

EXAMINATION OF INFLUENCING FACTORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CHOICE IN MEZŐKOVÁCSHÁZA MICRO-REGION

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ABSTRACT

My examination is related to secondary school enrollment of four small towns. The inquiry, involving 1342 persons, has resulted in the following consequences: mobility among generations is directed upward, achievements of the last primary school year partly, social background considerably has an effect on secondary school choice; most of the students are from the direct catchment area of the secondary school.

Keywords: secondary school, further education, school choice

INTRODUCTION

Today's Hungarian public education system is going through a transformation, as the number of students is decreasing, efficiency ratio is not appropriate, decision making is decentralised, educational directives of the EU are needed to be adopted, as a result, we need reforms. Education can produce high value and chance for national and international mobility. It is great result, but more important to use competences in the home country. (GÁL, 2006)

As for secondary education, the most conspicuous changes were brought about by institutional merges and appearances of Regional Integrated Training Centres.

After finishing primary school studies, students will have a choice of the following secondary education forms:

- grammar school
- secondary training school
- vocational school (vocational training school)

Main differences are manifested in educational goals. Grammar schools primarily prepare students for further studies. Secondary training schools, in addition to maturity exam, provide professional training as well, which is completed by professional final exam and students receive a certificate according to the National Qualification Register. Vocational schools also provide professional qualification to their graduates according to the National Qualification Register, without maturity exam, and students are prepared firstly for starting a job.

Different further education guides, ranking lists, institutes' own schooling guides and open days, placed out presentations and fairs help orientation. Furthermore, career counselling centres offer self-knowledge and career choice tests.

The object of my research was a territorially limited group of secondary schools. These four settlements – Battonya, Mezőhegyes, Mezőkovácsháza and Tótkomlós – share municipal functions: there is a court and a thermal spa in Battonya, a vocational training institution in Mezőhegyes, a registration office, a specialist clinic, an ambulance station, a grammar school in Mezőkovácsháza, a thermal spa with medical department in Tótkomlós. Among secondary school students of these four settlements I carried out the survey which revealed decision making processes and their background concerning enrolment.



Figure 1. Location of secondary school
Source: lazarus.elte.hu (11th February 2012)

MEANS AND METHODS

Population of the four institutes was 1342 students in September, 2010, from this 908 persons (67.66%) answered my questionnaire. The least number of answers characterized Vocational Training School of Mezőhegyes, 43.2% of students assisted my study. The most number of answers was typical in Kelemen Mikes Grammar School of Battonya, 88.5% of the allocated questionnaires were returned to me with answers. Evaluation and analysis of questionnaires was carried out by Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

Hypotheses, which I wanted to prove with my examination, were the following:

1. Students and their parents were properly informed about the possibilities before application to the secondary educational institute (ANDOR, 1998, 1999). This assumption proved to be correct, as 82.2% of interviewed students used one or more official information sources previous to application. On the grounds of institutional open days 37.7% were informed, enrolment guides were applied by 10.5%, 34% gathered information from both previously mentioned sources.

2. More than one aspects were taken into account and decisions were made based on them. This assumption also proved to be correct. According to the responses, the most essential aspects are the following:
 - range of qualifications in the institute
 - quality of education
 - possibilities of further education
 - school is near the residence
3. There is a connection between the grade point averages of last primary school year and the selected form of secondary education. Students arriving with good, excellent primary school grade point averages behaved as I expected, thus most of them chose grammar schools, least of them chose vocational schools. Almost the same number of students with average educational achievements chose secondary training schools and vocational schools. However, to my surprise students with poor educational achievement are represented with a slightly higher number in secondary training schools than in vocational schools. Consequently, my assumption proved to be true partly.
4. Students' plans after secondary school determine the choice of secondary education form (LANNERT, 1998). This assumption proved to be correct, due to the fact that students who intend to continue their studies in higher education or in specialized education are studying primarily in grammar schools and in secondary training schools, while those who want to start to work after their secondary school years chose vocational training.
5. Mobility among generations is directed upwards (SÁGHY, 2005). With reference to the measured data, this idea is correct as well. In those cases where the student provided information on his/her parents' qualifications as well as on grandparents', 94.2% of parents have higher qualifications comparing to grandparents. Expectedly 81.4% of students will have higher qualifications than their parents (not considering 14.6% who did not provide information on their parents' education).
6. Social background determines the choice of secondary school (LANNERT, 2003, 2008). This hypothesis did not prove to be correct, owing to the fact that aspects regarding social background (occupation of parents, family background, housing, personal estate) did not show clear correlation between social background and school choice of the person.
7. Institutions attract students of the surrounding settlements. Considering secondary schools of Battonya, Tótkomlós and Mezőkovácsháza, the assumption proved to be true. In the previous two institutions a high percentage of students are local residents and only a few students arrive from nearby settlements. Compared to the two previous schools, in Mezőkovácsháza the rate of local students is not too high 27.6% of the total number of students, the remaining 72.4% of students are from 21 – mainly nearby – settlements. Nevertheless, in case of Mezőhegyes the statement is not correct. The population of students consists of 23.2% local residents, the others come from 34 settlements, which include as the farthest ones Gyöngyös, Szeged, Makó, Orosháza, Újkígyós, Füzesgyarmat and Doboz.

CONCLUSION

Most of the students studying in the examined secondary schools made a decision on enrolment by themselves or together with their parents. Students are interested in the decision; therefore they collect information on opportunities properly. It is typical that students who do not study in the secondary school marked at the first place or got to the institution following a parental decision evaluate their institutions negatively. Taking into consideration after-school plans as for secondary school choice tells us about students' deliberate future vision and strategy.

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