



Students' Integration into the Academic World

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to analyse those effects of academic value preferences of students which are related to institutional behaviour, integration, and learning. The mass higher education system made the pattern of the attitudes far more modulated towards the higher education and it called forth those layers which are very far from the elitist concept. Veroszta's analysis (2010) draws attention to the extant diverse values in Hungarian higher education, whilst in the international specialized literature we can read about – among others – the complex mode of action of the trend of marketization (Bok 2003). For the quantitative analysis, we used the part of the database of the HERD research¹ which focused on the University of Debrecen (2012, N=1,118). The techniques which were applied are: cluster analysis, variance analysis, and cross-tabulation. The results indicate that among the current demonstrable concepts we can find elitist, pragmatic, and open ideas at the same time, and the students rated to those groups are showing dissimilar marks in the fields where they were researched. In the classical elitist sample, we can find the strands which are the most interconnected to the academic world; however, if we look at the peer connections, their integration is considered as imperfect.

Keywords: higher education, academic values, students, integration, mass higher education system

Introduction

In our analysis, we are looking for the answer to the question how students' relationship towards learning and their level of institutional integration can be explained in terms of views about higher education (these concepts are the academic values). In case of a positive outcome, the question of which patterns are shaping the different types of integration and which are connected to efficiency and commitment towards learning come up. Mass higher education system evolved in

1 Registration number: HURO/0901/253/2.2.2. Leader: Prof. Dr. Tamás Kozma.

the 1990s in Hungary and we can find those sections in the new system which are assisting the students to become first-generation intellectuals. A significant part of students here has not got middle-class background and the indices of certain institutes are far below to compare with the results of the 'Greater' universities. The University of Debrecen has the widest spectrum of disciplines in the whole country and often appears at international higher education rankings, but at the same time the composition of the students seems regional: it reaches people who come from parts of the country which have lower economic indicators, i.e. the northern and the eastern regions. At the same time, the university is the main target for the Hungarian diaspora (Teperics 2006). The institutional structure contains the faculties with elite qualifications and also those units which have lower prestige. We believe that, on the one hand, the wide discipline coverage and, on the other hand, the existence of the units with different status are the ways in which the university can demonstrate a wider spectrum of the academic values.

On the changes of academic values

In our first step, we try to find – with the use of the functions and the peculiarity of the university – its ideal typical value background and target system. After this, we look for the answer on how the last decades' changes form the system of the academic values. In our reading, the term academic value contains the goals and the toolkit for higher education, its social incorporation, and its relation to practice and usability as well.

Marginson (2007) describes the universities as self-reproducing, knowledge-forming organizations, where both students and teachers have to represent values in a committed way, such as critical attitude, significance of innovations, and didactical way of thinking. Important aspects are the pluralism of the values, liberty of speech, empathy, tolerance, solidarity, and detachment. According to Veroszta (2010), the main function of the university is the maximization of the influence on the mind within society. Harland and Pickering (2011) considered engineering and dissemination of knowledge and critical attitude towards society as the main task for the institute. Ward (2007) says that the missions of higher education institutes are academic liberty, intellectual approach, probity, and commitment to social claims. Schwartz (2004) conceives that the cultural context of higher education shifts the values of the student towards personal autonomies, choices, and decisions. Considering the list above, it is unambiguously connected to D'Andrade's (2008) model, which places the position of knowledge nearby altruism and individual values. Although universities relay on the individual freedom of thinking, they are still part of society, and some of the functions aim at solving the problems of societies.

