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Dropping out – Hungarian experiences at vocational training

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ABSTRACT

The proportion of people with low school qualifications remains significant in Hungary, which not only makes it difficult for them to enter the current labour market but may also exclude them in the long term. For the increasing number of people with a low level of education, dropping out seems to be one of the most common reasons. Prevention as a determinative measure can provide answers to this problem. The study focuses on the issue of secondary school drop-out. The study results were based on the methodology of questionnaire surveys and semi-structured conversations. Based on the information obtained from the survey, this study continuously presents the results connected to drop-out conditions and compensatory measures. The study results highlight the significant effects of school and family, including previous school experiences, influence on the place of residence, the labour market status. The conclusions drawn from the results address the topic in a practical way and provide an opportunity to develop a possible action plan to prevent drop-outs.

Kulcsszavak
munkaerőpiac, visszatérés a
képzésbe, iskolai végzettség,
fejlesztés

Az alacsony iskolai végzettséggel rendelkezők aránya továbbra is jelentős Magyarországon, ami nemcsak megnehezíti számukra a jelenlegi munkaerőpiacra való belépést, hanem hosszú távon tartósan kiszorulnak onnan. A

növekedést kiváltó egyik leggyakoribb ok a lemorzsolódás. A megelőzés, mint meghatározó intézkedés választ adhat erre a problémára. A tanulmány a középiskolai lemorzsolódás kérdéskörére fókuszál kérdőíves felmérés és félig strukturált interjú módszereket alkalmazva. A tanulmány célja, hogy feltárja a szakképzésből való lemorzsolódás körülményeit, valamint a kompenzációs intézkedésekhez kapcsolódó eredményeket. A kutatás eredményei rámutatnak az iskola és a család jelentős hatására, beleértve a korábbi iskolai tapasztalatokat, a lakóhelyet és a munkaerő-piaci helyzetet. Az eredményekből levont következtetések gyakorlati módon foglalkoznak a témával, és lehetőséget adnak egy esetleges cselekvési terv kidolgozására a lemorzsolódás megelőzése érdekében.

Introduction

The issue of school leaving without any qualifications manifests as a very important area both from the point of view of the public education and the general operation of the economy. Among the steps managing the drop-out, essential emphasis is put on not only the reaching of those who already left the school and the supporting of their return to the education system but also the forestalling and prevention in the course of the process. In order to make the problem solving possible by appropriate measures, it is essential to interpret and study that accurately; to this end, not only national measures but also European Union-wide directives on the drop-out have been formulated.

The most critical elements and practices of a comprehensive policy framework proposed by the European Union in the triad of prevention-intervention-compensation (Nichols and Nichols, 1990; Imre 2014; Jørgensen, Järvinen and Lundahl. 2017; Vidal, Romero and Arredondo 2017; Williams et al. 2018) are defined as follows:

Prevention: Regarding prevention, most countries have focused on career planning (in this regard, on the general development of education and guidance) and the restructuring of the career counselling system. Some Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Spain, France, Luxembourg) sought to facilitate the transition between general education and vocational training in a wide range of methods. It is a common practice in Austria, Estonia, Finland and Sweden to help students with special educational needs select their vocational training course so that they can try out different areas of expertise in the scope of afternoon activities and choose one based on their acquired experiences. There are known practices for forecasting drop-out, such as monitoring absences and tracking each student's educational path.

Intervention: Students with behavioural and learning problems might temporarily leave traditional education in Luxembourg and the Netherlands while receiving personal support to decide their next steps. Finnish provinces recruit youth workers to help finish secondary education for students who drop out of the educational and training system. In Denmark and Sweden, personalized development plans and special information services are offered to students who have not completed their secondary education.

Compensation: In the Member States, compensatory measures are usually implemented in the form of "second chance" programmes, which facilitate the return to the education system or the labour market. In Austria, professional internship awards and coaching opportunities are offered for 15-19-year-olds to compensate for the missing components of their training. Similarly, in Portugal and Sweden three-month courses are offered for young people in order to return to the higher secondary level of education, while one-year courses are available in Luxembourg for students under the age of 18, which include key competencies required for vocational training or accessing the labour market. In Slovenia, project training and mentoring with flexible and personalized support are offered for young drop-outs aged between 15 and 25 years, which assist them in developing their personal and professional career path. Similarly, Lithuania and Norway also offer a combined system in which career motivation, education and workplace practice are combined for hardly reachable unemployed young people to be returned to work or education.

It is the task of compensatory measures to provide a second chance in learning, namely that young adults be given the opportunity to return to education and training. Elaboration of the appropriate compensation measures requires exploring risk factors of early school leaving.

