript, 1845-46, Univ. Library

subject was considered to be too nationalistic and it was also decreed that the subject be taught in German as well as in Hungarian.

The age of research statistics

The transition from the descriptive statistics trend to research statistics was marked by the name of Sándor Konek, Lahner's successor. This shift of scientific approach could not take place from one day to another. Konek, at the beginning of his career became known as a remarkable representative of the political sciences school, what is justified by his early works, especially the ones entitled "The Theory of Statistics" and the "Handbook of the Statistics of Hungary." His later works and his activity in the Statistical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences give evidence of the influence of the research statistical trend.

To what extent the implementation of certain decrees depended on the powers of the heads of departments at universities in that age can be well measured by the decisions of Sándor Konek, Lahner's successor. Konek taught the theory of statistics and the statistics of Austria in 4-4 lessons per week during the first semester and the statistics of the other European states in 4 lessons during the second semester. He lectured both in Hungarian and in German in turn. He had such multiple talents that apart from his lectures on statistics he also gave lectures on financial law and was planning to teach national economy as well. This effort, however, was rejected by the minister with the argument that "Statistics is already a huge, ever-expanding field of science in itself, the study of which requires a lot of time."⁴ Sándor Konek was head of the Statistics Department for 28 years, from 1854 to 1882.

Laying the foundations of the modern science of statistics

After the compromise of 1867, there were significant changes in the education of statistics. The education of law and political sciences was separated and statistics became one of the subjects of the university examinations of political sciences. For a short time the department functioned under the name "Department of Statistics and Public Administrative Law."

Károly Keleti, who, as head of the Royal Statistical Office and a private tutor at the faculty of law published his work entitled "The Handbook of Practical Statistics" in 1875, came up with the idea of reforming the education of statistics, complementing it with demographic studies, and suggested the establishment of a second department of statistics.

⁴ 31. May 1858. faculty session. Cf. Eckhart(3) pp. 432.

Although his latter suggestion was turned down by the Faculty, after Konek's death it was realized. The vacant position was then applied for by Lajos Láng, Béla Földes and Mór Pisztorý. In 1882 the king nominated Lajos Láng to the post, while, at the same time assented to the organization of a second department, putting in charge Béla Földes, a civil servant of the Statistical Office of the Capital City and later a teacher of national economical sciences and financial sciences at the Budapest Academy of Trade.

In 1889 Lajos Láng temporarily gave up his position as a lecturer, as he became an assistant-secretary of state, and until 1892 the Department of Statistics had only one tutor, Béla Földes. In this year he also exchanged his department for the Department of National Economical Sciences and Financial Sciences, and later his position as a professor for the post of minister. The departure of Láng and Földes meant a great distress for the education of statistics, the second department envisioned by Károly Keleti already operating with high standards was terminated and transformed into a new Department of the History of the Hungarian Constitution and Law.

During this period, József Jekelfalussy, head of the Royal Statistical Office addressed the Faculty in a memorandum in which he stated that he was willing to undertake the teaching of statistics if the faculty agreed to open an extra teacher's status. The faculty, however, considered this memorandum to be an unwarrantable interference and turned down Jekelfalussy's suggestions. Although I can understand that the faculty resented the leaders of the Royal Statistical Office interfering with their proceedings, I am convinced that Jekelfalussy's declination brought about losses for the faculty in the field of improving the education of political sciences. To demonstrate Jekelfalussy's concept I would like to quote from his study outlining the future of the Hungarian state, which seems to be topical even for the state administration of our days. In his study entitled "The Education of Political Sciences and the Requirements of our State Administration" he writes the following: "... not only the big social problems of the West will rest upon the young shoulders of our modern Hungarian state in the near future. We have our own assignments as well, or, more precisely, we face incomparably more tasks to be tackled than other states."

