

From the School to the Working World – What the Teacher Trainees expect?

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Abstract

The regular researches of education government show that the novice teachers – kindergarten or primary school teachers –, finishing their studies, have greater difficulties to find employment in the labour market year by year. The Faculty of Pedagogy at Kaposvár University makes an effort to expand the aspiring teacher trainees' opportunities in the working world. To help the students have a better chance finding a job after graduation our Faculty started specialized courses to extend future teachers' skills. In this paper, the results of a survey will be presented which was involved among the students of these special courses about their expectations: how the new knowledge and the new skills would give an advantage for them in the working world.

Keywords:

tertiary education
teacher training
educational research

1 Introduction

In Hungary, all universities and colleges pay attention to their former students' life in the working world. The "alumni" portal of the institutions informs these students about the available jobs, about the programs at universities and especially about the events being held for them (i.e. Senior Programs). However, the institutions rarely know about how the novice pedagogues find their first job.

The Education government carries out a research regularly to monitor how the former students succeed in the labour market. The results of the researches often report difficulties in this field: *"higher education supply does not seem to adequately respond to changes in the labour market, nor to the demands or expectations it raises"* (Horváth, 2009, p. 1).

2 Empirical data of career tracking of graduates

2.1 Results of the central tracking graduates' careers

The career tracking of graduates is a questionnaire-based survey conducted by the state every year. The data of these researches are available on the official website of the tertiary education, www.felvi.hu in the form of report books. These reports present a global overview about the graduates' success in the labour market, their opinion about the conduciveness of their knowledge in the working world and – beside several proposals towards the actors of higher education – provides feedback for the universities and colleges which may help to improve the content of their training (Horváth, 2009). The online platform contains the data of the universities and colleges in separate web pages; this system gives the opportunity to compare the success of the different institutions and to realize the value of the graduates' knowledge acquired during their studies. The results of

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the researches initiated by the government motivate the institutions to develop new curricula and courses to improve their students' skills and competences to have a better chance in their career as pedagogues.

2.2 Employment possibilities of graduates of Kaposvár University

In the past decade, related to the world-wide economic crisis, Hungary met major economic changes which have deeply influenced the employment possibilities in the labour market. After processing the collected data of the career tracking by Kaposvár University, the results revealed notable difficulties in finding a job for novice teachers.

In this paper, the main emphasis is on the process of how the graduated novice kindergarten and primary school teachers of our faculty establish themselves in a job. Two questions of the state survey will be examined: how many months does it take to find a job after getting a fresh teacher diploma and whether this job is connected to the profession of the graduates or not.

Comparing the data from 2007¹, before the world-wide economic crisis in 2009, the process of finding a job took an average of 4.3 months– there is no data about this question from 2009. Regarding the question whether the employment is connected to the graduates' profession, the results reveal that the job the graduates managed to find is less connected to their diploma in 2009 than before (Figure 1). In 2007 45.6% of the novice teachers worked in the field of education and 23.6% of found a job which is connected to education in some other way. This means that almost 70% of the graduates could apply their knowledge and competences in their own field². In 2009, 41.2% worked as a teacher and another 14.1% in education in a different position – which adds up to a mere 55%; significantly less than two years prior. Thus, the ratio of graduates who found a job with no connection to their qualification has increased by almost 10%³.

