



Academic Time at the Campus

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Abstract. The time budget of students is similar to that of the general population; the difference is that in the case of students we have substituted obligatory activities with academic time. This tract has got several elements at the campuses: students attend lectures, write essays, or read scientific literature, etc. The mass higher education system started to be formed in Hungary from the 90s, and this system has got some parts in which students' life is not so learning-centred because paid work and free time are also important elements of their lifestyles. In this study, we analyse two parts of academic time; firstly, the duration of preparing for lessons and, secondly, attendance at lessons. During this analysis, we used the HERD database from 2012.¹ From this international database, we separated the subsample of the University of Debrecen (N=1,118). Our aim was to feature the patterns of this field, and after that we analysed the results from the viewpoints of socio-cultural background, achievement, and academic attitudes. The findings show that the group with high academic timeframe comes from lower social groups (villagers, non-favourable economic situation, etc.). We can state that the academic attitudes (academic habitus, learning strategies, achievement) and academic time constitute a complex behavioural and thinking set for students.

Keywords: higher education, lifestyle, time budget, academic time, students

Theoretical frames

Universities are formal institutions, and this type of institution has got several different forms. Obviously, students have fixed time frames at campuses (lessons, practices, etc), but the extent of the autonomy is also significant. So, if we wished to approach universities from the viewpoint of institutional sociology, we could state that universities are not totally authoritarian organizations and they give several elements of the autonomy for the students. One significant part of this autonomy refers to the time budget. Some institutions stand closer to formal rules or strict norms; these are hierarchical systems, but in its every form individual

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

autonomy is a very important part from the Middle Ages (Bär 2005). In addition, in some ways, universities always take place ‘outside’ the society, and being a student at a university gives a special rhythm and special fixed activities.

Horsmanhof and Zimitat (2007) contend that students’ way of life is a balance among different demands and roles. Nowadays, in the context of mass higher education, the system has formed this opportunity, which also attaches to the selection and duties the concept of time balance. In the elite segment of higher education (HE) system, learning-centred activities and lifestyle are typical, but in some segments of the HE system this rigid lifestyle is not characteristic. Nevertheless, we have to see that this new section of the institutions sometimes stays closer to the secondary schools and leans less on the students’ autonomy.

Also, we have to see that the learning-centred lifestyle may work well if the degree generates a stable middle-class position and favourable opportunities at the labour market. In this case, the invested work can pay off. But this mechanism does not clearly function in Hungary, at least not after the Millennium. A degree can facilitate someone to find a suitable job, but it is not a guarantee for it. The higher education system in Hungary has changed since the 1990s. The number of full-time students has reached 200,000 over the last decade, but the gaps in the system have grown. We suppose that one part of the students have fallen away from the academic standards and life goals, but we do not have knowledge of the national and longitudinal data about the academic time of students.

It is also important that the academic time is not the only resource of the enlargement of the cultural capital. Several free-time activities and some segments of the paid work can generate similar processes as well. In connection with the first phenomenon, George et al. (2008) use the notion of ‘academic leisure activities’ (for example reading, writing poems, or debating). Time budget analysis is not the only method whereby we can recognize the students’ way of life. Such research results do not provide us data at all about the relation to time (collectivist or individualist patterns, the attitude towards rapidity, the fragmentation of time, flexibility, desultoriness, etc.). For those changes which have become general over the past two or three decades (Schilling 2005; Jurczyk and Voss 2015), universities offer ideal places. The special rhythm of students’ lifestyle and the frames of these institutions can verify these patterns. The process of mediatization can confirm these changes too.

Zinnceker (1993) observes that the degree of the youth’s autonomy has broadened in the second half of the 20th century. This change has presumably shaped the rules and norms of the universities, too. On the other hand, over the last few decades, the way of life became a substantial element of social stratification (Andorka et al. 1995), and this dimension has got a special relevance in the case of the youth. The different free-time activities are parts of the identity and show a picture about the self to the outside world. These activities generate a social status and they can

function like a status symbol, and we suppose that these mechanisms are working at the campuses, too. The subcultures of youth evolve generally opposite to the adults' world – and time use is an important segment of the adults' world. Violating the rules of society will become a significant part of identity in this cohort. For that very reason, the different activities were transposed into night-time (and these actions will be visualized on the Internet, too) or different social groups configure another attitude towards time and they try to intermit the 'rat race' of modern life.

