

Book Review

From Ukraine to Hungary: A Specific Case of Student Mobility

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Introduction

A *Mobility, career development, integration. Students of the Balassi Institute in Transcarpathia* is about the minority Hungarian student mobility. migration of Hungarian minority communities from Central Europe to Hungary is a well-known phenomenon in the international academic discussion. This book examines the specific link between migration and higher education studies by scrutinizing minority Hungarian students from Transcarpathia who graduated from the Balassi Institute.

The author of the book, Katalin Pallay, is an associate professor at the Department of Pedagogy, Psychology, Primary and Preschool Education and Management of Educational Institutions of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education (Ukraine). She is also a researcher at the Lehoczky Tivadar Social Science Research Centre in Berehove and the Centre for Higher Education Research and Development at the University of Debrecen. The volume is the 17th publication of the University of Debrecen Centre for Higher Education Research and Development's Educational Research Library series, edited by Gabriella Pusztai. Gabriella Pusztai, Attila Z. Papp, Ildikó Orosz and Réka Ágnes Dusa are the peer-reviewers of the volume.

Review

International academic studies on student mobility most often analyse migration processes in the global higher education space. However, in the Carpathian Basin, there is a specific form of international student mobility. This is the so-called Hungarian-Hungarian mobility, i.e. the student mobility to Hungary of Hungarian minority youth living in the countries surrounding Hungary (Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia). In contrast to global mobility for study purposes, this movement takes place in a closed geographical space, is one-way, and multi-purpose. Beyond this, perhaps the most striking difference is that mobility is the result of Hungary's national policy objectives. Support for Hungarian minorities, with an emphasis on elite education minority Hungarians, is an integral part of Hungary's policy. Moreover, the education of minority Hungarian youth in Hungary is an essential and central element of this policy. The main aim is to ensure that well-educated young people return home and put their knowledge to good use in their own communities, thus contributing to the cultural and economic development of the community. The introduction of a number of educational policy instruments helps to guarantee the success of higher education for minority youth in Hungary. In addition to the scholarship programme and other forms of support, mainly financial, Hungary supports the successful studies of young people by organising special training courses and by operating a complex system of support facilities (e.g. a network of dormitories). The Balassi Institute's university preparatory course (formerly known as the International Preparatory Institute) plays a key role among these institutions. The two-and-a-half-year

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preparatory course aims to ready students for higher education in Hungary, who have not graduated from high school there. In a way, this is a catch-up programme of sorts in the educational palette.

Katalin Pallay's book looks at Hungarian students from Transcarpathia who graduated from the Balassi Institute. Her goal is to explore the reasons for the student learning mobility, their academic careers, labour market placement and migration decisions. The point of the study is twofold: to analyse students' academic performance and to delve into the effectiveness of support policies in Hungary.

The book is well structured, logically organised, with each chapter being organically linked to the central theme of the book. In the first chapter, the author provides a clear statement of the problem, followed by the relevance of the empirical research on which the book is based.

The second chapter presents the education of Transcarpathia and the Balassi Institute, mainly from the viewpoints of educational policy and the history of education. It gives a detailed overview of the history of Hungarian-language higher education in Transcarpathia from 1919 to the present day in light of Soviet and Ukrainian educational policy. The establishment and operation of the Balassi Institute is described with photo documentation and ample statistical data.

The third chapter of monography discusses Hungarian and international theoretical approaches to the study of the topic. The author basically draws on Ernst George Ravenstein's push-pull theory to interpret the factors influencing student mobility. At the same time, statistical data and previous research results are used to furnish a solid basis for the following chapter, which proffers an empirical analysis of the issue.

The empirical research on which the monograph is based was conducted in 2019. The population consisted of students of the International Preparatory Institute from 1991-2015. The total population was 588 students of Transcarpathian origin, and 59% of the graduates were included in the sample using the snowball method. The author used a self-developed questionnaire, which was developed prior to a pilot focus group interview survey. The questions of the questionnaire covered seven major areas: the social background of the students, their school career, their study career at the Balassi Institute, their higher education career, the characteristics of their employment, their mobility, their commitment to their homeland and their Hungarian identity.

The author carried out a comparative study comparing young people who settled in Hungary with those who returned to Transcarpathia and those who went abroad, with the aim of identifying differences and similarities between the students. The central question of the monograph is what factors influenced the final settlement decisions of the former students. To answer the author's research questions, a methodologically sound and statistically sound analysis has been conducted.

The most important result of the analysis is that more than three quarters of the graduates from Transcarpathia did not return home, but most of them settled in Hungary (with a smaller number in other foreign countries). Regarding students from Transcarpathia, learning mobility can therefore be interpreted as a specific migration cascade that facilitates permanent settlement. This aspect is already present at the time of choosing a specialisation, as the analysis showed statistically that the choice of specialisation had a significant impact on the decision to settle, which suggests that there is a real intention to settle in higher education. This result also clearly shows that the original objective of the Hungarian support policy has been achieved to a limited extent.

When deciding whether to settle in Ukraine, students mainly considered the more favourable socio-economic environment and better labour market opportunities in Hungary, as well as lower wages, corruption and inadequate healthcare in Ukraine. The analysis also shows that students who work in Hungary have a higher status, higher education levels, better educational achievements and a wider network of contacts in country. A remarkable finding of Katalin Pallay's research is that returnees lead a 'floating' lifestyle, i.e. they maintain contacts in Hungary to facilitate their resettlement if necessary. This also implies that resettlement in Hungary is a central idea even for graduates who have returned to their homeland because of their higher native commitment and stronger Transcarpathian identity.

The author's empirical results also have important educational policy relevance. For example, she mentions the possibility of organising a preparatory training programme in Transcarpathia, modelled on the preparatory training offered by the Balassi Institute, which would help minority Hungarian students to successfully enter the Ukrainian higher education system, primarily by improving their knowledge of Ukrainian and developing their language competences.

Conclusions

Katalin Pallay's empirical research clearly shows that, despite Hungary's national policy aspirations, the establishment of the support system has had the opposite effect. The support system, implemented as part of

national policy, was designed to ensure the supply of intellectuals to Hungarians beyond the borders, but it did little to counteract Hungary's brain-draining effect. Beyond this, Katalin Pallay's work makes a significant contribution to the international discourse on learning mobility. In her book, she links learning mobility to the final settlement plans of young people. On the basis of her data, she argues that for young Hungarians from the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority, migration to Hungary for study purposes is in fact a means of resettlement. On this basis, it is worth reflecting on the conceptualisation of the phenomenon. It is reasonable to ask whether we can really talk about migration for study purposes or rather about studies for migration purposes. This also offers a new approach to international theoretical models of learning mobility.

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