Factors of Pursuing Higher Education in the Hungarian-Romanian Cross-Border Region[1]

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Abstract: *One of the main challenges and tasks for young people is that they have to reflect and define their most important goals, hopes and expectations regarding their future. These decisions include pursuing higher education. In this paper, the decision to continue studies was analyzed as a landmark in the quest for status and as a consequence of the expansion of higher education, highlighting the influence of different variables such as the type and personal motivations, value systems and dimensions of attitudes towards learning, in addition to the social context of the individual. The decision to continue education is inextricably linked to young people's desire to build a career,to the future direction of social mobility. Becoming an intellectual is one possible solution to obtain a social status and upward social mobility, graduating from a higher graduation institution is often considered as a guarantee for a successful future. The aim of this paper is to analyze the motives behind the decision to pursue higher education, in correlation with the individual and social motivational context. The source of the data used in the research is the result of the cross study carried out wihtin the HERD project in 2012; a sub-sample of undergraduate students from five higher education institutions from the Romania-Hungary cross-border area was selected (N = 2,120).*

Keywords: youth; pursuing higher education; motivations in accessing higher education; choice of university; sociology of education; Romania-Hungary cross-border region.
Cuvinete-cheie: tineri; învăţământ superior; motivaţiile continuării studiilor; alegerea universităţii; sociologia educaţiei; regiunea transfrontalieră România-Ungaria.

Introduction

One of the main challenges and tasks for young people is that they have to reflect and define their most important goals, hopes and expectations regarding their future. These decisions also include pursuing higher education. Participation in higher education has exploded globally along with the massification of post-secondary education. In the second half of the twentieth century, the problem of social inequality within the educational context together with the role of the education system in reproducing social inequalities has become one of the fundamental concerns of sociological research. A priority research topic, generated by the expansion of post-secondary education, was to determine the extent to which individuals belonging to different social classes accessed post-secondary education. Another important theme was the type of higher education pursued and the analysis of the role of compulsory education in achieving equality of chances. European sociology has been particularly marked by capital theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, when dealing with these issues (apud Hrubos, 2012).

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The process of choosing a higher education institution is considered by the sociological approach as part of the process of status attainment processes, emphasizing the factors of the individual's personal social background (Bergerson, 2009). Our study investigates the motivations for pursuing education, taking into consideration the indicators of race, ethnicity, family income, parents' level of education, age groups, school context, parents' expectations, student and parent aspirations, academic performance, as well as the factors of personal motivation and value systems together with the dimensions of attitudes towards learning. However, other authors (Hatos, 2013) stress on the fact that contextual variables describing local and national policies and measures as well as special institutional features should also be considered when studying enrollment in higher education institutions.

The hereby paper relies on the model proposed by Hatos in 2012, but it expands it by introducing 2 more variables to be tested. According to the data, objective factors of social context have an indirect influence and are important in the choice of specialization at smaller HEIs: the number of spoken languages and the origin from disadvantaged backgrounds of the student exceed the influence of the financial situation or parents' level of education, but the effects of gender cannot be ignored. The introduction of value systems and learning attitudes in building the model have proven to be successful, given that they made it possible to shape different patterns of specialization choice.

In the second half of the 20th century, the issue of social inequalities in education has become a central question of sociological research, together with the analysis of processes within the educational system. As education and higher education have become a mass phenomenon, the demand for the latter has increased among youth, while, at the same time, it became more accessible. The process, of course, entailed the restructuring of the educational offer and the diversification of educational opportunities. The expansion of higher education has made a priority research topic out of the extent to which individuals belonging to different social groups can access university. Although there are several research studies in the Anglo-Saxon and Western European scholarly literature, this topic is one of the least researched in the area of our study, Partium. The innovation brought by this paper is, first of all, the fact that the nature of the mechanisms that impact on decisions to continue studies is analyzed at the level of HEIs from Partium, beyond rational evaluation and the effects of social context.

This paper attempts to put forth the motivations which enable accessing higher education institutions in a region located at the border between Hungary and Romania. The structure of the paper is divided in several chapters. First, a theoretical background is presented, followed by the description of the methodology, sample and the data used in the empirical study. Then, explanatory models of the choice to pursue higher education are presented in general, on one hand, and more particularly in the case of the Romania-Hungary cross-border area. In addition, another chapter deals with an alternate explanatory model for college choice. In the end, a short summary sums up all the important aspects touched upon in the article.

Background theories

Social inequalities in education

The scientific explanations of social inequalities are woven into the history of Sociology. The international sociological literature on the research of social stratification and mobility probably offers the most solid theoretical and methodological framework. Also, the wide spreading of research based on empirical surveys has generated a series of new theoretical models and methodological approaches at international level, in the sociology of education, too (Boudon, 1981; Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Coleman, 1998; Andorka and Simkus, 1983; Ferge, 1972; Pusztai, 2004; Róbert, 2000).

According to Bergerson (2009) one of the most disturbing challenges of our society today is the widening social inequality, and its influence is perpetuated through the educational system, by the disparity of access to opportunities. The available data widely supports that students with a lower socio-economic background have a lower participation rate in higher education than the middle- and upper class students.

