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CAREER TRACKING OF AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES IN HUNGARY

MONITOROWANIE ŚCIEŻKI KARIERY ABSOLWENTÓW STUDIÓW ROLNICZYCH NA WĘGRZECH

Key words: career tracking of graduates of higher education, agricultural higher education, chances of entrance into a profession for graduates

Słowa kluczowe: monitorowanie ścieżki kariery absolwentów szkół wyższych, wyższe szkoły rolnicze, szanse absolwentów na znalezienie pracy w zawodzie

Abstract. The examination of the continuity between higher education and the labour market is a research area that is increasingly being dealt with. It is a generally accepted fact that people with a higher education degree can more easily find a job and receive a higher salary. The examination of the ways how new graduates are provided with the opportunity of filling in a post tailored to their skills, abilities and qualification in the least complicated and smoothest way has already been a subject of several labour market studies in Europe. In Hungary, finding a job has apparently become more difficult for graduates since about 2000. This fact has been stressed since it contrasts with the expectations of the 1990s.

There are a number of processes behind the statistics attempting to describe the chances of degree holders to find employment. Naturally, there are professional fields in which it is easier to find a job – in this case payment is usually lower. In other areas, the opposite tendency holds true. Data provided by the graduate career tracking system present a good opportunity to examine to what extent degree holders graduating from the Hungarian higher education system, which has been developing rapidly since the political transformation, meet labour market expectations.

Economic recovery was related to the expansion of higher education and it was supposed that it was easier for graduates to find a job, which could reduce unemployment. The present paper examines this issue among agricultural graduates. The respondents' evaluation of the work carried out in institutions of higher education is considered together with how they could make use of their knowledge, to what extent their qualification correlates with their present job and also how fast they could find a job after taking their final exams.

Introduction

At the turn of the millennium, numerous studies stressed the fact that obtaining a degree did not automatically guarantee entry into the labour market. Nowadays a degree is not enough, as the competencies developed must meet labour market expectations. In the United States, for example, a degree gained at a renowned institution cannot guarantee a job immediately or a job tailored to the qualification. Stadler [2003] considers that in the European Union a depreciation of degrees can be observed and consequently smaller salaries can be earned. On the basis of research of Furlong [2003], 60% of those aged between 16 and 29 feel underemployed. Studies have been written on the stages and mechanism of transition from higher education to the labour market. For example, Teichler [1999] does not consider the transition from higher education to the labour market to be an independent period. According to Schomburg-Teichler [2006] one of the main indicators of the labour market position of fresh graduates is the length of the transitory period after graduation which shows the time span devoted to searching for a job, the estimation of market position and chances. This period also indicates how much time fresh graduates have to encounter the opportunities offered by their profession. Supposing the graduate finds employment far too rapidly, it might mean that this person has not cared to choose the most suitable job.

Table 1. The percentage of graduates finding a job within and over 3 months (by nations)

Tabela 1. Odsetek absolwentów, którzy znaleźli pracę w ciągu 3 miesięcy lub później (wg narodowości)

Country/Kraj	Length of period/ Długość okresu [%]	
	within 3 months/ w ciągu 3 miesiący	over 3 months/ po upływie 3 miesiący
italian/Włochy	48	52
Spanish/Hiszpania	44	56
French/Francja	55	45
Austrian/Austria	67	33
Danish/Dania	64	36
Dutch/Holandia	72	28
English/Anglia	73	27
Finnish/Finlandia	77	23
Swedish/Szwecja	80	20
Norwegian/Norwegia	81	19
Czech/Czechy	84	16
Japanese/Japonia	37	63
Hungarian/Węgry	71	29

Source: International career tracking examination in the CHEERS-program 2006. (Schomburg és Teichler) N=27 178 Career tracking of graduates 2010. Educatio Nonprofit Kft. N = 4511

Źródło: Międzynarodowe studium monitorowania ścieżki kariery przeprowadzone przez program CHEERS w 2006 r. (Schomburg és Teichler) N=27 178 monitorowanie ścieżki kariery absolwentów rocznika 2010. Educatio Nonprofit Kft. N = 4511

ment even six months prior to graduation. This trend does not characterise European students, as only one third of British undergraduates start looking for a job three months before graduation. In France more than half of the undergraduates start looking in their last year, while in Spain and Italy about fifty per cent of undergraduates wait until they have earned their degree and only after that do they make the first step to secure a job for themselves.

