

THE POSSIBILITIES OF EXPANSION OF TALENT CARE INITIATIVES IN THE FRAME OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: In my paper I will try to analyze some relevant factors which may contribute to the expansion of talent care initiatives in the frame of Hungarian minority education in Romania and I will also dedicate special attention to all the factors which may create obstacles.

The talent care initiatives which are already existing in the current Hungarian educational network in Romania largely tend to follow and to copy the so called Colleges for Advanced Studies from Hungary and other forms of the students' professional competitions. However, I believe that none of these examples can have long-term success without taking into consideration the local peculiarities of the Hungarian community in Romania.

In my paper I will focus on the strong and weak points of the Hungarian education in Romania, I analyze the legal background of the current Romanian educational system and I also focus on such phenomena as assimilation, migration

Keywords: minorities, education, legal background, assimilation, migration

Introduction

The talent care initiatives have a long history in the frame of the higher education. Of course, the term in the context of higher education could not be interpreted for many centuries, as starting from the middle ages the few university centers of Europe were without doubt talent care institutions themselves¹. The low number of the students, the distances that had to be faced if someone wanted to study in these centers meant that those who had the opportunity to be members of these academic communities were given all the chances to become the future elite of their home societies.

However, after the expansion of the higher education the leaders of the institutions and even the students, and after all, all the members of the university community had to face the fact: there are probably not as many positions and career-possibilities in the society as many students are formed at the universities². And another fact was, and still is, that not all the students have equal abilities, similar expectations and motivation. A possible way out from this dilemma could be the spreading of the talent care initiatives, which in various forms aims to offer more for the involved students than the average benefits of the university level education.

If we talk about the Hungarian minority education in Romania, it has some peculiarities which has determined that the talent care initiatives will be largely similar to the such initiatives which are already widespread in Hungary. First of all, the common education language made the whole system, the working methods and written experiences easily applicable and adaptable. In addition, in Hungary the so called „szakkollegium” (the best translation would be „college for advanced studies” was not only a recognized form of the

¹ Aldrich, Richard. An introduction to the history of education. Hodder-Stoughton, London, 1982 p.37

² Atkinson, G.B.J. The economics of education. Hodder-Stoughton, London, 1983 p.91

talent care within the frame of higher education, but through the role of these institutions in the democratic turn ³ in 1989-90 this form of talent care enjoyed massive support of the wider society⁴.

In our paper we will not only analyze the currently existing talent care initiatives which can be observed and identified in Romania within the frame of the Hungarian minority higher education, but we will also offer an analysis on the possible appearance and development of alternative talent care initiatives. Our research aspects will include legal, demographic, economic and pedagogical approaches.

Research methods

Our main research method will be the document-analysis. This will include the study of the legislative texts, acts, studies realized by other authors (secondary data analysis) in related topics and a selection of press-materials which have relevance in our context.

Supply and demand: the frame of my analysis

The supply and demand, and the various forms of analysis based on these come from the economics, but many authors have convincingly proved that this can be applied for various social phenomena as an analysis-framework. SCHUMPETER

We decided to apply this in order to be able to take a profound look into the depth of both the possibilities which currently exist and could potentially appear in the field of talent care initiatives and the potential demand for it, not only from the students' point of view but also from the perspectives of the companies or other potential future employers.

Throughout the history we can find various examples for initiatives and institutions which proved to be unviable in lack of demand. We can mention here not only the possibly naïve idea of exporting the democracy to developing countries, but also the useless development projects, financed by the EU which proved to be unsustainable as result of lack of demand.⁵ So we believe that all the future protagonists, initiators and experts who try to analyze the possibilities of the talent care initiatives in Romania should take into the consideration the uncertainty of the demand on national level, not forgetting the fact that the most excellent students in the secondary education have many options to go to study abroad to high-level universities and in the last years Romania has been a target country for such institutions, especially hunting for young Romanian students in the fields of IT and engineering, realizing a new method of „brain-drain” in the region.