One of the major groups which carries the academic values is the group of teachers, who in every level of hierarchy in the classical universities have some kind of academic habit and the types of symbolic capital within higher education (Bourdieu 1988). The question is, nevertheless, how the bureaucratic organization of the institutes can fit into an academic habit and the prospect to advance to the standards of erudition. At the turn of the century, even Weber wrote that it is questionable how an entrant teacher could endure that 'undistinguished people pass him or her year by year' (Weber 1995, 14). Teachers have to be considered as the carriers of the ideal typical academic values. The years students spend at the campus transform their way of thinking, and part of the conversion is happening along the values: ideally, the students progressively approach academic ethics, moral and scientific knowledge. Other theories and researches refute the unidirectional and passive adaptation of higher education values: Escobar-Ortloff and Ortloff (2001) believe that academic norms which 'leak' downwards simply do not work: the impression on the students does not necessarily work out this way, especially when the relationship between the students and the teachers is limited.

The values represented by the universities cannot be managed as a standardized system, as certain professions as well as sciences have different preferences, and they expect different attitudes of mind from the person. However, particular sciences are more likely to be considered as rational and efficiency-centred, whilst, for instance, the assisting professions apparently converge towards the community sector.

The trends of higher education in the last decades (for instance, marketization, the development of mass higher education system, or fragmentation) have totally changed the tie of the universities and values. One of the most important generators of the changes is the tight connection between trade and higher education, which could be partially explained by the changed funding channels. Probably the biggest problem is caused by the different logic of the two fields. Huge distance appears in connection with liberty and autonomy since in most cases the tight co-operation with the labour market means sponsored research, tutorial second jobs, and partiality for certain projects (or even certain research outcomes). Tasker and Packham (1993) underlined that the moral principles of higher education are different and the collaboration of the characters of scientific life is inconsistent with the competitive market behaviour. Moreover, intellectual excellence cannot be qualified, whilst the values of the market are quantifiable. According to Graham (2005), we cannot expect a scientific research to be profitable, even if it is an operable construction in some higher education system. Bok (2003) summarized the trends of the commercialization and its thwarting-filled process, and he underlined that some disciplines cannot be fit into these changes: for instance, liberal arts get into a sort of vacuum caused by that. They made a sort of 'Faustian deal,' where the institutes sell their souls to the market

and they shove out from the academic standards, and due to the profit-oriented research the conversations between the teachers and the students become very rare. These could reinforce a sort of materialist approach, which affects both teachers and students, while the logic of scientific life should move on different lines. If the students are single-minded about their final goals, i.e. to have a job on the labour market (in a lot of cases, the institutes transmit this to them as well), they will move away from the classical learning purposes, the moral dilemmas, and the professional ethics as well. The judgment of this so-called 'academic capitalism' is not always as negative, though the opinions are corresponsive: the functions of higher education have to be put on a new basis. In other instances, independence and autonomy are blocked by the state; the outcome is the same again: the academic values will get eroded.

The development of mass higher education system affected both students and teachers. Pusztai (2011) wrote that the traditional student culture has split, but we have to see: it is the same with teachers. According to Bourdieu (1988), the stability of previous systems was based on the fact that teachers had an academic attitude on every level of the academic hierarchy. Where we can find sections of higher education expressly or tacitly, but obviously, where there are students far from middle-class mindedness, taught by teachers far from traditional academic attitude, we cannot build on classical academic functions and classical academic standards cannot be demanded. At the same time, the process offers mobility channels and it enables (even if it is depreciative) to get a diploma. It is really important to see that all of this does not steadily typify the whole higher education since the keeping of academic culture becomes the 'territory' of the high-prestige faculties and institutes (Bourdieu 1988). According to Veroszta (2010), a mass higher education institution is less normative, it can be described with lack of values and it shows a decrease in critical approach, ethical orientation, and features of the institutional autonomy. Nevertheless, the process does not have an obviously negative outcome.

The changes – which were listed above – will implicitly enhance other fields of academic values, while the structure of the different disciplines had been distributed from the beginning. It is important to see that all of these are connected to the learning attitudes which are part of the family identity in middle-class families. In that case, if the diploma is just a tool to run or maintain a mobility career, the tool aspect of the studies comes out and very likely all of these will convert the market aspects to the beliefs of higher education. If graduate students' labour market placement is difficult or the training courses tend to show signs of mass higher education system, then conceptions to constrict higher education can appear. Also, the rational and material mindset of students can result in similar process.²

2 An earlier analysis of ours showed that the idea of closing universities does not attach to the higher-prestige faculties of the University of Debrecen (Bocsi 2014).