Similarly to Czech and Norwegian students, Hungarian undergraduates also find a job relatively quickly. This speed might prove important not only from the point of view of a decreasing unemployment rate but according to Yorke [2006], it may also function as the indicator of usefulness of gained knowledge.

The target group and method of the research

In our research, secondary data collection took place within the framework of which the 2011 database of the National Graduate Research was analysed. In the national survey the examined population included students who graduated from bachelor and master courses as well as supplementary courses of accredited higher education institutions, in 2008, in all programmes and financing forms.

Table 1 shows the differences in the length of the transitory period by nations.

It must be noted though that a smooth entrance into the labour market does not depend solely on labour supply and demand, it also depends on the social trends of the transitional period as well as the habits and practices that help or hinder solving situations. Therefore, the structure of the transition and the structure of the labour market must also be taken into consideration when examining the length of the transition.

An international career tracking examination (CHEERS) points out unambiguously that the employment tendencies of higher education graduates vary greatly [Schomburg-Teichler 2006].

According to the table, Czech and Norwegian graduates were able to find employment quickly in the greatest percentage. The examination revealed that Spanish undergraduates needed almost a whole year to find a job, but the table also supports the fact that compared to the graduates of other nations, less Spanish graduates were able to find employment quickly – that is within 3 months.

As indicated by the research, the favourable Norwegian and Czech results were facilitated by the fact that a higher than average number of graduates started looking for employment prior to graduation. The commencement of job search showed a varied picture in different countries, which naturally indicates the wide-ranging length of the transition period. In some countries the early start of job search is acceptable. For instance, in Japan those who cannot get hold of a decent job offer during the last semester are thought to be “losers”. They, therefore, start looking for employ-

Table 2. The size of the population and sample per scientific branch
Tabela 2. Liczba absolwentów i grupy badawczej ze względu na dziedzinę nauki

Programme/Rodzaj studiów	Number of graduates/ <i>Liczba absolwentów</i>	Size of the sample/ <i>Wielkość grupy badawczej</i>
Agriculture/Rolnictwo	1 223	818
Human sciences/ <i>Nauki humanistyczne</i>	6 498	3 685
Economics/ <i>Ekonomia</i>	14 280	3 855
Informatics/ <i>Informatyka</i>	1 697	1 054
Law and administration/ <i>Prawo i administracja</i>	3 041	1 173
Technology/ <i>Nauki techniczne</i>	6 679	2 201
Art/ <i>Sztuka</i>	1 573	355
Medical and health care/ <i>Medycyna i opieka zdrowotna</i>	5 391	1 105
Pedagogy/ <i>Pedagogia</i>	7 345	1 674
Social sciences/ <i>Socjologia</i>	6 569	1 812
Natural sciences/ <i>Nauki przyrodnicze</i>	2 467	1 429
Total/ <i>Razem</i>	56 763	19 161

Source: own study on the basis of Educatio Nonprofit... 2011

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie bazy danych Educatio Nonprofit... 2011

The method of sampling was simple and accidental. The sample consists of institutional sub-samples for which the list of graduates was made available by the institutions that are involved in the research. The sample includes almost the entire range of institutions of the programmes concerned. As nearly the entire list of graduates was provided, the random sample represents the national breakdown of graduates of a certain programme. Table 2 illustrates the size of the population and the number of questionnaires of the sample.

The examination comprises eleven areas of education. Data was recorded by the interviewer network of Median Public Opinion and Market Research Institute and GFK Hungária Market Research Institute between May and June 2011.

Agricultural graduates in the labour market

According to the survey of CHEERS, it is advisable to pay enough attention to finding a job even during academic years as well as to aim at obtaining professional experience and practice. On the basis of Figure 1, we can observe the presence or the lack of this thoughtful way of thinking.

The figure reveals that two disciplines – human sciences and economics – stand out in terms of undergraduates (full-time students) having a job in their final year. In total – considering both full-time and non-full-time students – 35% and 43% of the respondents had a job respectively. An even more favourable outcome was recorded in the case of teacher training since 55% of the respondents worked during their studies. It must also be mentioned that this figure was inflated by non-full-time students. During their studies, one quarter of agricultural undergraduates had a job. On the basis of the data, it becomes obvious that this ratio is greatly influenced by non-full-time students.