In what the reproduction of educational inequalities is concerned, Boudon believes the effects of the financial background to be more important than the cultural resources of the family of origin, and he considers that during the first phase of schooling the primary factors and the cultural influences are important (quoted by Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993). Boudon sees the schooling life path as a series of transitions during which, at the end of each schooling stage, the individual and his/her family have to decide about continuing learning and which school to choose. Continuing education on a higher level or graduating is the result of a rational decision that is basically made using a cost-benefit model (secondary factor) determined by the financial situation and expected result (e.g. marketable knowledge, better job). In Boudon's view, when explaining educational inequalities, the emphasis shifts to the secondary effects as we approach higher educational levels (quoted by Csata, 2004). Goldthorpe (1995) takes Boudon's theory further to a rational decision theory model and he distinguishes two elements, beyond the perspective of decision theory. On the one hand, there are "the position theories of aspirations" according to which individual endeavors to pursue a higher education should not be interpreted in an absolute manner, instead they ought to be based on the social class positioning of the individual. On the other hand, Goldthorpe emphasizes the role of secondary effects on educational opportunities, in addition to the conditions of the expanding educational system. Goldthorpe considers that family income continues to strongly influence students' choices from a range of possible educational alternatives, therefore, his conclusion is that the remaining educational inequalities cannot be described in terms of class culture or cultural capital, but rather based on the rational action model recommended by Boudon. Critics of the theory (e. g. Scott, 1996) believe that the contradiction between the rational decision theory and the recognition of class specific social norms is not absolutely inevitable, because the fact that people follow values and norms they are emotionally attached to does not necessarily indicate that they will act irrationally. Thus, in the analysis of the school choice and the development of the school trajectory we have to consider the class specific cultural and normative influences and the considerations of decision theory, determined by the cost-benefit model as well (Csata, 2004).

A different approach of the subject is proposed by Mare (1981): he discusses the effect of educational expansion, in his analysis on access to education, separately from the students' selection process. Similarly to Boudon's vision, he develops a model in which the school trajectory is seen as a process of transitions between the schooling levels, during which the emphasis is placed on the decisions regarding pursuing education; "school hierarchy is no more than a 'decision tree' and we analyze, in this perspective, the individual 'branch points' and the role played by the family background in the decision to continue learning" (quoted by Bukodi, 1998, 160). Mare concludes that the effect of the socio-economic background prevails mostly at lower educational levels.

Raymond Boudon (1981) pointed out the correlations between pursuing education, different interpretations of the decisions to continue schooling and social status. Also, unequal ratios of the social classes participating in higher education are the result of a particular economic calculus according to which pursuing education at higher levels seen as an economic investment is undervalued by the low income families.

The impact of structural changes in higher education on continuing university studies

According to Usher (2009), the issue of higher education used to be quite simple in earlier times. The purpose of higher education was clearly and evenly understood: students were trained to become experts in a particular field, and, after graduation, they had to occupy prestigious positions in elite science institutions, within the chosen profession or the government. In the top of the hierarchy, there were the oldest institutions which attracted the most capable and wealthy students at the time, through their prestige. Students usually completed their studies in the institution where they started higher education and later on, their entire career unfolded within the profession or the economic branch which was specific to the completed studies.

Education, and higher education in particular, has become a mass phenomenon among young people worldwide, thus, the demand for research on higher education increased, which, at the same time, have become much more affordable. The process, of course, led to the transformation of education and the diversification of training opportunities. Thomas F. Green (1999) studied the phenomenon of expansion of education and found that as long as the number of individuals who have completed a certain level of education (such as high school) is low within a community, it brings little benefit to the individual himself, because the level of education does not act as a social filter. On the other hand, if enough individuals reach a certain level of education, then there is choice among potential candidates for a job; the absence or the existence of education manifests itself as a filter in this case, thus increasing the benefits of enrollment. However, in the situation in which more individuals obtain a graduation certificate, i.e. if most of them obtain a certain level of education, an inflation of education takes place. All of the above can be summarized in a comprehensive interpretation: while the number of participants in education continuously increases, the benefits of schooling tend to increase for a while, and then to fall dramatically, and when almost all individuals reach a certain level of schooling, the total benefit tends to zero, or as Hatos and Șuta (2012) put it, expansion of higher education came along with a decline in selectivity but also with a decrease in students' chances to persist in higher education institutions until degree completion. Green (1999) also concludes that when a level of education becomes a mass phenomenon, while the potential personal benefit decreases, the value of the educational institutions offering the certificate increases.

Contrary to expectations, the expansion of education has not led to an equalization of opportunities within the society. This has already been suggested by previous Hungarian research (see, for example, Ferge, 1972; Gazsó, 1971), which focused on the inequality of educational opportunities; they already showed in the 70s that children that came from families with a lower status headed to vocational schools, while children of intellectuals attended high schools. Ladányi's study from 1994 showed that the number of students belonging to the first generation of intellectuals is higher in colleges than in universities (Ladányi, 1994). Access to education is fundamental for achieving a certain status in modern societies, Romania included, where sporadic stratification and mobility studies prove that the educational achievements play an important role in status attainment (Hatos and Bernath, 2009). Equitable accessibility to higher education depends on the status and socio-economic vision of society (Toderaş, 2008). Cross cohort investigation of access to higher education, as shown by previous research (Hatos, 2011), have put forth the persistence and an even increase in inequalities in accessing higher education institutions between youth from different social classes. With the mass expansion of higher education,

institutions of tertiary education have adapted to the increased demand for education. The decision to pursue education at the next level is inevitably linked to the aspirations of young people in terms of career and the direction of the social mobility in the future. Becoming an intellectual seems to be a possible solution for upward social mobility, for obtaining a social status; graduating from higher education is, for many, a kind of guarantee for the future. This paper, however, does not study the relationship between social mobility and the education system, it focuses on pursuing education itself, as well as the context of individual and social motivation. The scientific literature on motivation, social inequality and higher education played a key role in the preparation, planning and interpretation of results of the sociological research. The sources that were considered to be related to the utmost to the topic and the regional issues were chosen from a multitude of various publications.