Theoretical background: topicality and possible root causes

Dropping out is a frequently-heard term the meaning of which covers a complex concept. In general, it concerns the students leaving the education without any completed. Nevertheless, the term can refer to an event when it occurs because it can be linked to a date thus has an administrative nature but, at the same time, can be interpreted as a process. The process-based approach allows for the exploration of attitudes, behaviours, information regarding the common background i.e. the factors through which the early school leaving becomes probable (Rumberger 2012). Based on a precise definition, the students endangered by dropping out were determined in Act on Hungarian National Public Education (point 37 of § 4 of Act CXC of 2011). Subject to the Act, those students can be regarded as being endangered by drop-out whose average learning outcomes are below medium performance in the given

school year or showing a deterioration of at least 1.1 in comparison with the average result of the previous school year and, in case of those students, an application of complex systemic pedagogical measures becomes necessary. Based on the definition used in the European Union (EU), those persons aged 18 to 24 can be considered as early school leavers who do not possess any completed secondary education or vocational skills (Molnár 2012).

Based on numerous research results, it can be concluded that the drop-out can be interpreted as a result of a longer process; however, its premonitory signs can be already discernible during primary school years (Bánkúti, Horváth and Lukács, 2004; Liskó 2003). Based on the survey carried out by the Hungarian Education Office (2019) in the first semester of the school year 2018/2019, albeit the drop-out can be recognised at all types of schools, but its risk is the highest in case of the vocational secondary schools. During an international-level survey (European Commission, 2018; Eurostat, 2019) 12.5% of students aged 18 to 24 abandoned their studies which is still significant compared to the target of 10%. With this latest data, Hungary is in the last third of the established ranking list, followed by Bulgaria (12.7%), Italy (14,5%), Romania (16.4%), Malta (17.5%) and Spain (17.9%).

There are such different and complex reasons in the backdrop of drop-out among which the social, economic, cultural, educational, gender and family factors have an equally influential effect. According to some experts' opinions, the factors making the drop-out likely can be divided into two groups (Rumberger 2012) where, the categories of the individual (learning outcomes, behaviour, attitude, socio-economic background) and institutional (family, school, communities) factors have been identified. Within these factors, based on several professional opinions, concretely the parents' qualification and employment, place of residence (Liskó 2004; Kertesi and Kézdi 2008, Szanyi 2013), gender, age, socially disadvantaged situation, soundness of family cohabitation (Budavári-Takács and Szalma 2009; Cseh-Papp 2010) mobility, family structure (Hickman, Greenwood and Miller 1995; Terry, 2008; Dommers et al. 2017), non-success in learning, repetition of the school year, presence and absence (Lee – Breen 2007; Suh – Suh – Houston 2007) and behavioural problems are the most decisive factors of the dropping out (Freeman and Simonsen 2015). However, based on several related studies, it can be generally said that the problems mainly affect groups with a low social-economic status where the factors causing early school leaving often have a cumulative effect on each other (Kertesi and Kézdi 2009, 2010, 2012; Fehérvári 2008; Mártonfi 2011; Pusztai, Fónai and Bocsi 2019; Bihari 2021).

In Hungary, a significant group of young people affected by early school leaving is roma. The proportion of roma NEET youth (38.2%) is four times higher than that

of non-roma youth (9.4%) (R. Fedor 2021). The low level of education, the lack of vocational training, the roma ethnicity make it difficult to find a place in the labour market, which can lead to long-term unemployment, income poverty and, in the end, exclusion. Roma families are characterised by almost all of these barriers (Láczy and R. Fedor 2017, R. Fedor and Balla 2019).

Mitigating the early school leaving is in line not only with the efforts of a given affected country but of the entire EU, according to which the common goal is to reduce the number of the NEET ('not in education, employment or training') young people (Jackson, 2013). A part of the EU's strategic objectives for education is to target the number of early school leavers, i.e. the drop-out below 10% by 2020 (European Commission 2018). Its impact on the labour market can mostly emphasize the importance of the topic since both domestic and international surveys have pointed out that a higher level of education results in a better labour market position and can reduce the risk of unemployment. So that the trend of dropping out can be reduced, it is necessary to know the root causes and respond to those effectively. In order to achieve that, the study aims to examine students who have gone through the drop-out process directly affected by the area, analyse the individual reasons, establish common denominators, and formulate practice-oriented suggestions for solutions from them.

Material and methods

The study aims to identify the factors behind early school leaving and the causes of this phenomenon. The abductive nature of the research does not require hypotheses to be formulated, but it is vital to formulate the research questions precisely. The study's research questions concern the family, career guidance and school circumstances of the drop-outs, how they experienced the post-drop-out period and how the possibility of re-education affected them. This kind of abductive research is particularly well suited to topics we have limited knowledge about so that the researcher can rely on the affected people's mental models. Moreover, the qualitative (interview with 16 participants), quantitative (questionnaire with 103 respondents) and abductive nature of the research method allows valid conclusions to be drawn on a smaller sample size, covering only a sub-segment of society.

The interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2016 in three counties by involving affected 16 persons aged under 25. The gender distribution was nearly the same. Such young people took part in the semi-structured interviews who albeit had suffered from and experienced the drop-out of vocational education, were able to return to the school desks and participate in catching-up training, thereby acquiring skills that can be used in the labour market. The selected counties were Pest (low

drop-out rate), Nógrád (high drop-out rate) and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (high drop-out rate), where remedial training was successful.

The results are also essential because there are few pieces of research concerning the analysis of the period between the school leaving and the retraining. During the interview, the focus of the conversations was put on getting to know the individual life paths and on the changes in the school-related emotions by means of which the reasons and circumstances of dropping out and the conditions of retraining were determined.