We will intend to identify the major elements of both the demand and supply parts, taking into consideration the institutional structure, the legal framework, the human resources

³ Many of the young intellectuals who sat to table with the ruling communist leaders were members of colleges for advanced studies, mainly of the Bibo Istvan College (founded for students of law) and Rajk College (founded for economics and business students). The party with the longest period in government after 1989 (Fidesz) was even founded in the Bibo College in 19th march 1988.

⁴ Szakkollégiumi helyzetkép felmérése-Összeállította: ADITUS Tanácsadó és Szolgáltató Zrt-Budapest, 2011 p.14
http://femip.hu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=53e02822-86f2-4237-a885-229a35a092e6&groupId=10136
accessed 09.04.,2015

⁵ A relevant example could be the case of the Ciudad Real Airport, closed due to financial unsustainability
<http://www.thinkspain.com/news-spain/21060/ciudad-real-airport-to-close-tomorrow>
accessed 09.05.2014

and financial possibilities and the recent experiences, while on the part of the demand we will dedicate special attention to the individual and collective motivation of the students and the wider society to support such initiatives, even if many of these are not yet realistic expectations and motivations but possible scenarios which can become reality as result of rapid social changes.

The main elements of the „supply` side

The supply in this context and in our interpretation to which we will be loyal is the totality of all the currently existing and possibly appearing factors which are in favour of the expansion of the talent care initiatives. These include the relevant elements of the national legislation, available funds, infrastructure, human resources, social support and tradition.

As we underlined in the former chapter, we believe that it's basically important to evaluate correctly the supply, as it is a primary pre-condition of any change within the society. We assume, that in many cases the extension of the talent care initiatives could be interpreted as an evident desire, purely because there are no reasons to oppose and while talent care, especially in Hungarian language context has a largely positive connotation (the national pride related to the „Hungarian geniuses` is an often quoted base of the modern Hungarian identity and all the initiatives that support this special attention to the human resources of the nation are widely supported in public spheres ⁶).

However, we believe it would be an irresponsible attitude to pretend that the expansion of the talent care initiatives in the Hungarian minority higher-education in Romania depend only on the aspect whether there's need (demand) from the students` and the wider society`s side. Without a proper supply such a desire could be rather utopistic. This is why we analyze each factor in detail, which we consider to be relevant in this context.

Legal framework

The evaluation of the legal framework in Romania can be rather simple for the first sight. If someone would look over in the frame of a comparative legislative research, would probably conclude the chapter about Romania with quite short comments as there are hardly any legislative references which are meant to regulate the talent care initiatives in Romania⁷. We can even imagine, that such hypothetical researchers would have various observations on this, and some of them could have a negative evaluation as there are few detailed legislative instructions for such initiatives.

However, we believe that the situation is considerably more complex. To offer a better understanding, we would like to offer a brief insight into Hungary`s case (as we mentioned, the talent care initiatives in the Hungarian minority higher education in Romania partly tend

⁶ http://hvg.hu/elet/20140421_200_milliobol_nepszerusitik_a_Rubikkocka
accessed 05.09.2014

⁷ ANDRÁS GYÓRBÍRÓ & TÍMEA CEGLÉDI- INSIGHT INTO THE HUNGARIAN AND ROMANIAN TALENT CARE SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A LEGAL APPROACH p.74 in Third Mission of Higher Education in a Cross-Border Region .Edited by Gabriella Pusztai – Adrian Hatos – Tímea Cegléd. Center for Higher Education Research and Development – Hungary University of Debrecen 2012 ISBN 978-963-473-599-1 ISSN 2063-8477

to take as model the forms practiced in Hungary, so this comparison may have relevancy in this context as well).