Higher education in Eastern Europe differs in many respects from the West and Far East in terms of higher education: given the relevance of indicators of mass higher education and the studied region, the analysis of higher education is significant only for a small part of society. The transformation of higher education, this region included, was produced by the change of regime in the 90s, followed by the introduction and implementation of international educational policies and of economic, social and political processes that impact on the education system. A trait of the higher education system from the region was the low number of students, which is characteristic for the type of elite higher education, due to political and ideological reasons. Meanwhile, in the West, higher education had a general, mass nature. The process in which higher education becomes a mass phenomenon is called the expansion of higher education in scientific publications (Hrubos, 2012; Kozma, 2004, 2006; Kozma and Rébay, 2004; Ladányi, 1994; Polónyi, 2010; Temesi, Hrubos and Berács, 2013).

A defining feature of the expansion of higher education in Eastern Europe is given by the fact that the processes which have determined education to reach a mass level took place quickly and almost simultaneously within the countries from the region; these processes had taken place over several decades in more developed countries. Most likely, this is the main reason for which, secondary and tertiary education have encountered serious problems in Eastern Europe, affecting its quality through a decrease in the effectiveness of teaching, a downturn in pupils' and students' school preparedness, etc. (Hrubos, 2012; Kozma, 2004; Pusztai, 2011).

School achievements and the decisions to pursue higher education are influenced by social capital (especially cultural and relational capital) and by the students' value system; accordingly, these factors were previously analyzed, beyond the simple interpretation of the relationship through the reproduction model. This situation permits the identification of less visible differences among individuals, as well as the exploration of social models for student recruitment.

Research objectives and methodology

The objective of the research is to analyze the motives behind the decision on pursuing higher education in the Partium region's higher education institutions.

In order to test our hypotheses regarding choice of higher education institutions (referred to as HEIs in the following) we constructed several explanatory models.

First, we assumed that students coming from families with a lower socio-economic background choose an institution closer to their home, while students with a higher socio-economic status enroll in higher prestige institutions of the region. In our case, students from Hungary prefer the University of Debrecen to the College of Nyíregyháza, students from Romania prefer the University of Oradea to Emanuel University, while the Partium

Christian University is preferred by Hungarian native speaker students coming from families with a lower socio-economic status.

In our second hypothesis we assumed that the larger HEIs – the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen – are chosen by students coming from families with higher social status, while the smaller ones – the College of Nyíregyháza, the Partium Christian University and the Emanuel University – attract students mainly for social mobility reasons. That is, individuals with high socio-economic status (living in better-equipped households), representing material values, as well as men, will apply for higher prestige institutions. Individuals from rural backgrounds, first generation intellectuals, those who identify with post-material and private-sphere values, women and older students (age), as well as those graduating from private or parochial high-schools will choose the College of Nyíregyháza, the Partium Christian University and the Emanuel University. The hypotheses are analysed below.

Hatos (2012) examines the differences in patterns of choice of institution in two countries (Hungary and Romania) using the data on seven higher education institutions from the database we also analysed, testing the hypotheses of the EMI model. The investigated dependent variables are Scott's categories of types of institutions (2011)[2], as well as the following independent variables: number of diplomas, educational level of the father measured in academic years, facilities in the household, type of settlement and gender (reference category: rural, female). The study concludes that the probability of further learning in a higher education institution depends on the social background, on the level of education of the parents and the type of settlement. This is especially true in Hungary, where higher education is much less privatized than in Romania. In both countries, smaller universities as well as private universities draw students mainly from groups of lower social background and lower levels of education, and thus they contribute to the opportunities for the further education of deprived groups. The author of the study stresses on the fact that these opportunities apply only to financially and socially less recognized and compensated disciplines, thereby supporting the hypotheses of the EMI model (Lucas, 2001). The explanatory variables used in our study have been developed and completed based on the theoretical scholarly literature. In addition, in the case of two institutions used by Hatos (2012) the number of cases was very low (23 and 52, respectively), thus our analysis does not include them. The dependent variable of the explanatory model comprised universities divided into three categories: top state university, state college and private university. The correlations regarding further learning were analyzed along with the variables described below with the use of multinomial logistic regression.

The independent variables consist of the following explanatory factors:

demographic factors: the gender of the respondent (dichotomized variable: female = 1) and the type of settlement (rural = 1);

- family background: the highest level of education of the mother and the father (number of graduated classes);
- material background: supply of consumer goods in the household;
- cultural background: number of spoken foreign languages;
- academic success: number of primary and secondary school diplomas;
- social background: missing parents or other cases of disadvantage;
- relational capital: number of friends and the extent of parental support;
- factors of choosing a HE institution: social mobility (having a recognized profession, a profitable job and have more chances in achieving a leading position), the factor of following (imitating) models (following friends' model, following parents' model and the importance of the opinion of parents and teachers), factor of university lifestyle (maintaining a wide range of relationships

with colleagues, to improve one's knowledge, the diploma facilitates finding a better job), and the factor of contextual motives (it was tax-free, I could afford it financially);

• the factor of post-material values: religious beliefs and identification with national values.