The questionnaires for the second phase of the survey were completed in spring 2017 by a random sample of 103 people selected, answering on a traditional paper and pencil way. The survey was conducted in Heves, Fejér, Bács-Kiskun and Pest counties, where labour market indicators were in line with the national average.

The questionnaire sample is not representative. Regarding gender distribution, 47.1% of the respondents were male and 52.9% female. The average age of the respondents is 27 years, and their place of residence is almost equal in terms of the proportion of people living in towns and cities. The highest proportion of respondents (45.7%) graduated from vocational training school, followed by the proportion of vocational school leavers (30%) and the proportion of secondary vocational school drop-outs (24.3%). One-fifth of the respondents (21.4%) continued their studies later. The sample's highest drop-out rates were in the second year of vocational school and the first year of vocational training school. The low educational level of parents is a characteristic of early school leavers. There is a wide variation in the current labour market status of the respondents: 50% are unemployed, a quarter (25%) are in public employment, a fifth (20%) have a permanent 8-hour job, and three in five (5%) are in part-time employment.

The questionnaire has contained mostly closed questions and a 5-point Likert scale. The content focused on socio-demographic characteristics, school experiences, drop-out circumstances and compensatory measures. The data is valued by descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation.

In our work, we undertook to investigate a known phenomenon on a given sample, so our aim was not to obtain new results but to confirm or question the correlations of previous research findings. This, together with the 103-item sample size, explains why we used primarily descriptive analysis in our study.

Results and Discussion

Reasons of dropping out

Women involved in the interviews mainly explained their school drop-outs with reasons related to the family. The most common reasons among girls were marriage,

pregnancy, taking care of sick parents, or a parent's death. Among boys, the most crucial reason was escaping excessively strict, hardly bearable and too long-lasting school environments.

"We got married, you know; it is early for the Roma." "My mum died; I had to cook for my dad and my brothers".

"I wanted to go to school, but my mum said she needed help at home with the cleaning because my other siblings were already at school. Mum could not do it on her own."

"My dad died, and my mum was ill, so someone had to take over the role of the family breadwinner."

Some respondents did not like the proportion of practical and theoretical subjects in school, while others found the originally chosen profession unacceptable later. In some cases, respondents identified poor school performance as a reason for leaving school.

Interviews have shown that dropping out of school does not primarily happen "in premeditation", and in most cases, it is not solely based on the individual's own decision. It soon became known that respondents were more likely "drifting" through their lives; they were unaware of the benefits and opportunities of learning.

"I was a rascal, I liked the freedom, I liked friends, and at school, there were too many rules."

"I do not know why; I just dropped out. I was young, I was hanging out with my friends, and I did not care about learning."

"I had a cousin; we were always together. He did not go to school either; then, I did not go. I was doing well in primary school, but later I did not like studying. I did not like getting up early either." "If I had to do something by hand or practice, I liked that, but just sitting there and watching, I was bored."

"I failed so many times; I got behind; it was easier if I did not go anymore."

"Because of the failures, I had not finished school by the age of sixteen, even though I wanted to continue."

"My parents would not let me have a boyfriend, so we got married, then we moved here, and I got pregnant. I stopped going to school."

"I became a home-schooler and managed to pass one or two exams, but then the kids came, and I did not have time."

"I was sick a lot when I was at school, so I was slow because of the absences. I often could not go in because I had to look after my siblings. So I ended up dropping out. And then I got married."

Circumstances of dropping out

Interviews revealed that parents often expressed their disapproval of dropping out of school, but they made no actual efforts to prevent dropping out, they accepted it instead.

"My father and mother were not happy, but they had nothing to do with me anyway".

"My father could not finish school either."

"My mum was happy to have help at home; she said it would have been better if I studied, but now helping is more important."

"My siblings did not finish school either, so they did not mind."

"My parents were not happy, but they are older, they say, why study at such an age?"

"My mum did not really say anything; maybe that was the problem."

Student status is essentially replaced by three roles for women: housekeeping, spousal and parental duties, while in the case of men, the appearance of work and the provision for the family were the most important changes instead of learning.

"I looked after my siblings and helped with the housework."

"After I stayed at home, cooking and washing became my job."

"Someone had to earn money."

The majority of respondents had a positive attitude towards leaving school; they experienced liberation and relief when they dropped out. However, after three to five months, the initial joy was replaced by negative emotions due to parents' behaviour, lack of money and unemployment. Respondents reached their lowest emotional point due to the above reasons by one year after leaving school. Respondents stated – without exception – that after a few years, they regretted dropping out of school.

"It was better to hang out with friends instead of school."

"I was glad not to have to get up early, not to have to take the bus all the time."

"I did not like studying, but then I realised it was important because it made it easier to get a job."

"When I stopped going to school, I was happy. However, after a year or two, my friends graduated, and by then, I regretted that I had not gone through with it."

"I did not like studying, but then I realised it was important because it made it easier to get a job."

"When I stopped going to school, I was happy. But after a year or two, my friends graduated, and by then, I regretted that I did not go with them."