In Hungary, the Act for Higher Education dedicates a whole chapter for the talent care initiatives.⁸ There are specific references and instructions, especially for the legal forms and the criterias of these (in which such initiatives can be carried out). We can find detailed legislative indications for the various forms of talent care, a separate part dealing only with the so called „szakkollegiumok” (colleges for advanced studies). For the proper understanding and interpretation of this it is necessary to know, that the lobby power and social-political influence of these colleges couldn't have been stronger as a significant part of the political class and in the moment of the writing of this article⁹ the President of the country, the Prime Minister and the President of the Parliament (National Assembly) are all ex-members of such colleges. As these colleges, especially the Bibó and Rajk college have played a key role during the democratic turn of the country and have formed ever since a large number of legal and economical experts who served governments of various parties and coalitions, the term „szakkollegium” could be well known for the experts of the Ministry of Education. This is briefly, why we find such an arguably uniquely detailed legal framework in Hungary for the talent care initiatives, especially for the colleges for advanced studies.

In Romania the situation might be rather less specified and legally instructed, but it is more likely that the case of Hungary is an exception due to the above mentioned reasons. In this approach it wouldn't be fair to say that this field in Romania is not underlined enough on legislative level. On the contrary, we try to offer a balanced approach to the readers to create their own analyzing frame.

Given the fact that there are quite few specific legal references, those, who wish to implement any talent care initiatives are free to do it, as the Act of Higher Education supports the idea of any activity which contributes to the development of any student who has outstanding abilities, which offers useful extrascholar activities and which enriches the usual school-curricula with cultural and professional activities¹⁰. This is not only important as a symbolic supportive gesture from the legislation, but also offers a significant legal self-defence ability for all the talent care initiatives which work in a formal organization and have the above mentioned objectives within their founding documents.

The disadvantage of such a legal approach is, at least in the case of Romania, that possible sources of financing are also not mentioned or named. So there are no specific national funds which have the objective and duty to assure that there are sufficient funds for such activities and which should operate a transparent and in all aspects fair competition

⁸ 54. §.

Act of Higher Education from Hungary

http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1100204.TV
accessed 09.05.2014

⁹ 09.05.2014

¹⁰ Legea Educatiei Nationale

. Retrieved 30 September 2011 from

www.edu.ro [Website of Romanian Ministry of Education and Research]

XXIII, Anul 179 – Nr. 18: Legea educatiei nationale, publ.in Monitorul Oficial, 10.01.2011 [Operative Education Act of Romania]

system for these funds. In the lack of these, the financing of the talent care initiatives in Romania, at least for the higher education, is very uncertain.

In Hungary, for example, there are more foundations and funds which regularly, 2-3 times a year publish the amount of accessible funds and invite all the institutions for competition. This on one hand offers a long term safety for the nationwide system, but also forces all the actors to adapt to the requests of the fund-providers. In lack of powerful lobby which could influence the financing-conditions, non-standard and original forms could easily find themselves without financial support, despite the existing sources.

And this leads us to the better understanding of the possibilities which is „hidden`` in the Romanian legislative and financing environment in the field of talent care initiatives. As the Romanian legislation and public administration doesn't offer sure and regular financing, there are no criteria and requirements set towards the talent care initiatives. This offers a large space for new initiatives, innovation and the implementation of original technologies and methods. In a world in which the concept of education is largely in transition, where former taboos are challenged like the necessity of the ability of the pupils to be possess the ability of handwriting, local initiatives which can adapt to local needs and changing rhythm can be extremely valuable.

It is enough to mention the heterogeneity of the educational system. Not only the territorial inequalities make the Romanian public and higher education so differentiated, but there are whole regions with extremely large ratio of disadvantaged groups or with groups which sociologically differ from the majority. The most extreme cases are probably the rromas, where many times it can be observed that the educational system can hardly handle the situation and is unable to give to the majority of the rroma pupils a viable solution for their future, in the field of education. Even if the number of rroma students is higher education is relatively low, this is an important aspect for the future as it makes us understand how important the possibility of differentiation and local adaptation can be depending on the local peculiarities regarding economical development, ethnicity and other socio-economical factors.

As a summary we can affirm that in Romania neither the legislative instructions, nor the specific financial sources exist for talent care initiatives in the higher education. This gives key role to the local initiatives and for the specific implementations. There is thus no guarantee that a countrywide talent care system would develop, but local initiatives with enough enthusiasm from the teachers` and professors` side and with proper financing have large professional freedom to invent and implement the locally most appropriate forms of talent care.