When we examine how fast fresh graduates can find a job considering disciplines independently, we receive the data presented in Figure 2.

According to data presented in Figure 2, it takes an average of 3-4 months for new graduates to find employment. We believe this figure is favourable in the present economic situation since, according to the data provided by the National Employment Service, the average time to find employment is 347 days for registered job seekers. Therefore, we can say that newly graduated degree-holders can find employment faster than their counterparts without higher education qualifications. The figure also reveals that it is agricultural graduates who need the longest time to find employment.

On the basis of the abovementioned facts, we considered it interesting to examine whether three years after graduation they worked in an area related to their qualification (Fig. 3).

It is observable in the cases of medical and health care as well as arts that new graduates find a job in their own disciplines. These disciplines also enable graduates to find employment in related specialised fields. For graduates of agricultural sciences, jobs in related fields can be

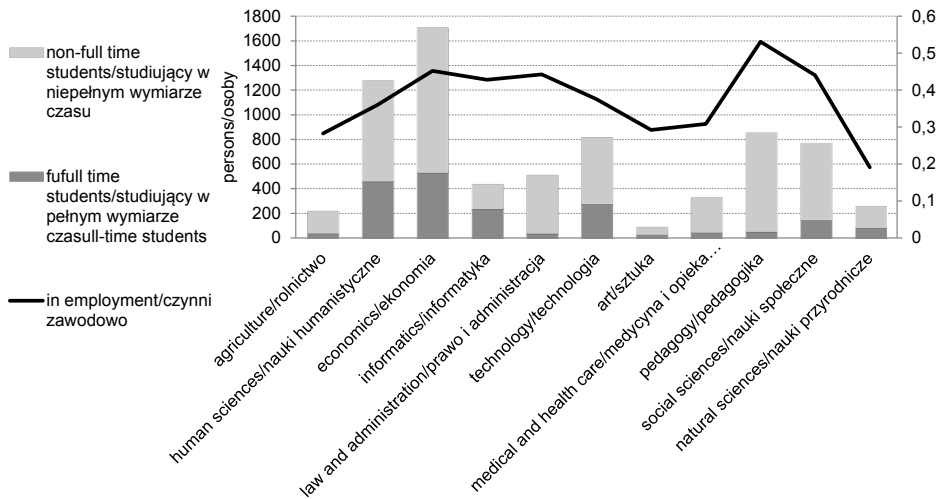


Figure 1. The proportion of undergraduates in employment during their academic years
 Rysunek 1. Liczba osób bez wykształcenia wyższego zatrudnionych podczas studiów
 Source: see tab. 2

Źródło: jak w tab. 2

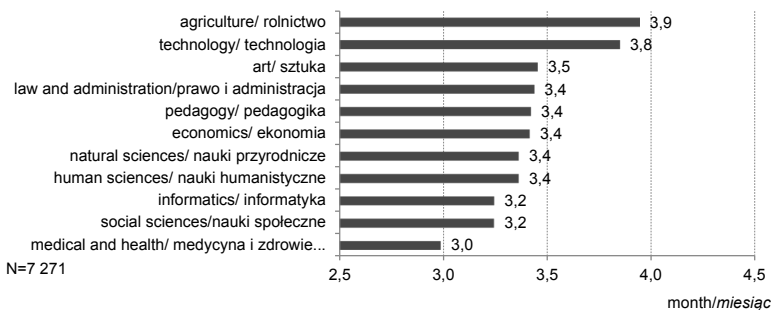


Figure 2. Time required for new graduates to find a job by disciplines
 Rysunek 2. Czas potrzebny świeżo upieczonym absolwentom do znalezienia pracy, podział według dyscyplin
 Source: see tab. 2