In the study he refers to problems present in economical and cultural life and the lack of unity among national minorities. He goes on writing: "the concept of the state is only an abstraction, it is provided with bones and blood by its citizens, and with brain by the prominent figures of its political scene. Consequently, a state is worth and knows as much as its leaders do. And since these leaders – from the top down to local authority level – are, as a rule, recruited from the youth of our academies, we can logically conclude that *the highest*

interest of our state requires that the education of this youth in the so-called political sciences be comprehensive and up to the highest standards.”

In this study, Jekelfalussy also expresses the need to organize the specific political education of lawyers who wish to pursue a career in the field of public administration and politics instead of the homogeneous education provided for lawyers. As he points out, out of the 20 departments of the Faculty of Law of Budapest 3½ provide education in political sciences.⁵

This attitude can be considered the germ of the interdisciplinary education, which developed in the last decades of the 20th century with the introduction of the specific education of economic-lawyers, medical-lawyers, engineering-lawyers and traffic-lawyers within the frame of the Institute for Further Education of Law.

The problem of the Statistics Department being short of lecturers was solved when Lajos Láng resigned from his position as assistant-secretary of state and worked as a university professor from 1893 until his nomination as Minister of Trade.

Lajos Láng's successor, Béla Kenéz's 29-year-long (1917-1946) operation as a lecturer, interrupted by his ministry, lasted until 1946. During his leadership of the department the research methods of statistics gained crucial ground. A significant improvement in demographic research can also be connected to his name. His concept of statistics is up-to-date even these days: "...statistics is a science the aim of which is an extensive observation of the typical attributes of the phenomena that emerge in large numbers in a society and the introduction of the composition and the changes of the society by means of numerical summarization of the results of observation together with the regularities inherent in them, and the exploration of the sources of these regularities."⁶

Kenéz was followed by Dezső Laky (1946-48), then István Varga, who headed the Statistics Department from 1948 to 1950.

Kenéz introduced a new trend in the education of statistics. During his leadership, methodological issues gained ground, which entailed a cutback in the position of statistics in the curriculum and in the role the subject played in the education of lawyers. The significance of the subject declined at the same rate at which it was moving away from legal sciences. Thus, it is understandable that the interest of the professors teaching it was focused increasingly on economic sciences instead of legal ones. The situation of the education of statistics

⁵ The Education of Political Sciences and the Requirements of our Political Life, Review on Economics and Public Administration, 1894. 1. book. pp. 3-12.

⁶ Béla Kenéz: The Theory of Statistics, Stampfel, Bratislava-Budapest, 1903, p. 5.

could be best illustrated by briefly pointing out that at the university of Budapest Béla Földes and others were pressing for the introduction of the education of economists already at the turn of the century. The National Lawyers' Assembly of 1911 took a firm stand against the one-sided education of lawyers, stating: "The general training in legal and political sciences provided by the present system of legal education is not sufficient in itself to produce a public administration performing at its best and aiming at the achievement of great goals."⁷ These thoughts indicate that Jekelfalussy's concept was finally appreciated and accepted by the community of lawyers.

This was how, after a lengthy preparation period, the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the Budapest University of Sciences was established, which started its operation in 1920 with 4 majors, namely

- general economics and public administration,
- agriculture,
- trade,
- foreign representation and consul majors.

The golden age of the Statistics Department

The golden age of the education of statistics within the frames of the Faculty of Law was characterized by professors Lajos Láng, Béla Földes and István Varga. It was during their time that professors teaching both statistics and economics were exchanged by lecturers teaching only statistics.

The establishment of the new faculty greatly extended the limits of statistical education. From among its many excellent teachers mention must be made of the names of Professors Frigyes Fellner and János Bud. Frigyes Fellner mainly concentrated on the issues of the statistics of state property, tax and finance in his scientific work. János Bud is remarkable especially for his results in the field of judicial statistics.