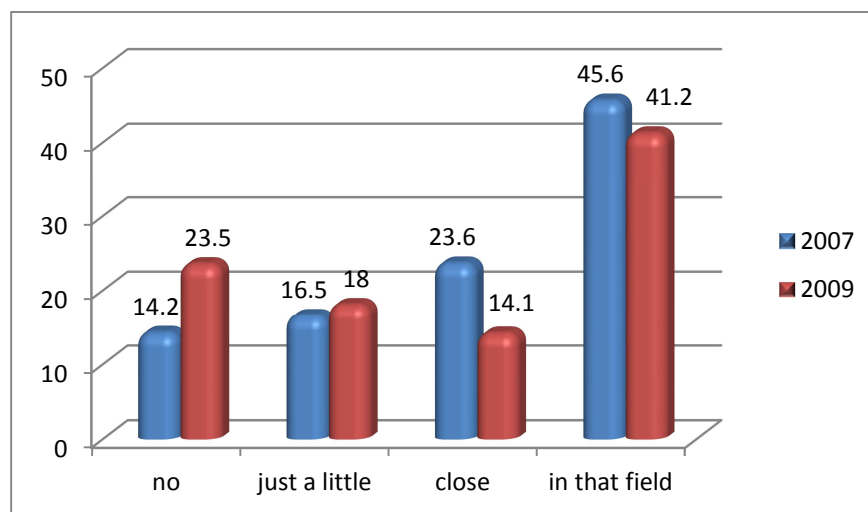


Fig. 1: Connection between the diploma and the first job of graduates

In 2014, a comprehensive survey has been conducted at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Kaposvár University by Judit Fináncz (2015). The online questionnaire was sent to 935 former kindergarten, primary school and special education teacher trainees, all of whom graduated between 2009 and 2014. The basis of the evaluation was 103 filled out questionnaires which are an 11% rate of the respondents from the sample. In this paper, the focus is on three of the questions from the questionnaire will be presented: 1) do the former students currently have a job; b) how long it took to find their current job; c) is it related to their teacher profession.

Figure 2 presents the processed data of novice teachers' employment areas and connection between their diploma and job.

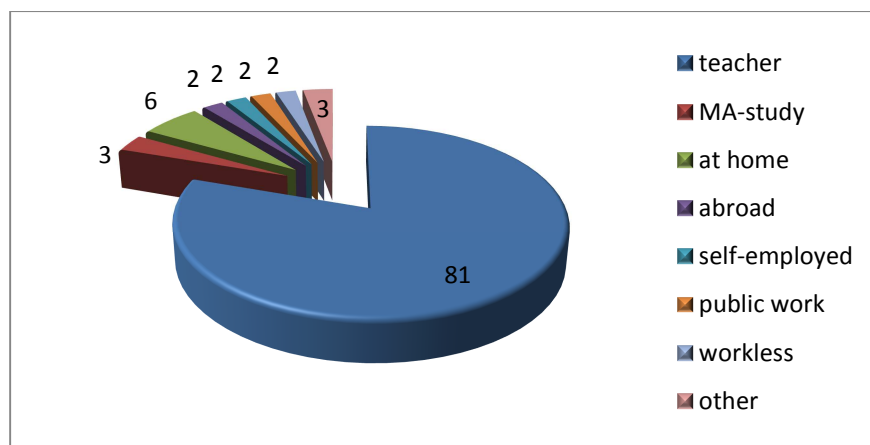


Fig. 2: Employment of graduated novice teachers 2009–2014

These data draw auspicious picture of the success job hunting: 81 novice teachers work in the field of education, close to their profession. Only three of them are still in further education doing their MA studies – which means that the graduates of our faculty rarely participate in the higher levels (Master or PhD) of the tertiary education. Six of them answered with “at home” – which is connected to starting a family. Two people are self-employed, another two do public work or work abroad and only two of them are unemployed. However, the results might not be accurate, considering that responses were voluntary. The survey also revealed the fact that the average time spent for job hunting was 16 months in this period. The amplitude between the answers is 52 months – one of the respondents was already working in the last year of his/her BA-studies (12 months prior graduation) and one of them only managed to find a place as a teacher in 40 months.

The results presented above force our faculty to review and rethink the process, the praxis and the contents of the teacher training programs.

3 A possible solution: specialization courses at Kaposvár University

Faculty of Pedagogy at Kaposvár University realized the problems of the novice teachers with finding a job more years ago. There were several proposals and experiments to support our graduates mainly focusing on the further education of the graduated teachers.

Starting the academic year of 2011/12, a new initiation was introduced for the teacher trainees: instead of further education they have the possibility to acquire new knowledge and skills during their BA studies. The first step was developing the four-semester specialization course called Romology for 30 ECTS. This specialization course focuses on one of the hottest problems in education: gipsy (roma) pupils’ cultural and economic background influences on the primary and secondary education, on teacher–pupil and pupil–pupil interactions and on the various processes of teaching. Within the confines of Romology specialization course the teacher trainees get an insight into the culture, the language, the economics and the social status of gipsy population which helps them in the future job support gipsy pupils to lessen their disadvantages during their education and integrate them more successfully into the multicultural/majority class.