Scientific identity (Whiting 2009) is the entirety of personality features, goal-achieving mechanisms and practices, which provide a particular characteristic for students to make them successful in education. The author lists characteristics such as self-efficiency (the person's belief in his/her own efficiency and task-completing skills), generosity, the belief that the good results depend on the individual as well, future orientation and self-confidence in the academic fields or needs of the student to achieve results. Therefore, such features evolve as better resource management, further, but accessible, targets, and a higher level of responsibility.

The tangible commitment towards academic values (Weber 1995) will definitely result in positive attitude towards learning, which is followed by certain specialties of institutional integration. The question is: does it take effect on the entire integration? – since a significant part of student integration cannot be characterized with the particularity of the academic world. In a study on the participants of teacher training, Pusztai and Fónai (2012) showed that in future teachers' institutional peer relations will be weaker, while other dimensions of their institutional integration seem to get stronger. If we give further consideration to all of this, we believe that if students display more elitist academic values they will show similar patterns in their institutional integration. Therefore, at universities which show the signs of mass higher education, students' academic commitment and integration can be just partial and asymmetric.

Methodology of the analysis

The HERD research was an international research with the participation of the University of Debrecen, University of Oradea, and Partium Christian University. It was a two-year-long project: we laid down theoretical frames and an empirical phase that was conducted in 2012. The same omnibus questionnaire was used in every country, so the findings are comparable. The leader of the project was Prof. Tamás Kozma.³

To assess the values related to functions and the openness of higher education, we used a 20-item questionnaire which had to be rated on a 4-stage scale by the students. The items contained statements about the elite training (for instance: just the high school students who have excellent grades should be admitted to the university) or they supported the presence of the disadvantaged in higher education (for instance: in regard to poorer students, the number of social scholarships should be increased) or had statements of a worldly-minded, utilitarian university-image (those university programmes should be eliminated which do not provide jobs immediately after graduation). We modelled the

3 The research findings are available at: <http://unideb.mskszmsz.hu/hu/kutatasi-eredmenyek>

clusters of academic values from this questionnaire. We analysed the socio-demographic background with variables of gender, parents' financial status, and the variable of the mother's and father's diploma. The base of the objective index of the financial status was modelled with their supply of durable goods.

We modelled the academic habit with a question block that measured the attitude towards learning. The rate of accordance relevant to these statements (also rated on a 4-stage scale) fits into the idea of the theoretical chapters.⁴ We also configured the index of the learning strategies which model the ability of learning. We analysed the field with a 4-stage scale⁵ as well (contains 4 items, such as: 'I am able to prepare myself for the exams'; 'I am able to study when I have more interesting things to do'). The variable for the efficiency of the students was modelled with an 18-item questionnaire. We also made an index for that (for instance: 'I have a paper or a poster for the National Conference of Students' Scholarly Circles'; 'I am a member of academic vocational programme').⁶ We modelled the attitude towards learning with a 16-item questionnaire, which refers to the behaviour in the classroom (for instance, I ask questions in the classroom) and to the relations between teachers and students ('I had a meeting with one of my teachers about my career plan'; 'I had a serious talk with students whose religious habit is different'). We used a block which models a teacher conformity (for instance: 'I have a teacher with whom I e-mail regularly') and a student conformity (for instance: 'I have a classmate who looks after me and visits me when I am sick'). Our hypothesis was that the elitist university image partners with higher academic integration (habit, efficiency, etc.), and we assumed a sort of asymmetric integration, i.e. their peer social network within the institute is weaker.