Źródło: jak w tab. 2

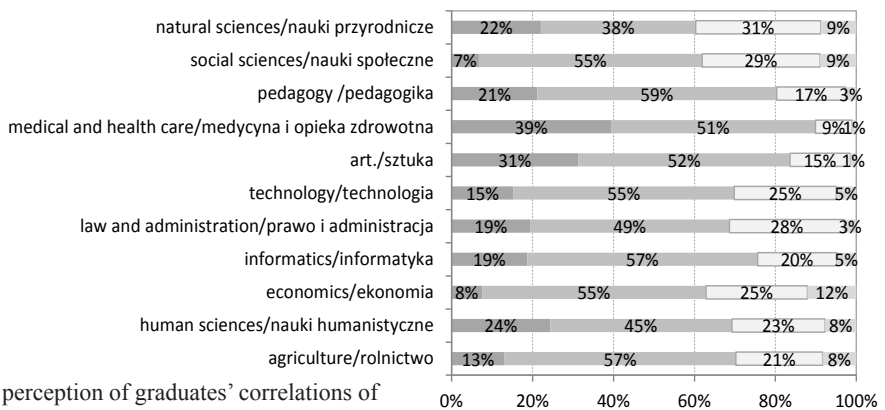


Figure 3. The perception of graduates' correlations of their jobs and qualifications
 Rysunek 3. Postrzeganie przez absolwentów korelacji między wykonywaną przez nich pracą a zdobytym wykształceniem

Source: see tab. 2
 Źródło: jak w tab. 2

■ own professional field /własny obszar zawodowy
 ■ related professional field/ pokrewny obszar zawodowy
 □ unrelated professional field/niepokrewny obszar zawodowy
 ■ any professional field/ dowolny obszar zawodowy

taken into consideration. When data from own specialisation and related specialisation are dealt with simultaneously, the disciplines of medical and health care as well as arts become outstanding. Graduates of these disciplines make use of the knowledge they gained in higher education. Approximately 60% of the graduates of economics, social sciences, and natural sciences remain in their chosen field. There is a greater consistency between what agricultural graduates learnt during their studies and what they do in their jobs after graduation since 70% of them work in areas where the knowledge they acquired during their studies is useful.

According to self-reported income data, the average income of graduates is €529. In the case of graduates working in Hungary the average monthly salary is somewhat lower, it is about €499. As a matter of comparison the average monthly income at the national level in 2011 (January–November, 2011) was €470, according to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Figure 4 presents the development of the net income of graduates by sectors.

Gaining a degree means an unquestionable rise in income in certain sectors (economics, technology, IT). In the case of areas like agriculture, social- and natural sciences, the average income can be earned only with a higher education degree. Unfortunately, in certain areas, the average income is still unattainable even for a degree-holder.

Figure 4. The net income of graduates in 2011 in Hungary
Rysunek 4. Przychód netto węgierskich absolwentów w 2011 r.

Source: see tab. 2

Źródło: jak w tab. 2

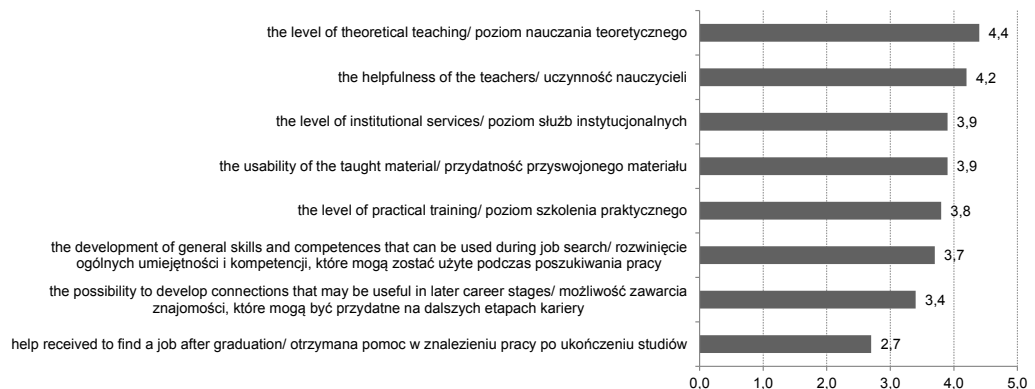
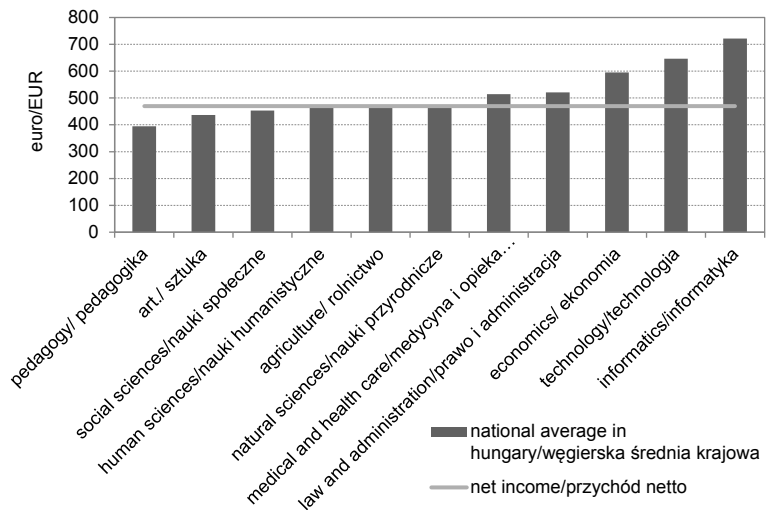