The last five factors resulted from a series of factor analyses – only the factors regarding the value systems and motivation scales for institution choice were significant in explaining the choice of HEI. In-depth details regarding the variables listed above and their selection process can be found in the author's thesis (Bernáth (Nagy), 2015). Thus, the influences of only these factors on HEI choice were studied in the present paper.

Sample and data

Our research involves the answers of students surveyed during the empirical data collection within the HERD[3] project. The complete database included many other institutions in addition to the listed ones, and involved Master's degree students as well. However, given the specific distribution of the number of cases, a correct comparison was not possible in their case, therefore we filtered out the institutions and respondents not satisfying the conditions and objectives set out in the investigation. As a result, the sub-sample included Bachelor's degree students who studied at five institutions of higher education. The vast majority of respondents from the sub-sample was registered at the University of Debrecen (N = 886), 565 students study at the University of Oradea, 400 at the Partium Christian University, 125 respondents at the Emanuel University from Oradea and 144 students were from the College of Nyíregyháza. Thus, the main target group of this research refers to Bachelor degree students from the enlisted institutions, who form a sample of 2,120 respondents.

Explanatory factors in the choice of institution

In the following we illustrate the distribution of the aforementioned variables in accordance with the dependent variable included in the analysis.

Table 1: *Number of respondents by gender and type of settlement*

Gender of respondents	Type of settlement	Type of institution			Total
		Top state university	State college	Private university	
male	female	376	28	134	538
	rural	129	17	51	197
	Total	505	45	185	735
female	urban	628	59	202	889
	rural	273	37	136	446
	Total	901	96	338	1,335
Total	urban	1,004	87	336	1,427
	rural	402	54	187	643
	Total	1,406	141	523	2,070

Our demographical data reflect the tendencies that currently prevail in higher education: the large proportion of women and respondents from urban settlements. These proportions show relatively similar distributions in the case of the dependent variable in our study. In the two top state universities there are 505 male students, 376 with an urban background, while 129 with a rural one. In the case of the college, there are 28 men with urban backgrounds and 17 with rural ones. 134 men learning in private universities come from towns and cities, while 51 from villages. The proportion of women by type of settlement is similar: approximately two thirds have an urban background, while one third a rural one.

Another important dimension of the explanatory model supported by a number of theories is the educational level of the parents. This variable was included in the analysis in the following way: the highest level of education in the database was correlated with the years of learning needed to attain a certain level of education in both countries.

Table 2: *Level of education and number of years spent learning*

Completed level of education	**Number of years spent learning in Hungary (typical)**	**Number of years spent learning in Romania (typical)**
less than 8 classes	6	6
8 classes	8	8
vocational training/vocational school without Baccalaureate	11	11
grammar school, high school with Baccalaureate	12	12
vocational secondary school Baccalaureate	12	13
Technical school	12	14
College degree (BA)	15	15
University degree (MA/MSc)	17	17
scientific degree (post-graduate training)	21	19

Source: Hatos, 2012.

In our analysis we experimented with including the variable of the level of education for both parents, but as we did not find a significant correlation regarding the level of education of the mother, we present our model built around the variable most used in the scholarly literature, the level of education of the father.

The table below shows the averages of levels of education by type of institution. The data shows that while the average of the parents is the highest in the case of top state universities, in the case of the state college the level of education of the mothers is the highest, while in the case of private universities it is the level of education of the fathers.

Table 3: *The family background of the respondents: the highest level of education of the mother and of the father (number of years spent learning)*

Type of institution	No of cases/ Average	Education of the father	Education of the mother
Top state university	N	1,362	1,378
	Average	12.90	13.09
State college	N	140	140
	Average	11.96	12.34
Private university	N	492	500
	Average	12.23	12.16
Total	N	1,994	2,018
	Average	12.66	12.80

Based on the data, the averages of education of the parents measured in years is the highest in the case of top state universities: 12.90 for the fathers and 13.09 for the mothers. This is followed by the level of education of parents with children learning in private universities: the average of the fathers is 12.23 years, while that of the mothers is 12.16 years. The fathers of college students spent 11.96 years learning, while the mothers 12.34. In all state-run higher education institutions the level of education of the mothers is higher, while in the case of students of private universities the fathers have a higher level of education.

Another indicator of social status is the parents' profession, however, due the estimation error it presents in multivariate analyses, we have replaced it with the indicator of household facilities (the aggregate indicator of equipment with consumer goods of the household) (Hatos, 2012).

Table 4: *Material background: supply of consumer goods in the household by type of institution*

Type of institution	N	Average
Top state university	1,451	4.79
State college	144	4.66
Private university	525	4.23
Total	2,120	4.65

The highest averages are observed in the case of top universities and state college. The largest number of household items on average is owned by the parents of students learning in top state universities (4.79), followed by college students (4.66) and finally the average of students learning in private universities (4.23). These indicators were also examined in the case of respondents and similar results were found.

As indicator of cultural background, we used the aggregate variable created based on number of spoken foreign languages[4], as classical indicators (number of books, number of review sessions and private classes) were not available to the needed extent. The data below show higher averages in the case of state universities.

Table 5: *Cultural background: number of spoken foreign languages*

Type of institution	N	Average
Top state university	1,451	1.0786
State college	144	0.8125
Private university	525	0.6781
Total	2,120	0.9613

The number of spoken foreign languages is the highest in the case of state funded higher education institutions, meaning that every respondent speaks at least one additional foreign language. In the case of college students this number is 8 out of 10, while only 6 out of 10 students learning in private universities speak at least one additional foreign language.