The last three years the interest for this specialization course demonstrates that the teacher trainees find the opportunity for extending their competences useful or even necessary.

Last years, colleagues of Faculty of Pedagogy worked out more curricula for different specialization courses from a two-semester short-term program (i.e. Bibliotherapy) to four-semester courses (i. e. Drama Pedagogy). The faculty expanded the spectrum of specialization courses with nine new programs and started five of them in the academic year 2014/15, the five most popular among the students. Besides Romology, two more four-semester courses are deeply related to the teacher profession: Drama pedagogy and Hungarian language teaching for foreign/immigrant children.

3.1 Research on the teacher trainees expectations

In September 2014, a questionnaire-based research was conducted by the author of this paper among the participants of the four-semester courses of Romology, Drama pedagogy and Hungarian language teaching for

foreign/immigrant children on the very first lecture. The main goal of the survey was to collect information on why the students decided to choose one of these specialization courses, what their expectations were, what they think about the usefulness of them and what they think they can use of the new competences in the future.

In this paper, three of the questions will be presented: a) whether the students expect the course to be useful for them; b) whether the students have any plans related the subject of the course chosen by them; c) what future plans they have where the new competences could be applicable. This last point also implies the question whether the students at this level (second or third year of their BA studies) think about their further plans in the working world.

The first hypothesis (H1) was that the students mainly joined to a certain specialization course because it is a recently introduced opportunity in their training and they are not sure whether it will be useful for them. The second hypothesis (H2) was that the students don't have real or realistic plans for their future job.

3.2 Respondents

All of these courses are available for the kindergarten teacher trainees in the 3rd semester; for the primary school and special education teacher trainees in the 3rd or 5th semester (as their BA education takes 8 semesters). The target group of the research consisted of 64 teacher trainees: 14 students taking Romology, 8 students taking Drama Pedagogy and 42 students of the course Hungarian language teaching for foreign/immigrant children. There are 5 respondents in Romology, 6 respondents in Drama pedagogy and 38 respondents in Hungarian language teaching for foreign/immigrant children. Figure 3 presents the distribution of the respondents by their training program.

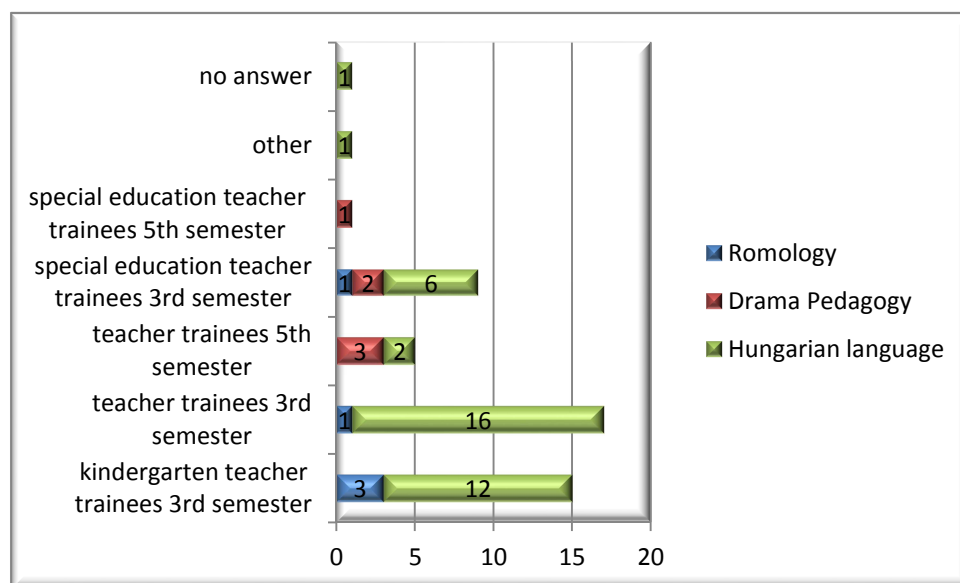


Fig. 3: Distribution of the respondents by teacher training program

Students of all three teacher training programs – kindergarten, primary school and special education teacher training programs – are active in the specialization courses; there are no kindergarten trainees in Drama pedagogy which could be a new point of extension of their curricula. The most active groups are kindergarten and primary school teacher trainees giving the highest number of participants in the specialization courses. The single answer from the category “other” came from a student of Faculty of Art.