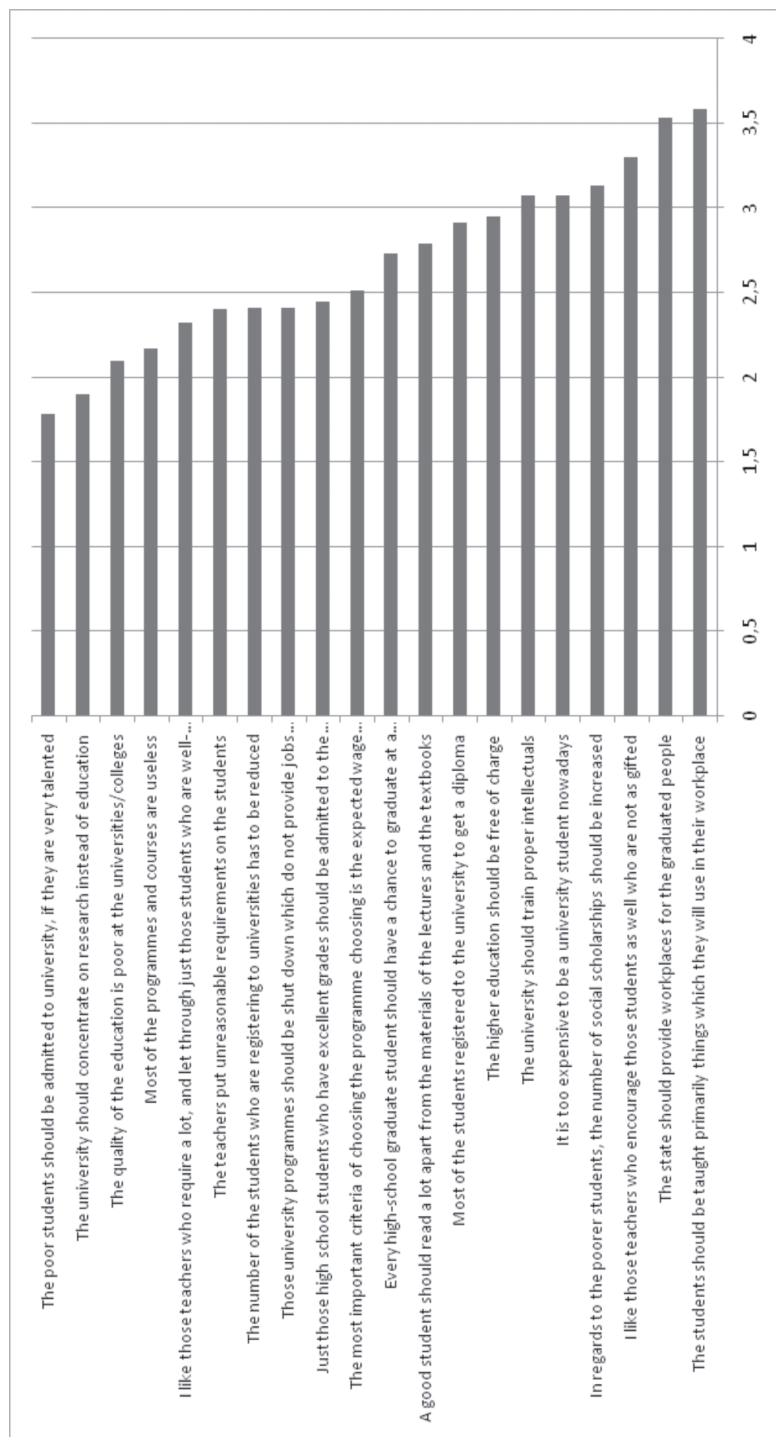
Research results

The average of academic values is demonstrated in *Graph 1*. According to the obtained data, we can assert that the judgments and functions of the universities and colleges are dominated by the pragmatic labour market aspects. Those items are also in a favourable position which contain social meanings: e.g., the idea of free higher education, the support of social scholarships, or the states regarding

4 We assess the academic habit with the following statements: 'The studies that I am doing will be useful in my professional career'; 'I am very determined to finish my studies'; 'I would like to achieve even better scholastic records'; 'I do everything to participate in the seminar and the course'.