Since there was no opportunity to separately investigate which foreign languages the students of the Partium Christian University speak, we can presume that many of them did not consider Romanian to be a foreign language, and this can result in a significant distortion of the above average.

The number of diplomas was chosen as the indicator of pre-university educational success, thus examining overall academic performance in elementary and secondary school years. The next table illustrates these distributions.

Table 6: *Academic success: number of primary and secondary school diplomas*

Type of institution	No of cases/ Average	1-8. class diplomas	high-school diplomas
Top state university	N	1,451	1,451
	Average	1.05	0.88
State college	N	144	144
	Average	0.71	0.57
Private university	N	525	525
	Average	1.31	1.06
Total	N	2,120	2,120
	Average	1.09	0.90

Regarding the number of awards and diplomas received in elementary and secondary education the highest averages on both levels were found in the case of respondents from the private universities (1.31 for the awards received in elementary school, and 1.06 in the case of high school awards). It is slightly lower for the students learning in state universities (1.05 and 0.88) and the lowest in the case of college students (0.71 and 0.57). The data is surprising as we considered the number of diplomas the indicator of school performance, assuming that the more motivated students with better learning abilities acquired the highest number of diplomas, which – based on the literature – implies the choice of a higher prestige institution. We investigated these distributions separately as well, finding that in the case of Romanian institutions the students had received a significantly higher number of diplomas during their studies than their peers from Hungary.

Among the Romanian universities we found the highest averages for academic success in the case of the students of the Emanuel University (1.7 in elementary education, 1.5 on the high-school level). The next institution is the University of Oradea (1.3 and 1.2 diplomas), followed by the students of the Partium Christian University (1.2 diplomas on the elementary level, 0.94 on the secondary). The respondents from the University of Debrecen acquired 0.9 diplomas on the elementary level and an average of 0.7 in secondary education. In the case of the students of the College of Nyíregyháza this ratio is 0.7 and 0.56.

The literature shows that the higher number of siblings as well as the cases of disadvantage usually determine the choice of a lower status higher education institution. We included the numerical variable from the questionnaire on the number of siblings without any modifications. To estimate the level of disadvantage, we created an aggregate variable regarding the period before the respondents turned 18, as well as the period before graduating high-school, in which they had to indicate situations that persisted at least six months (e. g. I lived in a single-parent family, I lived with my father and my foster mother, I was raised by a relative, I lived in a social institution for minors, I lived with social parents).

Table 7: *Family background: number of siblings, missing parents or other cases of disadvantage*

Institution	Number of siblings		Number of cases of disadvantage	
	N	Average	N	Average
Top state university	1,282	1.19	1,451	0.91
State college	115	1.17	144	0.34
Private university	419	1.84	525	0.66
Total	1,816	1.34	2,120	0.81

The data show that the number of siblings is the highest in the case of the private universities (1.84); in the two state universities this ratio is similar. In connection with the other indicator of family background, we can observe that the students with the most cases of disadvantage learn in top state universities (0.91), while the examined indicators are lower for the college and the private universities. All of the above can also indicate that the students learning in smaller-size higher education institutions come from larger and more stable families, which may be related to the system of values rooted in family traditions.

The relational capital can be both the reason for and the outcome of academic success in higher education. In our analysis we consider these explanatory variables. The number of friends is an aggregate variable that refers to the size of the relationship network of the respondents in their lives outside the university ("yes" responses to questions such as: *Do you have a friend whom with to discuss your problems connected to your studies or your private life, whom with you regularly spend your free time, whom with you can discuss your future plans, who visits you or calls you when you are sick, whom from you can borrow books, notes, notebooks, whom with you can discuss scientific problems, whom you can talk with about books you read, about culture, about public issues, about art, whom with you can study).*

Parental interest and support of their children was compacted in one variable based on the answers of the respondents given to the question "How often do your parents do the following?",

when they chose "very often" or "often" (*chat with you, talk to you about culture, politics, social issues, discuss books and movies with you, ask you about your free time, include you in household chores, ask you about your studies, your friends, support you financially, organize cultural programs with you, encourage and inspire you to learn, keep in touch with your teachers/educators*).

Table 8: *Relational capital: number of friends and the extent of parental support*

Type of institution	No of cases/ Average	Number of friends	Parental interest and support
Top state university	N	1,451	1,451
	Average	7.66	7.24
State college	N	144	144
	Average	7.33	8.08
Private university	N	525	525
	Average	7.34	7.13
Total	N	2,120	2,120
	Average	7.55	7.26

Based on the responses, the averages of number of friends is the jighest in the case of top state universities, while the interest and support of the parents is highest in the case of the state college. The similarities between the state college and the two private universities can be seen in the number of friends, as well; nevertheless there nearly a one tenth point difference in favour of the state college regarding the level of support from parents. The students learning in top state universities have more friends, the students from the college have a higher level of parental support. We can however state about both findings that for the majority of respondents there is a supportive social relationship, which – as we can see in the scholarly literature as well – can compensate for the lack of economic capital.

The distributions relating to the socio-economic backoround reflect the fact that the students learning in state-funded higher education institutions have better socio-gconomic indicators than their peers leavning in private universities.