Lajos Láng's successor at the department was, for a short time, Ákos Navratil, while Béla Földes' successor was Károly Balás. István Varga, who came to the faculty as a private tutor in 1933 was strongly committed to statistics. He did a lot for the improvement of teaching in seminars. Dezső Laky improved both the methodology of statistics and demography. István Varga lectured until 1950, when his place as head of the department was taken by professor Ede Theiss from the University of Economics. In addition to his lectures on statistical methodology, Theiss gave lectures of economic statistics and judicial sta-

⁷ Economic Encyclopedia, vol. II. Athenaeum, Budapest, 1929, p. 11.

tistics, the latter being fairly hard to teach, only the methods could be made public, as the data of judicial statistics were made secret in those times.

After the retirement of Ede Theiss in 1959, József Kovacsics, head of the KSH (Central Statistical Office) Library and of the Statistical Department of the Faculty of Law in Pécs, became head of the Statistical Department of the Faculty of Law of ELTE. During his 30-year-long leadership, the department was thriving again. In addition to the already existing methods of general statistics he extended the education of statistics with several special statistical fields that students of law were interested in and could well use later in their careers. That is how the statistics of state administration and judicial statistics became obligatory subjects, both putting into practice the principle that education should be built not only upon methods, but factual research as well, by way of which, through analysis, students will attain real practical knowledge of the society. He urged the introduction of the training of regulatory lawyers, which resulted in the introduction of administration as a subject, and students who were interested could attend special lectures to gain further knowledge in administrative sciences. Very early he became aware that information technology and its methods can be put to good use in legal studies and helped set up an information technology lab inside the department. Also recognizing the significance of international relations he had an international historical demographic periodical entitled *Historisch – Demographische Mitteilungen*, published by the department. There were 9 issues published.

The link between science and statistical practice

As, at the time of the monarchy there was no independent Hungarian statistical organization, the Statistical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences tried to fill the gap by organizing scientific lectures and by circulating statistical publications like the series entitled *Statistical Publications*, and *Statistical and National Economical Publications*. It was largely due to the work of the Statistical Committee of the MTA (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), that, after the Compromise of 1867, a Statistical Office meeting the scientific standards of the era could be established. The MTA acknowledged the achievements of Hungarian statistics experts when they offered membership to several of the leaders and lecturers of the Statistical Department, namely Károly Keleti, Gusztáv Thirring, Béla Földes, Lajos Láng, Béla Kenéz, Frigyes Fellner, Dezső Laki, Ákos Navratil, Károly Balás and Ede Theiss. After 1946 the science of statistics fell into the background at the Academy, and up till now no prominent statisticians have been invited to be members of it.

The work of the leaders and honorary teachers of the Statistical Department was acknowledged not only by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, but also by the international organization of statisticians, the International Statistical Institute, where nearly all the leaders of the department from Károly Keleti to Tamás Katona were elected members.

The Department was always concerned that the prominent representatives of the science of statistics took part in the education and the research going on in the department, as private tutors or as honorary academic lecturers. Thus, among others, Károly Keleti, József Kőrösy, Béla Földes, János Bud, Ferenc Bozóky, Gusztáv Thirring and Dezső Elekes held the title of private tutor, Lajos Thirring, György Vukovich, András Klinger, Lajos Mádai and István Vavró were honorary academic lecturers, Andor Csepinszky and János Lovász were honorary senior academic lecturers, while István Vavró and Pergel Józsefné were honorary teachers of the Faculty.

The last two decades

In 1988 Mrs. Kovacsics was appointed head of the Department. Under a new curricular reform, in addition to obligatory general statistics, special fields of statistics were included in the curriculum as alternative subjects, which meant that from the second year students could choose between demography and economical statistics, while from the third year they could choose between judicial statistics and legal informatics. Although practice lessons were not made obligatory by the curriculum, they were announced by the department as optional, and nearly all the students registered for the practice lessons, most of which were traditional, one hour per week seminars, while for some groups it was made possible by the Department to take part in three-hour per week practices backed up by computers.