Human resources

We do not know any statistics, which would show us how many persons of the current university-staff in the Hungarian higher education in Romania have experiences gained in any form of talent care. Obviously, those who have, could be the primary implementers of such initiatives at their local universities and faculties.

The role of the enthusiastic individuals who would encourage and promote talent care is more important in Romania, than in Hungary. The reason is the lack of the traditions and legal instructions. While in Hungary it is obvious that such initiatives are necessary , as it

comes out from the Act of Higher Education, in Romania basically it depends on individuals who realize it. If there are such people in the staff of the universities, probably we will see the expansion of the talent care initiatives, but it is likely that they will have to face some negative attitudes from their colleagues' side, as such initiatives would be like the typical situations of „creative destruction” (phenomenon through which new and innovative ideas, which are largely unpopular lead to a social progress by destroying older taboos and structures and by replacing it by more innovative and efficient ones¹¹).

Traditions and existing initiatives of talent care

There are two major forms of the talent care initiatives in the Hungarian higher education in Romania, and both have as root similar implementations from Hungary (which is not surprising, as the common language is only one connecting element, the other is, that recently due to the various scholarships and student and staff exchange programs more and more students and teachers spend some time in Hungary which becomes usually a regular stage during their studies or professional career).

The first form, worth to be mentioned is the so called TDK (Tudományos Diákori Konferencia-Scientific Conference for Students) which is actually a scientific competition where the participants are required to prepare a paper and lecture on any topic related to their fields of study. A professional jury decides the value of the paper and whether the student should be qualified to the next, regional level. There is also a formal connection to the Hungarian system, as a typical Hungarian student at a Hungarian university in Romania presents his/her paper first at the local level, after that on a regional level (Transylvanian Conference for Students-ETDK-Erdelyi Tudományos Diákori Konferencia) and some participants gain the right to take part at the National Scientific Conference (OTDK-Országos Tudományos Diákori Konferencia), organized in Hungary at various locations depending on the field of science.

This form of talent care initiatives has the positive sides of being an institutionalized and formalized form of talent care and offers a few months-long possibility of cooperation for the students with the preparing teachers. It also develops multiple skills, as it not only introduces the students into the world of the scientific research, but also requires presenting skills.

However, this is just a limited form of talent care, as the involved students would not be integrated within the talent care completely, but only from the side of the academic research and writing and due to its limits this system is not complex enough to offer a wider range of self-developing facilities for the students and to exploit any unknown or hidden abilities.

The other branch of the talent care initiatives, which also has as model the Hungarian type, is the „szakkollegium” (College of Advanced Studies). We have already mentioned above how special the role of such institutions was in Hungary, and as for Romania, there are some existing and some rather inactive institutions. The most developed and the most similar to the colleges of Hungary is the Miko Imre College from Cluj-Napoca, offering training for

¹¹ Described precisely at the following source
Acemoglu, Daron-Robinson, James. A. Why nations fail? Crown Business, Boston, 2012 p 171

students of law and economics for the students of the Babes-Bolyai University. However, there are many other smaller colleges which not necessarily tend to follow the example of the colleges from Hungary as for structure and functioning.

However, the colleges from Hungary have regular contact with the Romanian institutions and have played a key role in the starting phase of these institutions. Even before the appearance of the first colleges in Romania, the Movement of the Colleges from Hungary organized the annual general summer camp in Romania, inviting local Hungarian intellectuals and students.

Almost two decades later, two local colleges organized the summer camp (which is not a simply summer program, but the main forum for the whole movement of the colleges with prominent invited guests) in Oradea. The students of the Rajk College, from Budapest visit every semester their counterparts in Cluj Napoca to offer and organize joint seminars on various economic topics.

These moments and tendencies clearly show, that on the supply side as a positive and encouraging factor can be mentioned the support from these colleges from Hungary.