"After leaving school, I was happy to be free, then I had to work, and I could not find a job."

Possibility of retraining

Respondents started learning again based on certain social ties: brothers, brother-in-laws, friends jointly applied to the training. However, retraining in many cases was motivated by a central individual who persuaded young people to finish their studies through his or her life experience or prestige.

Retraining was supported by the parents of half of the respondents, while the other half was indifferent.

"I came with my brother and my friends; why should I go to strangers?"

"The 'Old Man' is strict with all four of us because he brought us into the company. Once when we were going to work a bit hungover after a Friday night out, 'Old Man' made us all go home, and we were stuck in the afternoon."

"In the meantime, I met my wife, who is a member of a small church community. Soon I 'joined' the church, where I was pushed by the so-called 'brothers', in addition to my wife, to take up the profession I had left off: I became a house painter."

11 respondents indicated some sort of economic aspect as the cause of *retraining*.

"I was supported in my studies; I even got an afternoon off when I had to be at school."

"Sometimes my husband would look after the children, his mum would be there and always help, or I could take them to school with me."

"There were not really others in the communities who encouraged me to learn."

These included the additional qualification required for newly appeared job opportunities or higher earnings at their current workplace. Some respondents stated, "At least I see the end of a shorter training time," and it affected them encouragingly. Multiple respondents indicated that they required additional qualification for operating their own businesses as a reason for retraining.

Most of the participants involved in the analysis have a positive attitude towards learning. People (2 persons) who have negative emotions towards retraining mostly mentioned their aversion from the new situation itself, as it was revealed during the conversations that once they were integrated into their new group, a level of group cohesion was established, and their negative attitude vanished. Most of the participants in the study talked about the future acquisition of their new qualifications and considered the efficiency of their retraining a *success*.

"As the child grew, I was able to undertake a short training course for my job. Men, on the other hand, are free to decide when to rejoin training."

"At least I can see the end of the shorter training period!"

"I could see that I would not have a job or money unless I studied."

"It was hard to start again after all these years; it was strange to have to study. But then I was happy."

"I was afraid of school, that I would be stupid."

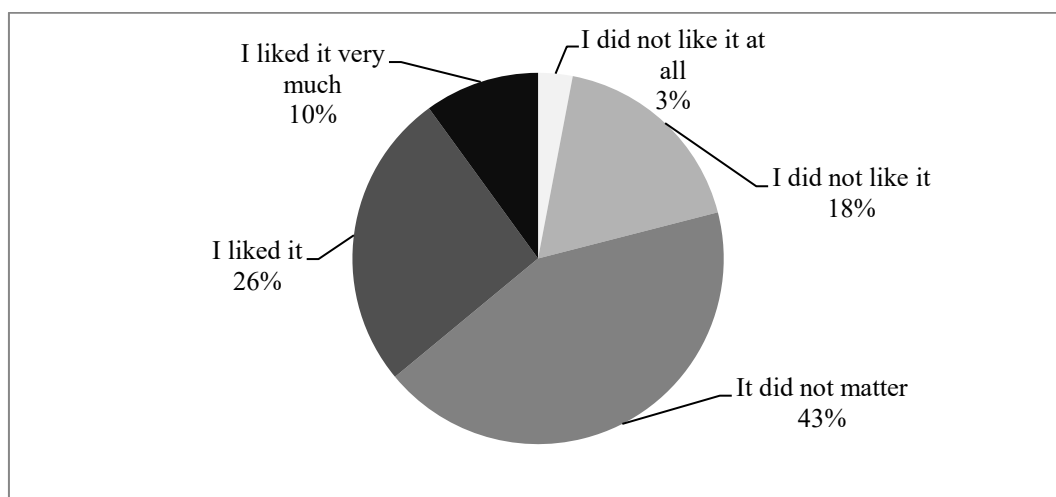
"It was good to have more familiar people in the group; it made it easier."

Educational history

Only 3% of respondents to the questionnaire survey claimed that they never attended kindergarten, the majority (81%) spent three years under institutional circumstances.

Measuring on a scale of five, the survey participants gave a mean score of 3.19 to the question of how much they liked going to school. The score 3 (it did not matter) was selected with a remarkably high frequency (43%), while 4 (I liked it) was selected by 26% (Figure 1).

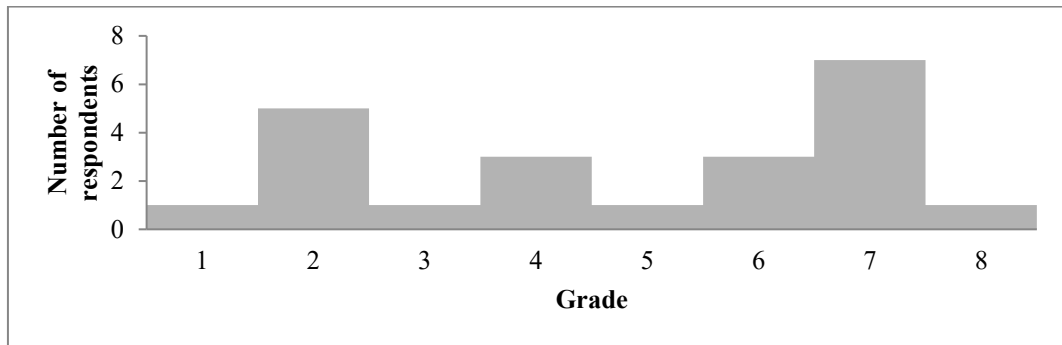
Figure 1. Distribution of respondents based on how much they liked going to school



Source: own examination (n=103)

Only one fifth (22%) of respondents to the questionnaire had failed in primary school, most of them in second (6) and seventh (7) grades. (Figure 2), when most new subjects appear in the Hungarian education system.