In 2001, after the retirement of Mrs. Kovacsics, Tamás Katona, the former head of KSH (Central Statistical Office) became head of the Department. During his leadership statistical practice lessons became obligatory again. Due to the lack of human and material resources, seminars backed up by computers were terminated. As a consequence of restrictive measures there was a reduction in the staff of the department. Tamás Katona is especially concerned with the scientific progress of young lecturers, two of whom are preparing to write and defend their PhD theses.

On grounds of the decision of the Council of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences on 04.06.2007, the Department of Statistics and Legal Informatics and the Department of Economics were united as of July 1, 2007. The new name of the department is: Department of Economics and Statistics, its head is Dr. Judit Steiger, associate professor.

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SUMMARY

230 Years of the Statistical Department

KATALIN NAGY KOVACSICS

Empress Maria Theresa founded the Department of Statistics of the University of Nagyszombat (today Trnava in Slovakia) in 1777, the year when she issued the law on education: *Ratio Educationis*, and she appointed Adalbert Barits, who identified with Jacobin ideas, as its first lecturer. He and his successors: Mátyás Mészáros, Pál Hajnik, Márton Winkler and Jurjevich, who was transferred to the university from the Academy of Law of Zagreb, advocated the descriptive version of statistics. On June 6, 1844 Hungarian supplanted Latin and German as the language of tuition at the department, and János Henfner, an expert on Roman and criminal law, and then Sándor Lahner began teaching in the vernacular. After the suppression of the War of Independence (1849), statistics was considered as excessively nationalistic and therefore it could only be taught in one lesson weekly, and German was brought back as the second language of tuition.

Lahner's successor, Sándor Konek, who held his lectures alternately in Hungarian and German, gradually shifted emphasis from descriptive to research statistics. Károly Keleti, director of the National Office of Statistics, recommended that demography should also be included in the curricula and that a second department of statistics should also be established. His ideas were implemented after Konek's death. In 1882 the king appointed Lajos Láng as head of the Department of Statistics and approved the founding of a second department of statistics, which was led by Béla Földes. In 1889 Láng was appointed State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance and Földes received a ministerial portfolio. As a consequence, the second department of statistics was terminated. Láng's successor, Béla Kenéz worked as a lecturer for 29 years, until 1946. He was instrumental in intensifying population science research. His successors were Dezső Laky (1946-48), István Varga (1948-50) and Ede Theiss (1950-59).

After the retirement of Theiss, József Kovacsics, director of the library of the Central Statistical Office and head of the Department of Statistics of the Faculty of Law of the University of Pécs was appointed head of the Department of Statistics at ELTE University. He held that post for 30 years and lent a fresh impetus to the development of the department. He introduced the teaching of specialized aspects of statistics to law students, which they largely benefited from upon graduation. In 1988 Katalin Nagy Kovacsics was appointed head the

department. After her retirement in 2001 Tamás Katona, former president of the Central Statistical Office succeeded her. He brought back the statistical practical course into the department's curriculum.

Under a decision of the Council of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of June 4, 2007, the Department of Statistics and Legal Informatics and the Department of Economics were merged as of July 1, 2007. The new name of the department is Department of Economics and Statistics, and its head is Dr. Judit Steiger, associate professor.

RESÜMEE

230 Jahre des Lehrstuhls für Statistik

KATALIN NAGY KOVACSICS

Maria Theresia gründete den Lehrstuhl für Statistik zeitgleich mit der Herausgabe der *Ratio Educationes* im Jahre 1777, und ernannte als ersten Professor Adalbert Barits, der den Jakobinern gesinnt war. Sowohl Barits, als auch seine Nachfolger – Mátyás Mészáros, Pál Hajnik, Márton Winkler und der von der Rechtsakademie in Agram (Zagreb) nach Pest versetzte Jurjevich – vertraten die Richtung der beschreibenden Statistik. Die Zeit vor dem ungarischen Freiheitskampf ist aus der Sicht des Statistik-Unterrichts beachtenswert, da das Fach ab dem 6. Juni 1844 in ungarischer Sprache vorgetragen werden musste, nicht mehr in Latein, bzw. Deutsch. Der erste in ungarischer Sprache unterrichtende Professor war János Henfner, Professor für römisches Recht und Strafrecht. Sein Nachfolger war Sándor Lahner. Nach der Unterdrückung des Freiheitskampfes wurde – da das Fach als viel zu nationalistisch angesehen wurde – die Stundenzahl auf eine Stunde pro Woche gesenkt und angeordnet, dass es neben der ungarischen Sprache auch auf Deutsch vorgetragen werden soll.