The main elements of the „demand` side

As for the demand, our data are more vague and while on the „supply` side we have the possibility to mention long term tendencies which have been shaping the institutional and legal background of the talent care initiatives in the frame of the Hungarian higher education in Romania, from the side of the students` (and also from the side of the wider Hungarian community in Romania -a demand can arrive not only from the students themselves but from the micro-society and through the political representation it can create an institutional demand) we have changing tendencies and no possibility for long term analysis.

If we wish to get a clear image of what the students we can partly rely on relatively fresh research reports realized in this topic by Gergo Barna and Tamas Kiss. The research questions did not include any interrogation on the wish to participate in talent care initiatives, but indirectly we believe that can help us to get a clearer image on the topic. This research report not only reflects current opinions of the young persons in Romania but also has a comparative dimension as the same questionnaire was applied in 2008 and 2013. The survey was made on persons between the ages 18-35, but taking into consideration that the participation in the higher education is by far not only the privilege of the 18-23 years old persons and through second BA, MA and Ph.D trainings this whole range of age is a potential target for the higher education institutions, we evaluate that these data are useful in our case.

A relevant information is that they are significantly less satisfied with their current financial situation, in 5 years increased almost by ten percent of those who are rather unsatisfied. If the Hungarian students will have trust in the importance of studying and if the educational system can offer proofs (mainly by training young people who get easily employed after the faculty) that studying is worth and the better one manages to gain relevant training the more chances has in the life financially too, than the request for high-quality higher education and talent care initiatives which offer supplementary possibilities is likely to grow in our view. This observation of the young generation can influence effectively the visions and decisions of their parents` generations too, as double-direction communication is

more developed as ever before according to numerous experts¹². Likewise, if the parents' generation would re-discover the importance of training and education, it could be a positive incentive for the students to try to achieve higher results¹³ which could also be a factor which raises demand for talent care initiatives in the higher education.

An other important element could be if the students from Hungary would come to study in Romania at the Hungarian higher education institutions of the country. This migration has already started and if it continues to grow and extend than these students from Hungary can not only mean a greater rivalry for the free places in the higher education (and as a result more performing students who actually will enter the university) but as coming from Hungary they can possibly be attracted by the idea of founding and organizing colleges for advanced studies, a form of talent care which is well known and widely positively interpreted in the Hungarian society.

A possible encouragement and positive pressure could come from the business sphere. There are many examples worldwide that companies tend to choose the best students in study fields which are vitally important for them, and offer financing for their studies and in return they expect the student to start his/her career at their company. On a higher level, whole faculties and departments can be financed and shaped by companies' special demands, and this could generate the appearance of a more institutionalized and well financed form of talent care.

Obviously, the above mentioned scenarios are partly hypothetic. They are based on worldwide experiences and possible factors which may contribute to the growing and more determined „demand” side for talent care in the Hungarian minority higher education in Romania.

Conclusion

Since the worldwide expansion of the higher education, there have been questions about the possibility of differentiating among the students in a positive way. Not through discrimination, but through offering special attention, financing and the possibility of professional and personal development through various talent care initiatives. In this study we try to adapt global and regional tendencies and experiences for the Hungarian minority higher education. As the legislative context is rather liberal and permitting but the financial sources however uncertain, a key role could have the human background and personal motivation of the university-staff members which would like to be involved or would be ready to play a key role in the founding and managing of talent care initiatives.

As the analyzing framework we chose to set a supply-demand model and we mentioned the most relevant factors of each. This study, based on document analysis and the evaluation of possible future scenarios (based on local peculiarities and former global and regional experiences) will hopefully be able to help students, university-staff and decision makers who might have a role in the expansion of the talent care initiatives at Hungarian universities in Romania.

¹² Gábor, Kálmán. Az ifjúságkutatás irányai a kilencvenes években. *Educatio* 1995/2, p 191

¹³ Ogbu, J. U.-Gibson, M. ed. *Minority Status and Schooling*. Garland Publishing, New York, 1991 in Pásztor, Adél. Őshonos kisebbség mint nem őshonos kisebbség-Ogbu kulturális-ökológiai elméletének tesztelése Európában. *Szociológiai szemle*, 2006/2 p.10

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