Figure 2. Failures of respondents during the eight grades of primary school

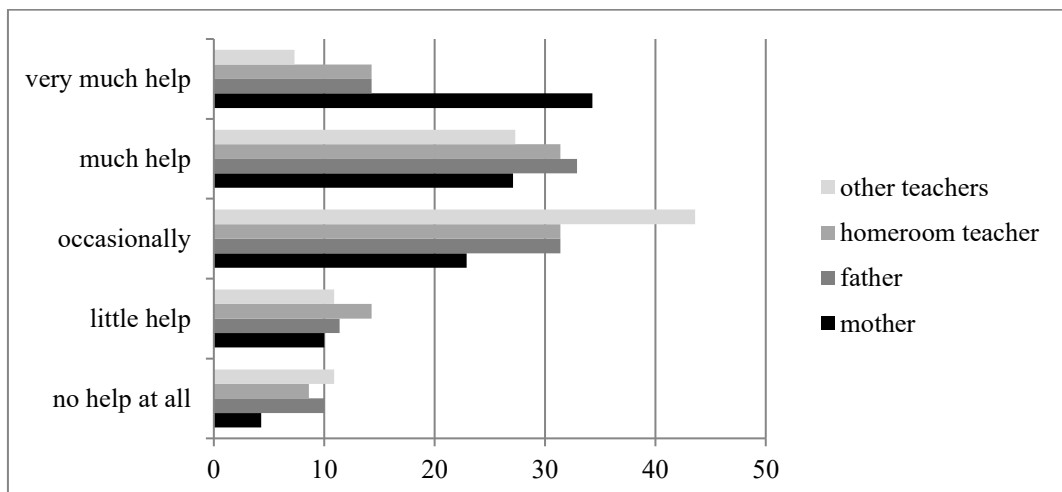


Source: own examination (n=103)

Three-quarter (78%) of the respondents to the questionnaire survey who failed a class in primary school dropped out in the first or second grade.

One of the questions concerned the extent to which drop-outs received help for their studies from anyone in primary school (Figure 3). The extent of received support is generally moderate, 17% considered it very much, while 28% considered it significant. 8% of the participants did not receive any adult cooperation for learning in primary school. Those who feel that they have received very much help claimed that it mainly came from their mothers and least from their teachers.

Figure 3. Received help of respondents during their primary school studies (%)

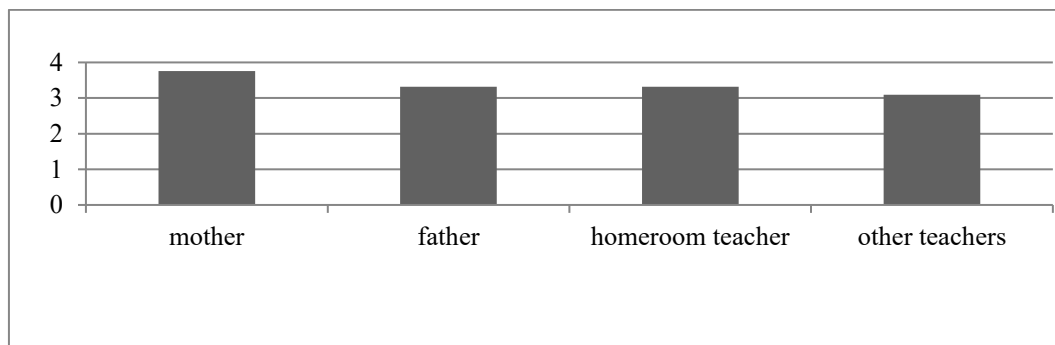


Source: own examination (n=103)

According to the data, most respondents to the questionnaire survey mentioned the support of their mothers (37.6%), this is followed at an equal level by the role of the

father and the homeroom teacher (equal mean value of 3.32). The value of support received from other teachers is the lowest (3.09), but this is not negligible either (Figure 4)

