

## Colleges of advanced studies in Hungary

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***Abstract:***

*My paper focuses on the current situation of the Colleges of Advanced Studies in Hungary, as key elements in the “elite-training” in the higher education system. I would like to find an answer to the question: which are the field, where these institutions may have a significant extra contribution that they can offer for their students, and how are they able to compensate the eventual deficiencies that origin from the “mass” character of today’s Hungarian higher education. I would also like to focus on the chances that the students and graduates of these colleges may have to become real parts of Hungary’s elites.*

***Key words:*** College of Advanced studies, higher education, elites, elite-training

In choosing my research topic I was influenced by a few factors that apparently are independent from each other, but they surely belong to the same issue. First of all I was interested if we are still able to speak about an elite education in any quality and form (from the data of the Admission Information Centre and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office we can see that almost 15-30% of the students continue their studies, so we can speak about mass higher education) (Kozma,1999) .

Of course in everyday communication, respectively in the general consciousness there are some traditionally recognized institutions with high prestige, long history and sections or trainings whose graduates follow an attractive carrier in the eyes of the society and due to this, these institutions were granted the so called elite naming. (Many authors tried to define the term elite, they share the idea that the term denotes more or less well defined and descriptive social group and as a subsystem it refers to social groups which are in small number in comparison to the size of the society and have a great impact on it.

If we intend to find working examples for elite training institutions using the above mentioned definition then I think that the starting point is not clear. There are institutions with high prestige and a positive social judgment, respectively faculties (according to several researches The Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the Eötvös Loránd University and the Semmelweis University’s Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry are examples of the elite training).

At the same time, I do not accept the definition as perfect and fully explanatory but relying on the basic mechanism-logic the approach based on economics is justifiable (because this models the higher education institutions relying on demand-supply and pricing (Smart, 1985). The main idea of this is that it is possible to model the higher education analogically with the help of economics (Downs, 1957). We have to mention that the above mentioned author, though introduced a real paradigm was only the forerunner of the neo-liberal authors, who tried to extend the usage of this for other sectors, too (Pokol, 2001).

From our point of view, this trend tries to offer an explanation using the theory of rational choosing in the definition of the value of the institutions, more precisely on demand-supply comparison. In this case the applicants are the customers, they represent the demand side and the institutions represent the supply side, the transfer tool, the money, is not else than the performance that enable the applicants to continue their studies according