5 We made the index of learning strategies with the following statements: 'I am able to study when I have more interesting things to do'; 'I finish the papers in time which are required by the teachers'; 'I am able to get ready for the exams'; 'I am able to focus in the class'; 'I participate in the course/seminar'.

6 The procession of configuration of the certain indices will be explained in the appendix.



Source: HERD database, N=1,118. Authors' computation

Graph 1. The average of the academic values in a student's sample

the cost of students. The items of the elitist concept (for instance: only the high school students who have excellent grades should be admitted to university) came just after the statements with social meanings. According to the preferences of the students, the tone of teaching and the researching roles of the institutes are dominated by the first role. Therefore, students' image of higher education has a particularly important role on the practice and the social attitude, while the weaker roles are illustrated by supporting those concepts where learning has a strong transformation into the labour market needs and by the approval of elitist attitude.

Next, we make clusters from the academic values. With the help of this method, we have created student groups, and every group has got their own characteristic in the field of academic values. During the next steps of the analysis, we can determine the social-cultural background of these groups and we can analyse the means of the indices in every cluster. The identified clusters are demonstrated in *Table 1*. The clusters were made by listwise deletion and k-means techniques. The sample contained 250, 101, 158, and 195 people, resp.

Table 1. *Cluster centres on the basis of academic values*

	Open	Materialistic and antisocial	Elitist and non- market- oriented	Practical elitist
Only the high school students who have excellent grades should be admitted to university	2,036	2,192	2,855	3,077
Universities should concentrate on research instead of education	1,773	1,879	1,913	2,145
The university should train proper intellectuals	2,979	2,472	3,467	3,379
A good student should read a lot besides the materials of the lectures and the textbooks	2,688	2,416	3,019	3,048
The quality of education is poor at the universities/colleges	1,902	2,060	2,164	2,486
The poor students should be admitted to university if they are very talented	1,368	1,889	2,112	2,289
I like those teachers who require a lot and let only those students pass who are well-prepared	1,886	2,188	2,837	2,831
The number of students who are registering to universities has to be reduced	1,713	2,034	3,111	3,086
The state should provide workplaces for the graduated people	3,776	2,853	3,648	3,736

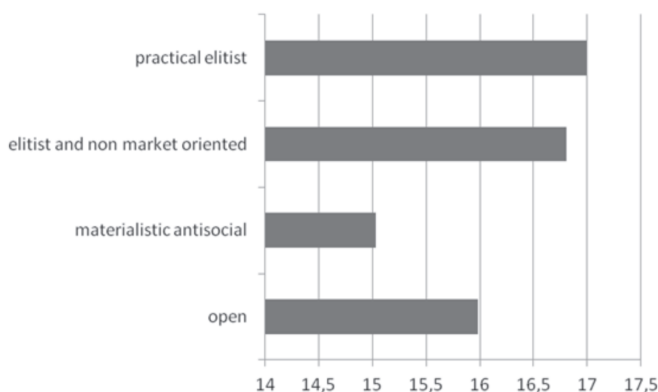
	Open	Materialistic and antisocial	Elitist and non- market- oriented	Practical elitist
I like those teachers who encourage students who are not as gifted as well	3,663	2,944	3,248	3,135
Most of the students register to the university to get a diploma	2,691	2,499	3,271	3,347
The teachers set unreasonable requirements on the students	2,720	2,087	1,953	2,651
It is too expensive to be a university student nowadays	3,483	2,528	2,593	3,484
Every high-school graduate student should have a chance to graduate at a university/ college	3,339	2,349	1,976	2,720
In regards to the poorer students, the number of social scholarships should be increased	3,606	2,474	2,764	3,242
The students should be trained primarily to things which they will use in their workplace	3,825	2,966	3,673	3,830
Those university programmes should be shut down which do not provide jobs immediately after graduation	2,235	2,304	2,289	3,156
The most important criteria of the programme choice is the expected wage after graduation	2,601	2,422	2,126	3,008
Most of the programmes and courses are useless	2,034	1,986	2,018	2,756
Higher education should be free of charge	3,390	2,101	2,380	3,264