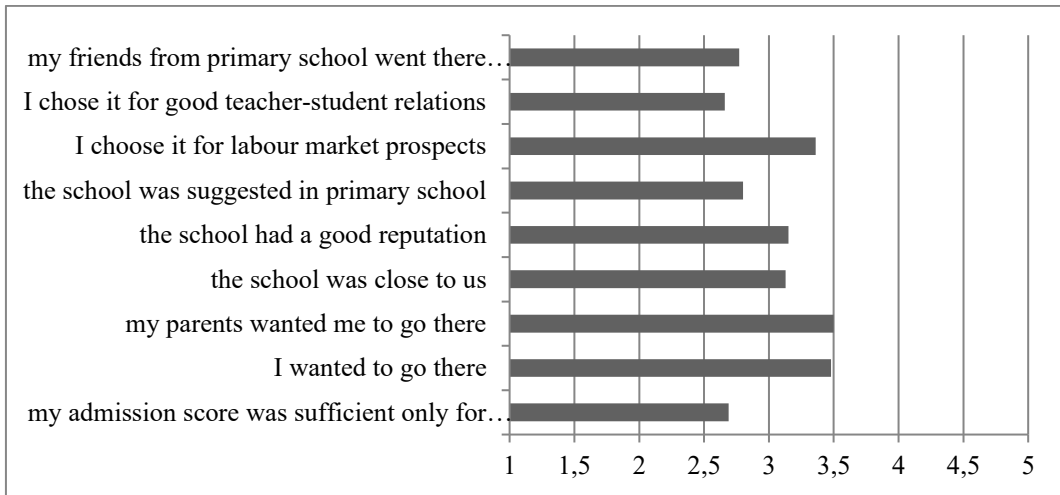
Figure 4. Assessment of the extent of help received by respondents during their primary school studies



Source: own examination (n=103)

Concerning the reasons behind the selection of a secondary school, the most important factor is the own will of parents (3.5 on a scale of 5) and students (3.48) (Figure 5). Choosing an institution due to labour market prospects was the third (3.36), followed closely by the proximity (3.15) and the good reputation of the school (3.13). The data suggest that the vocational school or vocational secondary school from where the drop-out took place was not a compelled choice because the option "my admission score was sufficient only for that school" had only a mean score of 2.69 and it became the 8th out of 9 options. The effect of fellow students with the same age did not play a significant role, as the option "my friends from primary school went there too" received a mean value of only 2.77. For selecting a secondary school, the lowest average score was given to "good teacher-student relationship" (2.66). Therefore, school choice was mainly based on own decisions, and labour market conditions also played an important part.

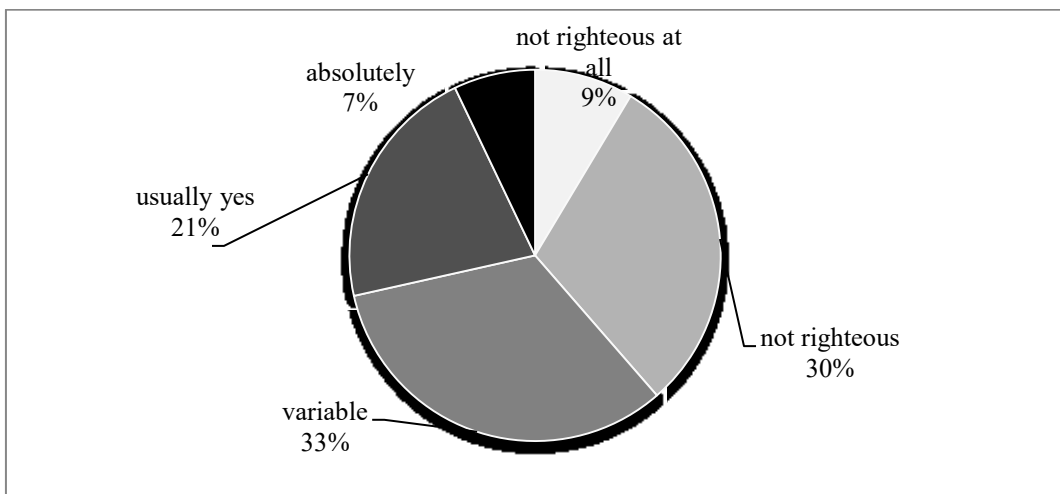
Figure 5. Assessment of respondents regarding the reasons behind their choice of secondary school (1-5)



Source: own examination (n=103)

The questionnaire also included a question about what sort of profession the study sample participants intended to choose in their childhood. The respondents listed a wide range of skilled worker professions. The most frequent values were the following: nearly one-tenth (9%) selected hairdressers, police officers and cooks (they are currently above-average paid professions in the Hungarian labour market), and the same proportion of respondents did not know back in their childhood which profession to choose in the future.

Figure 6. Distribution of the opinions of respondents about the righteous behaviour of their former teachers (%)



Source: own examination (n=103)

In terms of school conditions, the opinions of dropped out people who participated in the questionnaire survey are different concerning the righteous behaviour of their former teachers (Figure 6). However, the distribution is nearly equal: one-third (33%) rated the value "changeable", slightly more (39%) judged their teachers unjust and slightly fewer (28%) referred to their teachers as fair.

One-tenth of the participants to the questionnaire survey did not receive any support from any adult in primary school. Those who feel that they have received a considerable amount of help, mostly received it from their mothers and least from other educators/teachers. The selection of high school was mostly based on their own decision and labour market conditions played a part as well. This is somewhat contradicted by the fact that only 14% of the respondents chose a school for further education, which corresponds to the profession they desired as a child. Of course, there might be a change behind this, which came with the progression of age. Teachers were considered to be righteous on an average of 2.89 points.