Next we analysed the distribution of the averages of value factors and motivational scales. The factors included in the study were the ones found to be the most relevant, as rgsulting from previous research (see the regression model in Bernáth (Nagy), 2015):

1. Value factor (post-material) - tested with the Principal components method, Varimax rotation, (KMO=0,850; Explained variance: 56.07%). The items composing post-material values are religious beliefs and identification with national values.

2. The motivational factors of choosing a HE institution:

• Factor of institution choice (social mobility), testel with the Principal components method, Varimax rotation, (KMO=0,826; Explained variance: 63.16%). The following items compose it: having a recognized pvofession, a profitable job and have more chances in achieving a leading position.

• Factor of following (imitating) models, testel with the Principal components method, Varimax rotation, (KMO=0,826; Explained

variance: 63.16%) and composed of these items: following friends' model, following parents' model and the importance of the opinion of parents and teachers.

• Factor of university lifestyle: tested with the Principal components method, Varimax rotation, (KMO=0,826; Explained variance: 63.16%) and composed of these items: maintaining a wide range of relationships with colleagues, to improve one's knowledge, the diploma facilitates finding a better job.

• Factor of contextual motives: tested with the Principal components method, Varimax rotation, (KMO=0,826; Explained variance: 63.16%) and composed of these items: it was tax-free, I could afford it financially.

The results of the factor analysis are summarized in the following two tables:

Table 9: *Factor of post-material values by types of institutions*

Type of institution	No of cases/Average	Post-material values
Top state university	N	1,318
	Average	-0.05
State college	N	131
	Average	-0.21
Private university	N	483
	Average	0.19
Total	N	1,932
	Average	0.00

The averages of the factor scores indicate that the students enrolled in state universities are more characterized by the material system of values, the college students by the values of the private sector, while in the case of the two private universities the post-material values are the students' priorities. These correlations are examined from several points of view, and we shall demonstrate that there are certain particularities characteristic of institutions and even specialities.

Table 10: *Factors of choosing HEI: mobility, following models and contextual motives*

Type of institution	No of cases/ Average	The factor of social mobility	The factor of following models	The factor of contextual motives
Top state university	N	1,235	1,235	1,235
	Average	0.07	0.06	-0.01
State college	N	119	119	119
	Average	-0.14	-0.07	-0.07
Private university	N	416	416	416
	Average	-0.17	-0.16	0.05
Total	N	1,770	1,770	1,770
	Average	0.00	0.00	0.00

Among the reasons of choice of institution in the case of state universities the factor of social mobility is dominant, while the motives behind choosing a college are the tendencies of age change. In the case of students applying for private universities the motives are mostly associated with the factor of relationship building.

Explanatory factors of choice of institution in Romania and Hungary

Our hypotheses (the students from Hungary prefer the University of Debrecen to the College of Nyíregyháza, the students from Romania prefer the University of Oradea to the Emanuel University, while the Partium Christian University is preferred by Hungarian native speaker students coming from families with a lower socio-economic status; the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen are chosen by students coming from families of intellectuals, while the College of Nyíregyháza, the Partium Christian University and the Emanuel University are chosen by students for mobility reasons; individuals with high socio-economic status, representing material values, as well as men will apply for higher prestige institutions, while individuals from rural backgrounds, first generation intellectuals, those who identify with post-material and private-sphere values, women and older students (age), as well as those graduating from private or parochial high-schools will choose the College of Nyíregyháza, the Partium Christian University and the Emanuel University) are also tested within the following analyses.

In order to test our hypotheses we used the variables previously presented: we examined their effects on the choice of type of institution by applying multinomial logistic regression analysis. The model has been revised several times to obtain the best fit, thus the most relevant items had been selected in our study. The table summarizing the results shows that although significant, the explanatory capacity of the model is not exhaustive, suggesting that the group of independent variables could be further extended with some that present a bigger impact on the choice of type of institution beyond the analyzed variables. It is also important to mention that we could draw clearer conclusions if we increased the number of sample units or included more institutions of the same type, and the explanatory value of the model would also increase.

In the following we start with the presentation of the results from the Romanian institutions.

Table 11: *Explanatory factors of choice of institution in Romania - multinomial logistic regression*

RO - private university	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Intercept	1.442	0.518	7.752	1	0.005	
high-school diplomas	**0.289**	**0.062**	**21.725**	**1**	**0.000**	**1.335**
support of friends	-0.052	0.028	3.343	1	0.067	0.949
parental support	0	0.031	0	1	0.991	1.000
cases of disadvantage	**-0.352**	**0.079**	**19.62**	**1**	**0.000**	**0.704**
trust	0.023	0.022	1.095	1	0.295	1.023
education of the father	**-0.085**	**0.033**	**6.588**	**1**	**0.010**	**0.918**
rural	-0.188	0.158	1.415	1	0.234	0.829
female	-0.159	0.15	1.13	1	0.288	0.853

RO - private university	B	Std. Error	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
the factor of mobility	**-0.161**	**0.07**	**5.286**	**1**	**0.021**	**0.852**
number of spoken foreign languages	**-0.778**	**0.112**	**48.308**	**1**	**0.000**	**0.459**
endowment with household equipment	**-0.147**	**0.044**	**11.231**	**1**	**0.001**	**0.863**
the factor of post-material values	**0.282**	**0.077**	**13.271**	**1**	**0.000**	**1.326**
Category of reference: University of Oradea LR=159.78 (df=12) p<0.001 Nagelkerke R^2=0.176 Classification = 78.3%						

The multinomial logistic regression model marked the effects of seven variables to be significant on the Romanian sub-sample with the University of Oradea as reference category. Based on this we can state that while the chance that a student will choose the two private universities is 1.33 times higher with the unit increase of the number of acquired diplomas in high-school, and 1.32 times higher in the case of the factor of post-material values, the unit increase of the level of education of the father and the factor of mobility, as well as that of the number of spoken foreign languages and equipment with consumer goods implies the probability of choice of the University of Oradea.

