

Recent trends and possibilities in the Hungarian higher education

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Abstract: Higher education of Europe is in a period of great changes. According to the Bologna declaration higher education will be transformed into the BSc-MSc system within a few years. Is it a “must” or a “need” for Hungary? Data on Hungarian higher education are given to show the necessity of some modification. Details are demonstrated with an example of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics.

Keywords: higher education, Bologna declaration, BSc-MSc, Budapest University of Technology and Economics

1 The Bologna Declaration

In 1999 the representatives of the European countries, among them Hungary, met in Bologna, in the city where the first university was established in 1119. They signed an agreement on the uniform higher education system in Europe. The main goal of this agreement was to facilitate the co-operation of European countries. Due to the uniform system the mobility of students, the use of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), and the evaluation of various degrees (equivalence of diplomas) employing professionals from another country will be easier.

In the past several years various higher education systems have grown up in Europe. In Hungary, like in Germany, the so called dual system of higher education exists: there are three years post-secondary institutions (“Fachhochschule”) and universities (generally five years, six at medical universities). Throughout, this former one will be referred as colleges. The curricula of colleges contains more practical knowledge while in the curricula of

universities there are more theoretical subjects. Universities have the right to give doctoral (PhD) degree.

According to the Bologna Declaration the uniform structure of European higher education will be the *BSc-MSc system* which is existing in the English-speaking world. *BSc* means “bachelor of science”, a degree corresponding to a basic knowledge in a relatively wide field (180-210 credits). Education ending with *MSc* degree (additional 120 credits) gives more detailed knowledge in a special field.

In Hungary the parallel existence of colleges and universities is planned to disappear. Colleges will provide the BSc degree, while at the universities students can graduate with BSc, MSc and PhD degrees.

2. The Hungarian Higher Education – Present and Future

There is a dramatic increase of the number of students in the Hungarian higher education in the last decade (*Figure 1*)

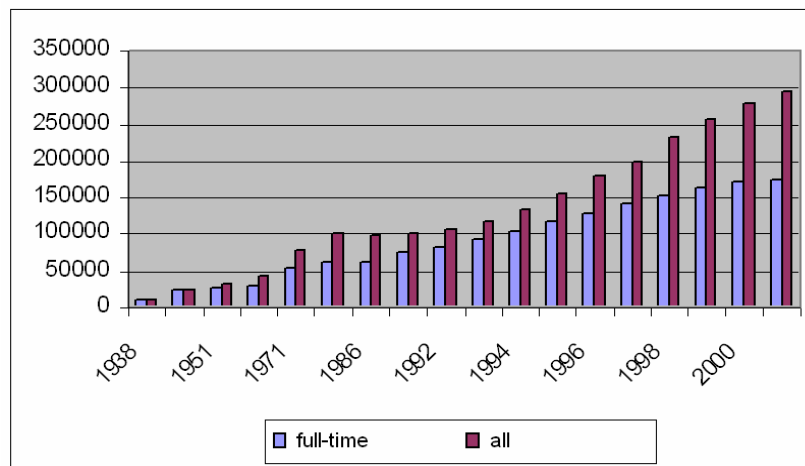


Figure 1. The number of students in the Hungarian higher education

The student/staff ratio (*Figure 2.*) has significantly been changed, too.

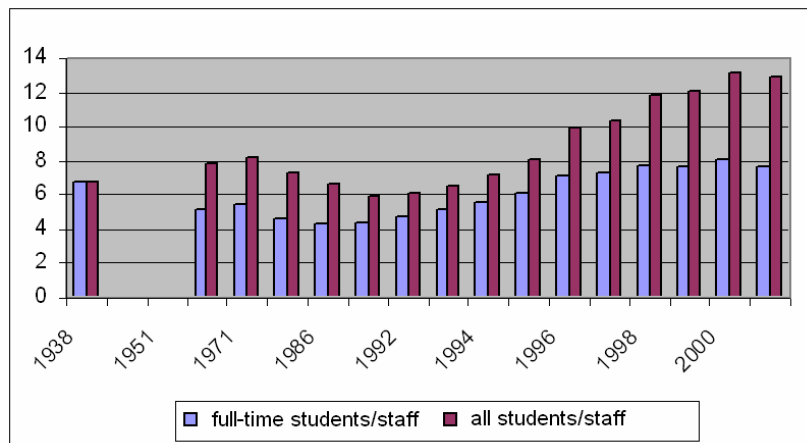


Figure 2. Student /staff ratio in the Hungarian higher education

Similar changes can be observed at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (*Figures 3-5*)