Compensatory measures

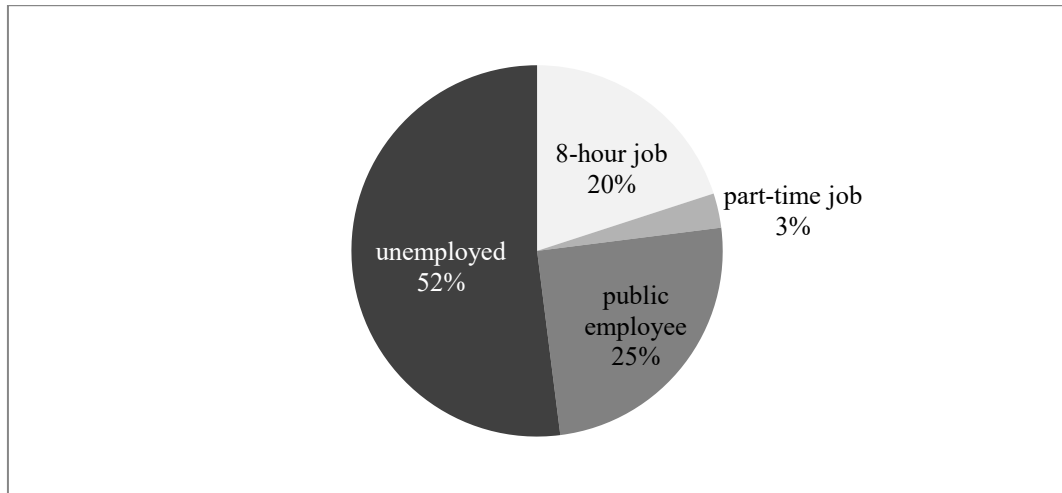
89% of the respondents currently do not participate in any sort of training. The majority of the 11% currently learning are being trained within the framework organized by the Department of Employment, and 2 people are in the school system. Two-thirds of the respondents (67%) did not enter any training at all after leaving school. Half of those who continued their studies volunteered to do so, and half of them were compelled to learn in order not to be erased from the database of individuals seeking employment. Nearly half of the sample (46%) have not learned since the drop-out and currently have no job. 14% of the drop-outs of the study currently work full-time, half of them later completed school.

One-fifth of the respondents (21% - 21 people) continued their studies after leaving school and completed their studies (13% learned a profession, and 8% graduated from secondary school). Only one person from each group left school because of behavioural problems or failure, and both of them acquired a profession later. Half of the people who eventually continued their studies left the previous school because they chose another profession. Those who have left their previous school because of absence or transitioning to another profession have equally (nearly 50-50%) acquired a profession or graduated from secondary school. Half of them (10 people) are currently working in an 8-hour job, one-tenth of them (2 people) work part-time and in public employment (2 people), while one-third (7 people) are currently unemployed.

Considering the current labour market status of respondents, there are significant deviations (Figure 7): more than half (52%) are unemployed, one-quarter (25%) are

involved in public employment, one-fifth (20%) have a permanent 8-hour job, while part-time work is carried out by three people (3%).

Figure 7. Distribution of the current labour market status of respondents (%)



Source: own examination (n=103)

Respondents who are currently primarily unemployed have low school qualifications. Their highest qualifications are the following: primary school (72%), skilled worker (18%), secondary school graduation (10%). Half of the respondents who had jobs at the time of the survey finished primary school, one-quarter of them acquired a profession, while another one-quarter of them graduated from secondary school.

More than one-third of the respondents (39%) would choose the same profession if they re-applied to school, while 61% would choose another profession.

As for future prospects, most respondents (83%) claimed they would like to work full time in a year, while only 10% of respondents said they intended to be at school. With respect to personal plans for the future, 75% of respondents would establish a family, 3% stated that they wanted to live alone in Hungary, and one-fifth (22%) of the participants would take their chances abroad.

Nearly half of the sample have not studied since dropping out, and they do not have a job either; more than half of them are unemployed, one-fifth have a permanent 8-hour job. Almost all of them claimed that they intended to work full-time in a year, but only one-tenth is considering going back to school. There must be a huge lack of information in terms of the labour market behind this large difference. Participants of the sample have considerably strong family bonds.

Results of the paired sample t-test only occasionally showed significant differences amongst the different data:

- Students with poor grades highlighted the importance of workshops; this group includes the lowest proportion of employees with an 8-hour job.
- Those who are currently involved in public employment had the lowest grades in mathematics.
- Those who received major help from their mother during vocational training would prefer to re-apply for the same profession.

Those who eventually graduated dropped out from the first, second and third grades in equal proportions

Conclusions

Family

As a result of the questionnaire survey, findings based on technical literature have only partially been confirmed in relation to family background.

One of the characteristics influencing the education prospects of children is families' residence; these findings conform with our survey results because the entire sample resides in small towns, villages or farms. The second characteristic, the existence/nonexistence of an intact family (the lower the level of training children are participating, the more likely their parents are divorced or one of the parents has deceased) was not confirmed because the sample does not have a high number of one-parent families.