Source: HERD database. Authors' computation

In the case of the 'open' cluster, social sensitivity is dominant. The students' ideal image of higher education refers to accepting the disadvantaged; the cluster has supportive ideas towards the disadvantaged, and this view is completed with practical features and critical points (too expensive, free of charge). The sample part cannot go with statements about elite training. The explanation of the second cluster was very challenging since this group has mainly negative decisions; that is why we had to find the points where students were reluctant to changes less (practical values, quota reduction, powerful student-base sorting). We named this sample part as 'materialistic antisocial'. The third cluster is typified with a classical, elitist university and student image, which is completely far from labour-market logic (elitist and non-market-oriented group), while the fourth cluster is a kind of a mixture of the elitist and practical items.

In the next step, we analysed the socio-cultural background of each cluster. We found the qualification of the father as the only connection (chi-square statistics: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000). If the father is graduated, the students have bigger chance to get into the elitist and non-market-oriented group. This is a logical coherence, even if more of them get into the materialistic antisocial group than anticipated. This is a surprising result and it points out that higher education graduation does not necessarily generate a behaviour towards academic values in the region (and in the current labour market). The sons of the graduated fathers are attending the 'open' group in a lower number than it was anticipated. It has to be underlined that the parents' financial status did not affect the academic values either.

We analysed the indices of the attitude towards learning and the academic commitment with the clusters. The results seem to be obvious ($p < 0.05$; sig: 0.000) since the rate of the efficiency index was the highest in the elitist and non-market-oriented group (4.27), which was followed by the practical elitist group (3.54), while the rates of the open and the materialistic antisocial group showed a lower level (2.69 and 2.93). While we were analysing the academic habit, we found the highest rate in the elitist and non-market-oriented group sample (13.86), but the difference was not significant. In the fields of learning strategies that require organizing and planning skills, the practical elitist sample showed the highest index rate (ANOVA test: $p < 0.05$, sig: 0.000). The coherence is represented in *Graph 2*.



Source: HERD database. N=704. Authors' computation

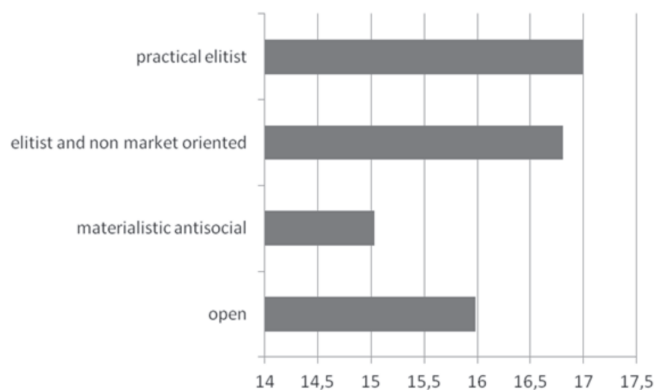
Graph 2. *The connection between learning strategy and the clusters*

The items assessing academic behaviour and extracurricular attitudes were not typical in the cases of open and materialistic antisocial groups with the positive statements.⁷

⁷ From the 16 statements, 13 showed significant coherence. We found different motifs about the statement 'I talked with the teacher after the class about what I heard in the class' – here the materialistic antisocial sample was overrepresented.