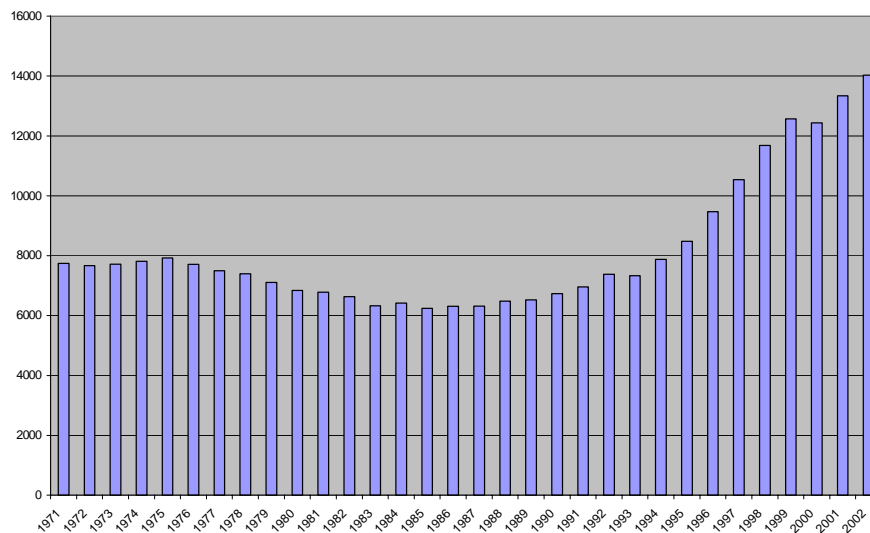


Figure 3 The number of full time students at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics

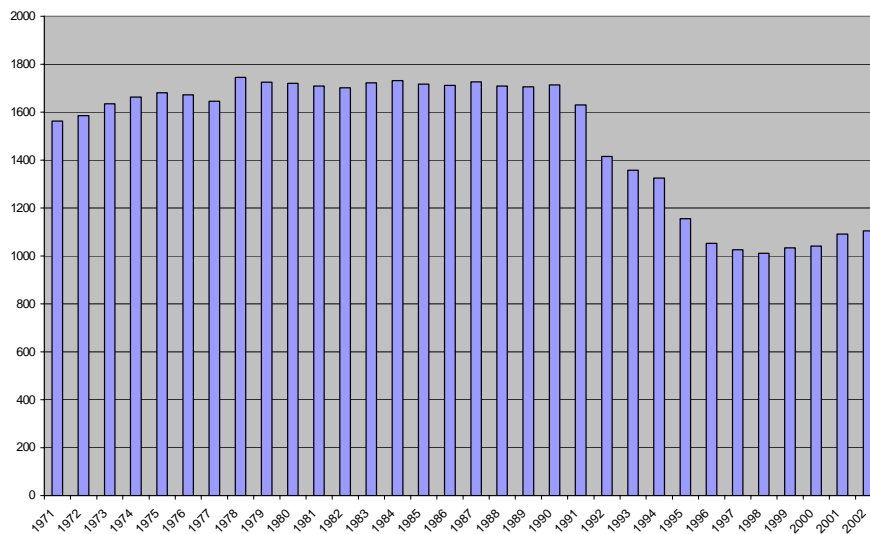


Figure 4 The number of full time staff at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics

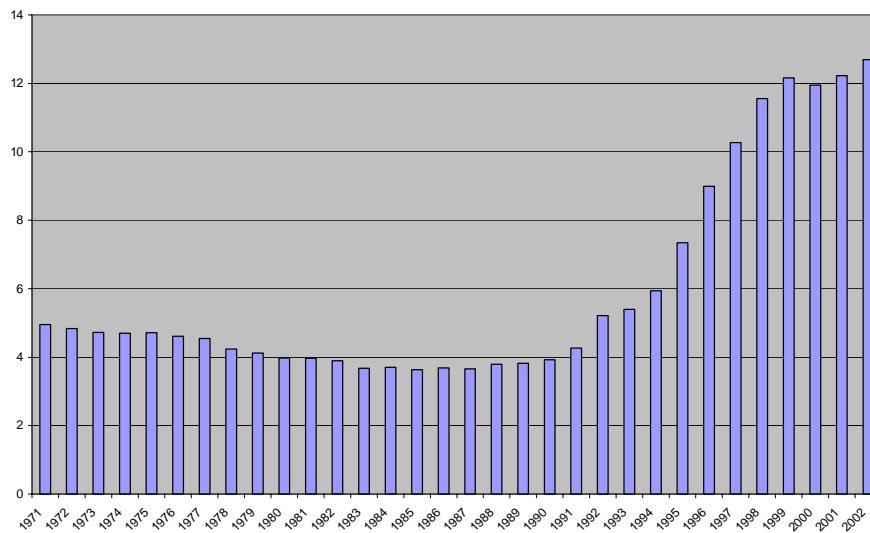


Figure 5 Students (full and part time) / staff ratio at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics

The dramatical increase of the student/staff ratio jeopardizes the quality of education. Some changes are obviously necessary to accomodate to the new situation.