We continue the testing of our hypotheses by analysing the explanatory factors of choice of institution in the case of students from Hungary in a separate model.

Table 12: *Explanatory factors of choice of institution in Hungary – multinomial logistic regression*

HU - College of Nyíregyháza	B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Intercept	-0.194	0.911	0.046	1	0.831	
high-school diplomas	-0.163	0.126	1.684	1	0.194	0.849
support of friends	-0.066	0.045	2.132	1	0.144	0.936
parental support	**0.165**	**0.058**	**8.113**	**1**	**0.004**	**1.179**
cases of disadvantage	**-0.629**	**0.164**	**14.684**	**1**	**0.000**	**0.533**
trust	-0.068	0.036	3.519	1	0.061	0.934
education of the father	-0.096	0.058	2.74	1	0.098	0.908
rural	**0**.385	0.247	2.43	1	0.119	1.469
female	0.208	0.269	0.597	1	0.440	1.231
the factor of mobility	-0.167	0.116	2.091	1	0.148	0.846
number of spoken foreign languages	**-0.451**	**0.188**	**5.729**	**1**	**0.017**	**0.637**

HU - College of Nyíregyháza	B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
endowment with household equipment	**-0.156**	**0.078**	**3.991**	**1**	**0.046**	**0.856**
the factor of post-material values	-0.208	0.124	2.826	1	0.093	0.812
Category of reference: University of Oradea LR=78,93 (df=12) p<0.001 Nagelkerke R^2=0.162 Classification = 91.8%						

On the Hungarian sub-sample the choice of the College of Nyíregyháza is 1.17 times more likely with the unit increase of parental support, while the unit increase of the number of spoken foreign languages and of equipment with consumer goods makes the choice of the University of Debrecen more probable. Surprisingly, in this explanatory model the level of education of the parents (father) and the type of settlement does not play a significant role. In Adrian Hatos's above mentioned analysis (2012), in the case of small-scale public universities the unit increase of the level of education of the father makes applying for a top state university 0.9 times more likely.

With respect to our hypotheses, we only found partial explanations in the two models described above. In accordance with our assumptions, the students from lower socio-economic status families prefer the Emanuel and Partium Christian University, however, based on the measured indicator of academic performance, the students with more diplomas prefer the three smaller higher education institutions. Our assumption formulated in our second hypothesis was confirmed, thus, the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen are more likely to be chosen by students coming from families of intellectuals, while the College of Nyíregyháza, the Partium Christian University and the Emanuel University are more likely to be chosen by first generation intellectual students.

Another explanatory model of choice of institution: large and smaller higher education institutions

For a more nuanced interpretation of the results, we have examined the differences of choice of types of institutions from another point of view, as well. We grouped the higher education institutions into two categories creating the "smaller higher education institutions" and "larger higher education institutions" categories. Based on former results it was obvious that in order to identify the similarities and differences between the institutions it is much more appropriate to group the two largest higher education institutions, the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen into one category, while the other three smaller ones into another. Including the institutions into a dependent variable created based on this logic, we attempted to complete the testing of the first two hypotheses of our analysis.

Thus, the dependent variable includes the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen forming the category denominated as larger higher education institution (N=1,451), while the other three higher education institutions are included in a separate category, that of smaller higher education institution (N=669).

The dependent variable was built into the regression model separately, first together with the above explanatory variables, then separately, using the motivational and systems of value

factors. We examined the factors explaining the choice of larger higher education institutions as well as the ones that make the choice of smaller higher education institutions more likely.

The results of the multinomial logistic regression used to explain the model are summarized in the table below. Four separate regression models were used: the indicators of socio-economic background and academic success, as well as the factors of values. Only those variables are included in the table that proved to be significant and represent the explanatory factors in choosing the HE institution.

Table 13: *Explanatory factors of choice of institution by types of institutions - multinomial logistic regression*

Factors explaining the choice of larger higher education institutions			Factors explaining the choice of smaller higher education institutions		
Explanatory variables	Sig.	Exp(B)	**Explanatory variables**	Sig.	Exp(B)
endowment with household equipment	0.009	0.932	number of diplomas obtained during high-school	0.007	1.144
support of friends	0.002	0.936	parental support	0.054	1.046
education of the father	0.002	0.927	-		
number of spoken foreign languages	0.000	0.495			
The motivational factors of choice of HE institution					
social mobility	0.000	0.678	university lifestyle	0.000	1.264
following models	0.052	0.897	contextual factors	0.000	1.221
The factors of values					
the factor of material values	0.000	0.816	the factor of post-material values	0.001	1.180
Category of reference: large higher education institution LR=162.82 (df=13) p<0.001, Nagelkerke R^2=0.158, Classification = 70.4%					

Among the factors explaining the choice of a larger higher education institution – in our case the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen – the endowment with household equipment, the support of friends, the level of education of the father and the number of spoken foreign languages represent significant differences in the model. All of these are connected to types of capital: economic and social, including various forms of cultural and relational capital.

