Progress and Dropout Risk in Higher Education

(Book review)

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The EU and Hungarian higher educational national dropout statistics make the dropout problem very evident and overwhelming. Although there is much talk about progress and dropout risk, policies directly addressing these issues are minimal. The volume series "Library of Educational Researchers" published by the University of Debrecen, Volume 11th is a thorough new volume highlighting the importance of inclusive prevention regarding the problem of university dropout in educational policy concepts. The contributors are experts in their research areas, they all represent both the national and international point of view of the educational research community. The volume is organized around seven themes: from dropouts to dropout risk; study pathways and social background; secondary education; higher education and experiences; studying parallel to other activities; factors affecting the high dropout rates; summary. The reader can get an integrative review of the research with each chapter on the topic of progress and dropout risk in higher education.

In the first chapter Pusztai provides a review of international literature on dropping out of higher education, (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993), findings showed that students with lower educated parents, with poor family income, those who missed out years after high school, elder students and those with families and kids are in higher risk of dropout. Next to dropout the researchers mention stopout as well (Attwell 2007), when students have to stop or freeze academic year due to financial issues. This study was carried out with 605 university students (N=605) from Hungary, Romania and Ukraine using quantitative and qualitative interview (N=20) to examine the characteristics of student dropouts who left school before their graduation. Students' dropout of universities: 1. financial or family issues; 2. lack of support, students find higher educational institute climate to be too stressful, just one of fifth of the students gets supported from their teachers; 3. many students get frustrated with their studies and convince themselves that they don't need a degree; 4. complex problem. (Pusztai et al. 2019, 2020)

Although the popularity and availability of higher education is expanding the high dropout rates problems remain unresolved. In the following three chapters the researchers analyse the cause of dropouts in higher education employing different approaches to identify the higher education dropout factors in quantitative data analysed and qualitative research studies. They interpret dropping out in the relation of completion and persistence as well, in the second part of the volume the researchers examine the study pathways and social backgrounds, highlighting the importance of demographic characteristics and parental education level (Szigeti, 2021); students life paths in the light of identity (Pallay, 2021); religiosity and religious affiliation (Demeter-Karászi, 2021); cultural activities (Bocskai, 2021). In this part of the volume the contributors identified the statistically significant predictors of student dropout.

In the third chapter the focus is on secondary level education, how the selection of those entering higher education is conditional on successful lower and upper secondary attainment. (Csók & Hrabéczy, 2021). In Hungary entering higher education students can use different additional points, but the quality of secondary education is unequally distributed across schools. The researchers used different universities rankings to measure performance of secondary level education and a data-driven

cluster analysis proposing three subgroups of dropout students with differences in progression and risk of dropout.

The fourth chapter analyses the notion of resilience from the theoretical and empirical side highlighting the concepts of persistence (Fényes, 2021), effectiveness (Ceglédi, 2021), customs (Győri, 2021), satisfaction, trust and resilience (Szigeti, 2021), connections (Godó, 2021), science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Alter, 2021) and the characteristics of teachers' profession (Kovács, 2021) related to the factors of dropout in higher education.

The next chapter theme is about studying parallel with other activities, such as abroad employment and learning opportunities, volunteering and leisure pursuits and how these activities affect academic achievement and dropout risks in higher education. (Dusa, Kocsis, Markos, Kovács, 2021). The studies concludes that not necessary the student work and travel abroad, but the work for an extended period can influence the dropout, although the student work has a minimal negative effect on dropout.

Pusztai highlights the existence of substantial lack in the approach of orientation, transition and adaptation regarding students' progress in higher education system in the sixth chapter. Analyzing the data through binomial logistic regression predicted the probability that the dropout rate falls into two categories of a dichotomous dependent variable, slipping-passive vs. non-slipping-passive. Male dropout risk is higher compared to their female counterparts, according to the analyses a large number of male students are not getting the education they need.

In Hungary some of the higher education institutes and departments don't consider dropout as a problem, but many of them fights against. Students leave higher education for all kinds of reasons. In some cases, it's a personal choice, and in other cases, they just simply feel as though they have no choice due to their circumstances. Students and their families/relatives were left out very often from this discourse. The objective of this study is to examine the characteristics of student dropout in higher education using both quantitative data analyses and qualitative interview.. A central finding of the current study is that although many countries and higher education institutions are actively stimulating students, there are many unresolved questions which should be discussed. First of all, the educational systems should try to focus on the connection and the possible relationship between higher educational programs and the employers Also, there should be more activities to make students happier (extra-activities, counselling, tutoring etc.) and higher education system has to focus attention on families' situation as well. Teachers should support students at risk of dropout, helping them to understand the importance of how does professional qualification help them in life.

This volume reveals the urgent need for further research in this area to ensure the policy makers and educators to understand the importance of the high dropout risks and therefore to enable them designing better strategies which will be more efficient to keep the participants in universities. The authors use their own studies to tease out basic understanding about the process of progress and dropout risks. This book collects studies on what the contributors designate the progress and risk of dropout in one practical and research-centered volume. The authors intended to offer contributions to a broad audience: educators, curriculum designers, policy makers, researchers. The reader will find the book's content and writing style firmly research-centered; therefore, this volume offers an excellent collection of studies to those interested to take a deeper insight in the topic examined by the team of The Center for Higher Educational Research and Development (CHERD).

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