3.3 Usefulness of the courses

The first questions in the questionnaire asked the students' opinion whether they consider the course useful for them. Participants of Romology mostly think the content of the course and the competences gained will be beneficial for them; one of respondents is not very sure about it. This particular answer was given by the special education teacher studying in the 3rd semester. She is before her practice in school, which can be the

reason for her answer. All of the students in Drama pedagogy answered with yes, they consider it beneficial for them. 33 respondents of Hungarian language teaching course are sure about the usefulness of the course. One kindergarten, two special education and two primary school teacher trainees are not sure yet.

Relating to first hypothesis (H1) the results show that the students' participation in the specialization courses is on purpose. Thus, the hypothesis H1 needs to be rejected.

3.4 Plans for the future

Two questions in the questionnaire asked the students about their future plans related to the specialization courses:

- Do you have any plans for the future related to the specialization course?
- What kind of plans do you have where this specialization course could be useful?

Table 1 represents the students' answer by specialization courses. As the number of respondents is relatively small the result cannot be considered as representative data.

Plans for the future	Yes	I don' t know yet	I am not sure	No	No answer
Romology	3	1	1	-	-
Drama Pedagogy	5	1	-	-	-
Hungarian language teaching	19	16	-	1	1

Table 1: The students' answers distributed by specialization courses

The students in Drama pedagogy are more confident about question *a)* as only one respondent does not have any particular plans for yet. There is also one respondent from the Romology course who is not sure about her future plans and another one of them who does not know yet. The answers given by the students of Hungarian language teaching course show a more significant contrast: 19 of the students *have plans* related to this course but 16 of them do not know it yet.

Regarding the different teacher training programs, most uncertain students are the special education teacher trainees: three fourths of the respondents here (8 people 12) do not know anything about their future plans yet (Figure 4).

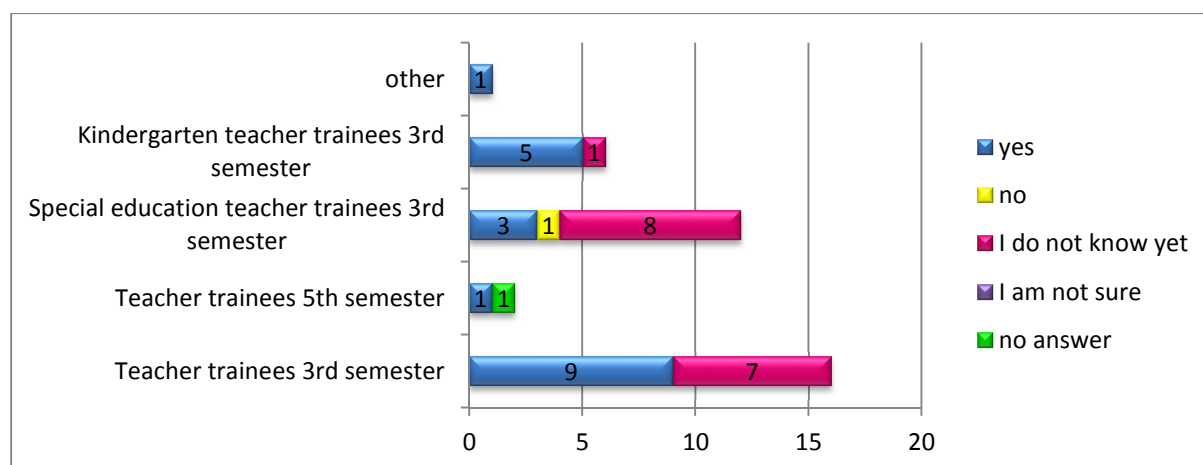


Fig. 4: Distribution of answers given to question a)

Regarding question b), the students visualized various possibilities for their future. The most determined and unambiguous visions were expressed by the students of Romology course. One student (a teacher trainee of 5th semester) reckoned it is going to be an advantage in the labour market; two students are planning to continue their studies for a BA degree in Romology (a teacher trainee of 5th semester and a kindergarten teacher trainee of 3rd semester); one student (a special education teacher trainee of 3rd semester) is planning to work with gipsy children and another one gave no answer because he already works with gipsy children (a teacher trainee of 5th semester). This group seems to be very conscious about taking the course.