Den Übergang von der Staatskenntnis in Richtung der forschenden Statistik bedeutete der Nachfolger von Lahner, Sándor Konek, der sich in seinen ersten Arbeiten als herausragender Vertreter der staatswissenschaftlichen Richtung vorgestellt hatte, seine späteren Arbeiten spiegeln jedoch die Wirkung der Richtung der forschenden Statistik wider. Er hielt seine Vorträge abwechselnd in ungarischer, bzw. deutscher Sprache. Károly Keleti, Direktor des Nationalen Amtes für Statistik (Országos Statisztikai Hivatal) hatte die Idee, den Statistik-

Unterricht zu reformieren, ihn um demografische Kenntnisse zu erweitern, und bat zugleich um die Gründung eines zweiten Lehrstuhls für Statistik. Nach dem Tode von Konek wurde dieser Vorschlag auch verwirklicht. Der König ernannte im Jahre 1882 Lajos Láng und genehmigte zugleich die Organisierung eines zweiten Lehrstuhls, an dessen Spitze Béla Földes ernannt wurde. Dieser zweite Lehrstuhl wurde 1889 wieder abgeschafft, nachdem Lajos Láng zum Staatssekretär für Finanzen und Béla Földes später zum Minister ernannt worden waren. Die lange Lehrtätigkeit des Nachfolgers von Lajos Láng, Béla Kenéz, erstreckte sich über 29 Jahre, bis zum Jahre 1946. Mit seiner Tätigkeit ist die bedeutende Förderung der demografischen Forschungen verbunden. Kenéz folgten Dezső Laky (1946-48) und István Varga, der den Lehrstuhl für Statistik zwischen 1948 und 1950 leitete. 1950 kam Professor Ede Theiss an die Spitze des Lehrstuhls.

Nach der Pensionierung von Ede Theiss im Jahre 1959 wurde der Direktor der Bibliothek des Zentralamtes für Statistik (KSH), zugleich Inhaber des Lehrstuhls für Statistik der Juristischen Fakultät der Universität Pécs (Fünfkirchen), József Kovacsics, zum Inhaber des Lehrstuhls. Seine 30-jährige Tätigkeit als Lehrstuhlinhaber bedeutete im Leben des Lehrstuhls einen erneuten Aufschwung. Neben den Methoden der allgemeinen Statistik führte er den Unterricht von spezialisierten Teilgebieten der Statistik ein, die den Interessen der Jura-Studenten nahe standen und im Rahmen ihrer späteren Laufbahn gut anwendbar waren. Im Jahre 1988 wurde Frau Kovacsics mit der Leitung des Lehrstuhls beauftragt. Nach ihrer Pensionierung wurde im Jahre 2001 Tamás Katona, ehemaliger Vorsitzender des Zentralamtes für Statistik zum Lehrstuhlinhaber. Unter seiner Führung wurde das Statistik-Praktikum erneut verbindlich.

Im Sinne des Beschlusses des Rates der Fakultät für Staats- und Rechtswissenschaften vom 04. Juni 2007 wurden der Lehrstuhl für Statistik und Rechtsinformatik, sowie der Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftslehre mit dem 1. Juli 2007 vereint. Der neue Name des Lehrstuhls lautet Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftslehre und Statistik, die Inhaberin des Lehrstuhls ist Universitätsdozentin Dr. Judit Steiger.