Regarding the choice of types of institutions we can therefore conclude that as the number of household equipment and the number of friends increase, the choice of one of the two larger higher education institutions increases 0.93 times. Also, as the level of education of the father measured in years increases the likelihood of choosing larger HEIs 0.92 times, while the number of spoken foreign languages generates a 0.495 increase. Furthermore, the more diplomas an individual received during high-school, and the greater the degree of parental support is, the greater the chance of the student to enroll in a smaller higher education institution: in our case the Partium Christian University, the Emanuel University or the College of Nyíregyháza.

Among the analyzed motivational factors those of mobility and following models make enrolment in a larger higher education institution systematically more likely, being an explanatory motive in all three cases. When applying

for a smaller institution, further education is determined by contextual and relational factors; among the reasons of choice of institution, university lifestyle and the contextual factors have proven to be decisive. Regarding value preferences, the effect of material values is particularly strong in the case of larger higher education institutions, while enrolling in a smaller higher education institution is made more likely by the factor of post-material values.

Thus, regrouping the institutions into larger and smaller HEI categories has proven to be successful in the analysis of explanatory factors of HEI choice than the three categories model.

Summary

In our study we reflect upon issues related to continuing studies in higher education institutions, by applying sociological tools and methods. We consider that continuing to study is one of the critical milestones of the status gaining process and a result of structural changes in higher education. Also, this decision is determined by the dimensions of personal motivation and by the value factors in addition to the classical explanatory variables of the individual's social background. Young people's decision to continue learning is inevitably linked to the desire to build a career and the future paths of social mobility. One possible solution of upward social mobility and status achievement is to become a university graduate, as receiving such a degree is perceived by many as a guarantee for the future.

The source of the data from our analysis is the cross-sectional research carried out within the HERD project, where we examined the sub-sample of undergraduate respondents studying at five higher education institutions. The sample consists in 2,120 respondents from five higher education institutions from the Hungary-Romania border region, out of which 35.55% male and 64.5% female. The majority of the respondents are enrolled at the University of Debrecen (N=886), 565 study at the University of Oradea, 400 at the Partium Christian University, 125 at the Emanuel University of Oradea, while 144 at the College of Nyíregyháza.

The main purpose of our study was the analysis of motivation for pursuing higher education and the choice of institution, in the context of future plans and factors of value systems in order to find the main similarities and differences between the institutions from our research. In analyzing our data, we relied on the sociological theories regarding the access and pursuing HEIs, focusing on Lucas's (2001) effectively maintained inequality model as reference point for result interpretation.

As a first conclusion, the direct effects of the social background upon the first generation intellectuals can be identified. The model of college choice designed by Chapman (1981) is also confirmed by our results: college choice is determined by the students' social background and several other features correlated with external characteristics of the student, such as the influence of important others, characteristics of the higher education institution (location), as well as the attitude towards pursuing educational programs. Expanding the model proposed by Hatos (2012), this study introduces new factors that impact on decisions to continue studies, i.e. values and motives behind institution choice. The novelty of the research is primarily given by the fact that the underlying mechanisms of decisions regarding further education are examined separately from the role of the cultural effect of the social background and that of rational deliberation in the typical higher education institutions of the Partium region.

As a result of analyzing our empirical data, we have found that, in accordance with our hypotheses, the students from lower socio-economic status families, with supportive parents, are more likely to choose the smaller higher education institutions, while individuals with rural backgrounds, first generation intellectuals, those who identify themselves with post-material and private-sphere values, women and older students (age), as well as those graduating from private or confessional high-schools, will tend to choose smaller

HEIs, such as the College of Nyíregyháza, the Partium Christian University and the Emanuel University. Among the factors of pursuing education, the contextual and relational factors make it more likely to choose a smaller higher education institution; while among the reasons of choosing the HEIs in general, university lifestyle and the contextual factors have proven to be decisive. The larger higher education institutions (the University of Oradea and the University of Debrecen) are more likely to be chosen by students who come from families of intellectuals (the father has a higher level of education), who live in high socio-economic status households (better equipped ones), have more friends, speak more foreign languages, and their decision to continue education and choice of institution are determined by mobility and following models, while they represent material values.

Understanding the motives behind choosing an educational path can be important in the recruitment practices of the institutions, in influencing higher education policies and in contributing to the research in the field of the sociology of education, as well. The competition for students among higher education institutions makes understanding of the preferences and decision-making mechanisms they apply necessary, both in choosing the institutions and in deciding about pursuing education. Based on our results, universities can acquire professional knowledge on the youth applying to study at their institution, on the "profile" of the applicants, while the individuals still having to make their choice can be more aware in deciding about their possibilities for further education. The scientific material resulting from the research can be a pillar for career counselling and institutional development, based on the provided information on motivations to pursue higher education, and it also serves to enrich the results of empirical research on recruitment mechanisms of cross-border higher education institutions and on young students. Results and conclusions of our study can be applied in high school career counselling, as well.

Notes

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[2] Top (research and education) state higher education institutions, secondary (education) state higher education institutions, private higher education institutions.

[3] The HERD research project – "*Higher Education for Social Cohesion – Cooperative Research and Development in a Cross-border Area*" – was completed and financed within the framework of the Hungary-Romania Cross Border Cooperation Programme (HURO/0901/253/2.2.2.). Data collection took place in the spring of 2012. The overall aim of the project was to analyze the role of higher education in strengthening social cohesion. The total size of the sample is 2,728. Further details about the project can be found on the project website.

[4] Péter Róbert followed the same strategy in a former study (Róbert, 2000).

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