The students of Drama pedagogy gave slightly less certain and more general answers: three of them think that their studies will help them in their work as teachers (two teacher trainees of 5th semester and a special education teacher trainee of 3rd semester). Two students are planning to organize special lessons in their work like Drama lessons or special lessons for disabled children (a teacher trainee of 5th semester and a special education teacher trainee of 5th semester). One of the students (a special education teacher trainee of 3rd semester) is thinking about starting her own private school and requires as many competences as a teacher as possible. Considering these results it is safe to state that the Drama pedagogy specialization course supports the everyday work of pedagogues.

The answers received from students taking the Hungarian language teaching course are more diverse. The opinions about the usefulness of the gained competences can be divided into four parts: a) general answers; b) plans to teach Hungarian as a foreign language; c) advantage in job hunting abroad; d) absolutely no plans for the future related to the course.

The results in this specialization course are as follows:

a) One of the students thinks that the specialization is going to provide advantage in job hunting as a teacher. Four of the students consider the course generally useful in their future work as a teacher. This adds up to approximately 13% of the respondents of this specialization course. These answers reveal a slight hesitancy regarding the specialization but present the determination of the students to work as teachers in the future.

b) Eight respondents would utilize the recently gained competences as a Hungarian (as a foreign) language teacher. Six students are planning to work with immigrant children, one of them as a private teacher. Two students would only teach their friends which means they want to use their knowledge in their private life. The number of students in this group represents 21% of all respondents – these students were the most determined to use the competences acquired in this specialization course.

c) The third option was that the specialization course would provide advantages in job hunting abroad and this one was the most popular answer, chosen by eleven students, 29% of all respondents. The popularity of this option displays the serious problem in Hungary regarding the migration of the educated youth.

d) A surprising result of this question is that three students do not have future plans yet; one of them gave an irrelevant answer and nine of them gave no answer to this question. This group contains the uncertain and less motivated students.

Table 2 summarizes the answers given by the students of all three specialization courses.

	Romology	Drama pedagogy	Hungarian language teaching
Advantage in job hunting	1	-	1
Generally at work	-	3	4
Special professional usage	1	2	11
Postgraduate course	2	-	-

Private business	-	1	3
Working abroad	-	-	11
Does not know/no answer	1	-	11

Table 2: The students' answers distributed by specialization courses

Considering the results the second hypothesis (H2) can be justified for the students of Romology and Drama pedagogy but cannot be justified in case of students of Hungarian language teaching as 34% of them (13 people) have no idea about their future job yet.

4 Summary

In this paper two topics were examined in connection with the tertiary education and the transition of novice teachers from education to the working world. The topics also considered the economic environment around them and how much the tertiary education pays attention to the changes in the labour market.

The official results of regular career tracking by the state report difficulties with job hunting in the field of education. The Institutions have to consider these changes in the labour market and find the solutions to increase the applicability of the novice teachers' diploma in the working world.

Faculty of Pedagogy of Kaposvár University introduced new ways to support its students after their graduation. One of the solutions was the extension of the spectrum of training programs and their contents. The Faculty of Pedagogy started several specialization courses to improve the skills and the competences of the kindergarten, primary school and special education teacher trainees and to better prepare them for job hunting.

The results of the research among the participants of specialization courses Romology, Drama pedagogy and Hungarian language teaching for foreign/immigrant children demonstrate the students' confidence that the acquired knowledge will increase the value of their diploma at the end of their training.

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³ Source of data: http://www.felvi.hu/diploman_tul/kutatasi_jelentes!/DPR_kutatasi_jelentes/index.php/jelentes/reszletes/3 [05.31. 2015]