Both the need for some change and the fulfilment of the Bologna Declaration require a new system in the Hungarian higher education. New structure (so called two-step linear education) and new curricula should be developed to cover the industry requirements. It can be demonstrated with the example of Universität Karlsruhe (Figure 6).

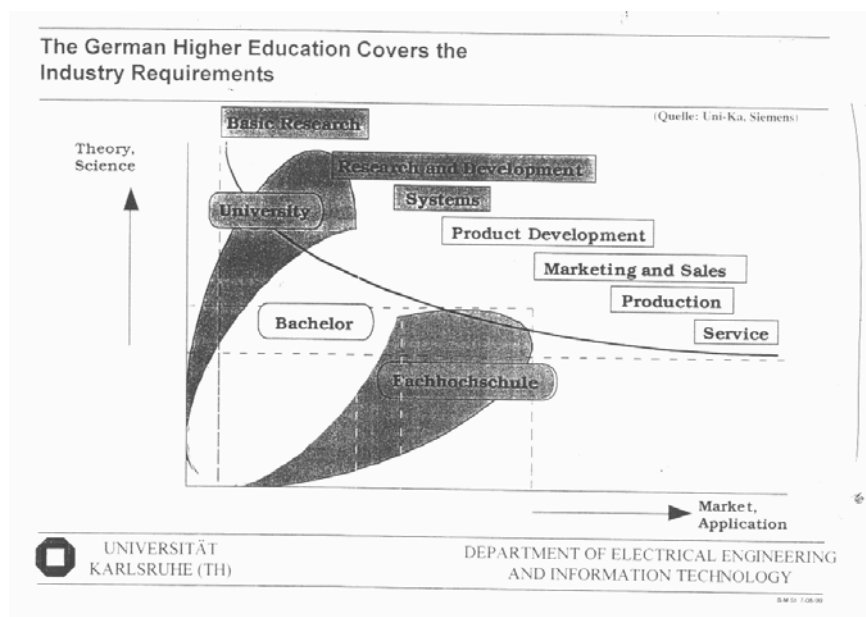


Figure 6 Comparison of various curricula: universities and colleges (Fachhochschule) before changes, and BSc-MSc, respectively

The ratio of theoretical and practical subjects in the education of colleges and universities, mentioned above, can be seen in Figure 6. This ratio in the BSc education should be between the values of the former colleges and universities.

Let us study the situation at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics again (Figure 7).

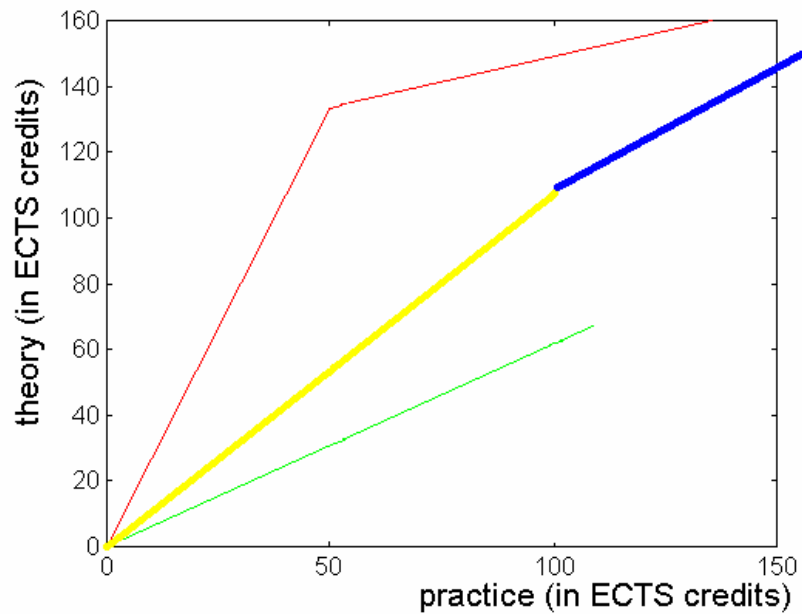


Figure 7 Theoretical versus practical subjects in credits at BUTE. Upper line: five years education at BUTE. Bottom line: three years education at a corresponding college. Medium line: BSc-MSc education in the new structure

In the case of engineering studies students having BSc degree should have proper knowledge to work in the industry and to continue their study for the MSc degree. One can get BSc degree and MSc degree at two different majors.

The first part of the reconstruction of the Hungarian higher education has already been finished. The number of programs decreased from about 450 to about 100, the common features of the same BSc program at various institutions were established. New curricula are under development in these months.

3. Co-operation of institutes within Hungary and international affairs

The institutes with the same educational program work together to develop the main requirements of the program, moreover, the institutes with programs of some similarities should work on the possible change from one's BSc to the other's MSc.

International affairs of Hungarian colleges and universities have already been widened in the last decades. For example BUTE has contracts with about 130 institutes all around Europe. Further development in international contacts and student exchange are expected.