Figure 5. The opinion of agricultural graduates on the activities and services of the higher education institution
Rysunek 5. Opinia absolwentów szkół rolnych na temat działalności i usług świadczonych przez szkoły wyższe

Source: see tab. 2

Źródło: jak w tab. 2

As a result of the survey, graduates expressed their opinion on the educational activities in the institution that issued their degree (Fig. 5). The figure clearly reveals that higher education institutions provide little help during job search. (This criterion received the lowest score, and it is the only one that was evaluated as worse than average by students). It must also be pointed out that students expect higher education institutions to provide more help in developing a connection network.

Conclusions and recommendations

We can conclude that graduates of agricultural studies can find employment relatively quickly after the final examination. Nevertheless, this relative speed can be considered fast only compared to the 347-day national average. If the data collected is analysed according to disciplines, it becomes obvious that finding employment requires the longest time, which can be thought of as an adverse factor taking the specific agricultural characteristics of Hungary into consideration.

The actual job of graduates corresponds closely with their qualifications only in a few areas. In the case of agricultural graduates this means a mere 13%. The study areas of the related fields show more favourable ratios. As a result of our research, we can declare that by earning their degrees, graduates can receive higher salaries in certain areas. Unfortunately, students of agriculture can only get closer to average incomes by acquiring qualifications.

In order to improve these parameters, it is believed that higher education institutions should place more emphasis on helping graduates, even after the state examination, to find their first employment. One way of realizing this aim is to develop a site that keeps a record of both graduates and undergraduates and is accessible for labour market players. Employers could look for graduates or undergraduates who have the required skills and abilities to fill in given vacancies. Undergraduates, on the other hand, could find a company cooperating with a higher educational institution that might provide a place for compulsory workshop practice.

The site would not only help improve the opinion of the students about the assistance they receive in connection with job search, but also the curricula could be better adapted to labour market requirements. Besides, companies would get informed about the students' abilities prior to employment.

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Streszczenie

Ożywienie gospodarcze miało związek z rozpowszechnieniem edukacji wyższej i założeniem, że to ci absolwenci łatwiej znajdą pracę, co miało wpłynąć na zmniejszenie bezrobocia. Celem badań było rozpoznanie tego problemu wśród absolwentów uczelni rolniczych. Respondenci oceniali w jaki sposób mogą wykorzystać swoją wiedzę, w jakim stopniu ich wykształcenie nawiązuje do ich obecnej pracy oraz jak szybko mogliby znaleźć pracę po zdaniu egzaminów końcowych.

Osoby z wyższym wykształceniem łatwiej znajdują pracę i są lepiej wynagradzane. Od 2000 r. absolwenci szkół wyższych napotykali na coraz większe trudności w znalezieniu pracy na Węgrzech. Podkreśla się ten fakt ze względu na to, że jest on całkowicie sprzeczny z prognozami z lat 90. XX wieku.

Szanse osób z wyższym wykształceniem na znalezienie pracy badano wieloma metodami. Istnieją sektory zawodowe, w których znalezienie pracy jest łatwiejsze – w tym przypadku zarobki są zazwyczaj niższe. Informacje dostarczone przez system monitorowania ścieżki kariery absolwentów stwarza szansę na określenie do jakiego stopnia osoby z wyższym wykształceniem spełniają wymagania rynku pracy.

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