In the case of nearly half of the respondents, their families opposed their early school leaving and these families already had members who have dropped out of school earlier. It is therefore not clearly characteristic to drop-out students that their status runs in the family or it is a hereditary feature, although it can be stated that the parents of these families had a low level of school qualification.

Those who feel that they have received considerable help during their school career could most likely expect help from their mothers. However, nearly half of the respondents never discussed their personal issues with anyone.

Three-quarters of the respondents intend to establish a family in the future, which confirms that family ties are quite strong in the sample participants.

Based on the information obtained during personal conversations, it can be stated with regard to the family that women mainly explained their school drop-outs with family-related reasons. Parental attitudes had a considerable role, meaning that school could prevent dropping out with suitable parental cooperation.

School

As a result of the questionnaire survey, as for primary school problems, especially failure, relevant technical literature findings were not, or were only partially confirmed by the study. Only a small proportion of our respondents failed classes in primary school. This is clearly related to the fact that one-tenth of the participants did not receive any support from adults at all for their primary school education. However, out of those who dropped out of school due to failure 2% failed classes in primary school as well.

The opinion of experts that high school failures are deeply related to the serious shortcomings of basic skills acquired in primary school has not been confirmed. The drop-outs involved in our research did not have a failed school life since they went to kindergarten, failed only occasionally, liked going to school and 80% even received help in learning. The drop-outs do not have negative memories of school years.

The statement that problems with learning and behaviour are in close correlation is also not confirmed. Our findings are not in line with the statement of technical literature that unjustified absence during secondary school studies show a significant correlation with the occurrence of primary school failures.

Dropped out individuals clearly considered practical training more important than theoretical education, although this is not reflected in their grades and achievements. The extent of help with secondary school education is considerably less than in primary school, and the highest decline is observed in the case of the homeroom teacher.

There were contradictions in the scope of career choice and choice of school, based on which the following conclusion could be drawn in conformity with technical literature: career choice was not based on an established decision. According to the respondents' opinion, the choice of secondary school mainly was based on their own decision, and labour market conditions played a considerable role as well. This is somewhat contradicted by the fact that only one-sixth of the respondents chose a school for further education, which aligns with the profession they desired as a child. Obviously, *there might be a change behind this, which came with the progression of age*. The controversy related to school choices is also exposed when only one-third of the respondents would choose the same profession they initially did.

Based on the information obtained during personal conversations, it can be stated with regard to the family that as a confirmation of findings provided by technical literature, it has been proven that carrier choice based on misinformation and compulsion had a role in dropping out, thus career guidance as one of the preventive

and compensatory measures has an important role. Dropped out students are willing to be reintegrated into training after a certain time, they are even happy to have the possibility to learn again. Consequently, there is a need for catch-up trainings organized by schools or by the employment office

Labour market status

As a result of the questionnaire survey, the surveyed data are in line with the findings of technical literature, in terms of the subsequent fate of the respondents.

One-fifth of the respondents continued their studies later (13% learned a profession, 8% graduated from secondary school). Half of the people who eventually studied further left the previous school because they chose another profession.

Almost half of the sample have not learned since dropping out of school and have no job, more than half of them are unemployed, one-fifth have a permanent 8-hour job. The sole opportunity for them to work is public employment. Almost all of them responded that they would like to work full-time in a year (where?), but only one-tenth of them consider going back to school for further studies. There must be a huge lack of information in terms of the labour market behind this large difference.

Retraining status

Based on the information obtained during interviews, the respondents see learning as a new role in general, which means that proper motivation is present. In the case of school drop-outs, the decision to engage in retraining is primarily emotionally driven and at the same time, partly rational. In addition, results of the study have shown that micro-communities themselves might also mean breakout, motivation and support if there is a common goal, willingness and such life experience according to which not only subsistence can be assured through work, but a higher social status as well that can ensure not only living but a higher social status as well.

Summary – Suggestions originating from the survey

The future importance of the research of secondary school dropping out, including the studies on compensation, was justified by the coexistence of multiple factors, namely: continuously increasing danger of marginalization of young people dropping without any secondary school and vocational qualifications; reduction of early school leaving is a major social problem and educational policy task; besides its labour market and social economy aspect, it also belongs to political and even national strategy tasks.

In our study, we aimed at exploring the family circumstances of students dropping out of secondary school, their school career and their current labour market situation.

Another objective is to provide suggestions for preventing dropping out of vocational training and taking effective compensation measures. The present study might serve as a guide to this approach.

The 103 surveyed individuals involved in the questionnaire survey who dropped out of vocational training were difficult to reach (only through personal relationships), and it was also challenging to convince them to respond which they often were unable to do by themselves. All that raises the question of how honest their replies were. We suggest a repeated survey on a much larger, nationwide and representative sample to exclude all these uncertainties. Due to the lack of time, the survey did not cover the psychological characteristics of respondents, such as motivation, sense of responsibility, realistic self-image, ability to cooperate and other skills. Therefore, it would be expedient to extend the questionnaire in this direction and explore the involved students' school life more comprehensively, based on the categories defined in the international literature. Due to the timeliness of the subject, this will become indispensable in the future.

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