When we analysed the frequency of the activities and the clusters, we did it with contingency tables and chi-square test ($p < 0.05$). As a result, the existence of the elitist concept generates a habit which is similar to an ideal student image. The elitist items' dual motif induces different forms of behaviour. The behaviour of the elitist and non-market-oriented group is more adjustable ('I correct my homework several times before I hand it in'; 'I ask questions in the classroom'); at the same time, the activities outside the classroom will be less typical. The practical elitist group is less active in class, while the scaling of the attitudes and the wish to meet them is more frequent ('During a conversation, I approach the topic from more aspects'). The social network seems stronger within the sample ('I worked together with my classmates during the class'; 'I coached them for free or for money'; 'I had serious talks with students who came from different cultures or ethnicities'). As it seems now, the behaviour of the two elitist groups is very different during the class and after the class.

A separate block of questions mapped the relations with the teachers – with nine statements –, and we found significant connection in three cases (cross-tabulation and chi-square test $p < 0.05$). In the case of non-market-oriented and practical elitist groups, we more likely got the answer that they had a teacher with whom they talked about future plans, while these two groups are more likely to connect via e-mail. Concerning scientific career, we received different motives for the most important statement ('I have a teacher who takes care of my career') (Graph 3). The obtained data are interesting as they show that the learning strategies of practical elitist students are the best regarding certain behaviours: during class, they produce more favourable distributions than the non-market-oriented samples. We can raise the question whether in case of the elitist and the non-market-oriented group they turn to the labour market because they failed to establish good relationship with their teachers.



Source: HERD database, N=704. Authors' computation

Graph 3. *The ratio of the teachers who monitored the career of the student*

We assessed the conformity of the students' connections with nine statements, and in six we found significant relations (cross-tabulation and chi-square test $p < 0.05$). On the whole, we can say that in connection with peer integration within the campus (spending free time, borrowing notes, conversations about scientific questions, asking for help when sick) the practical elitist group is in the most favourable place. It is very interesting to see that the motives of the two elitist clusters differ since the elitist and non-market-oriented group could show bigger social network in the field of talking about future plans. Peer networks are not typical in the elitist and non-market-oriented group even in fields of cultural or scientific conversation.

Summary

In the first step, let us analyse the correctness of the hypothesis. We presumed that the student clusters which contain elitist components show tighter integration to the academic world. This hypothesis is not fully probable. Two samples were counted here, the elitist and non-market-oriented and the practical elitist ones. The index of efficiency and learning strategies got their highest rates in these two groups; however, the differences in the field of academic habit were not that significant. On the other hand, we wanted to demonstrate the phenomenon of the asymmetric integration, which was revealed by Pusztai and Fónai (2012), but in this case this hypothesis was not obviously provable. Our findings have showed that the practical elitist attitude generates a strong peer network inside the campuses, but this phenomenon is not demonstrable by the case of elitist and non-market-oriented group (although they probably plan their future at the university). In an earlier analysis of ours, where we studied further education plans, we found out that in this cluster the students who intend to continue PhD studies were overrepresented (Bocsi 2014). The received results propose two questions. On the one hand, it opens our eyes that the value system which is tightly connected to the university generates a university life free of student connections, where co-operation (even in the field of learning) is less likely.

A student image based on the Prussian educational model is emerging in front of our eyes and rightfully reminds us of Karikó's correspondences (2005) about conformism and education. We have identified clusters in which peer networks and those outside of the campus are important. The case of these students shows that they approach problems from different viewpoints – this phenomenon prevails in the fields of learning strategies and communication. Practically, we demonstrated the value fields of science (Bocsi 2014) in such a group which is almost out of the institute and plans its career outside of it. It is also emphasized that analysing the academic conformity in this group is rather successful, but

the tracking of their career by their teachers is less observable. We can ask the question whether in their case conformity characterizes them from the beginning of their studies or it evolves as they could not find the right tutor for themselves. Unfortunately, we are unable to answer the arising question from the available data; however, the qualitative enquiries, which we are going to conduct, could take us closer to understanding the phenomenon better.

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