Findings of earlier researches

Firstly, we have to see that the phenomenon of academic time is not productive in every case. During these periods, students can be passive or not too efficient; so, this value is not a guarantee of the academic achievement. But analysing the academic time is a very useful tool if we wished to give an overview about students' way of life.

Zulauf and Gortner (2009), in their analysis on the American students' time budget, observed that students' way of life is similar to the average American lifestyle, at least if we substitute paid work with learning. But we can state that these time frames are finite and if the duration of Information Technology (IT)-use or paid work widens, the academic time has to be reduced. The duration of these elements can be formed by the institutional programme requirements as well. Babcock and Marks (2011) analysed the academic time of American students, and they found that this period was reduced from 40 hours to 27 hours a week between 1961 and 2003. Meanwhile, IT-use and free time became more dominant in the students' time budget. Jacobsen and Forste (2011) concluded that the length of academic time is 5.5 hours a day in the case of the average American student. According to Mokhtari et al. (2009), the duration of Internet use is 2.47 hours a day, television use is about two hours a day, and reading is 3.3 hours (in scientific and recreation fields together).

The judgement of the reducing academic time is not unambiguous. These periods are not productive in every case. The evolution of educational technology can make a learning process easier and faster. When we analyse the connection between academic time and students' achievements, we have not found a clear relationship. One group of researchers have shown positive but not strong connection between these two fields, while the other group does not prove this correspondence (Zulauf and Gortner 1999).

In the frame of the Regional University Research (NKFP-26-0060/2002, Research Co-ordinator: Prof. Dr. Tamás Kozma), we have analysed the time budget data of students from three universities in the Partium region (University of Debrecen, Hungary; Partium Christian University, Oradea, Romania; Ferenc Rákóczi II

Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, Berehove, Ukraine). Learning, IT-use, free-time activities, and reading were significant parts of the students' lifestyle, but the means of homework and television use were under the mean values of the average population. The fixed terms were dominant, but the informal activities were also widespread (see Table 1). The sum of academic time was 368 minutes a day. Because the research was conducted in three countries, we are able to compare the time budget of the subsamples. The longest span of academic time was perceivable in Oradea (454 minutes a day).

Table 1. The students' time budget on a normal workday in 2005 (in minutes)

Activities	Minutes (mean values)
sleeping	419
personal hygiene	49
rest	71
attendance at lessons	203
learning at home	131
self-development	34
paid work	39
housework	43
transport	83
shopping	31
reading	49
television use	77
listening to music	82
computer use	54
Internet use	50
social life	95
hobbies	37

Source: Regional University Database, N=952 (see: Bocsi 2013a)

Although we do not know the general Hungarian students' time budget data, there are few research results which analyse the IT-use. For instance, Nagyné and Ambrus (2015) analysed the arts students from this aspects at the University of Pécs, and they contended that the most frequent answers were between three and four hours a day. When we try to map the attitude towards time and the special time frames of universities with qualitative methods, we receive a dissonant picture. This hectic and flexible lifestyle provides favourable circumstances for students, but their opinion is not univocal: we have found traces of nostalgia about their life before the massive IT-use and they find their lifestyle too casual and unpredictable (Bocsi 2014).²

2 These attitudes are observable from the grounds of the 'Slow Movement'. Some parts of

Methodology

The HERD research was an international research with the participation of the University of Debrecen, the University of Oradea, and Partium Christian University. It was a two-year-long project: we laid down theoretical frames and an empirical phase, which was conducted in 2012. The same omnibus questionnaire was used in every country, so the findings are comparable. The project co-ordinator was Prof. Tamás Kozma.³ In this article, I analyse only the data of the University of Debrecen (N=1,118). The University of Debrecen has got a relatively high student population (28,000), and it is a regional university: our students come from the northern and eastern parts of the country and the economic level of these regions is relatively low.

Two questions referred to academic time in this questionnaire. The first referred to the preparation for lessons (less than one hour, two or three hours, over three hours) and the second is the attendance at lessons. In this last case, the students had to tell how many percent of their lessons they attend. We have analysed the duration of the IT-use (in minutes) and the frequency of the paid work, too. The following socio-cultural variables were used in the analysis: parental degree, economic situation (with the help of consumers' goods), the type of settlement, and the faculties of the university that the student attends. The analysis has three significant parts: the field of learning and its socio-cultural background, the segments of academic habitus, and the field of cultural activities.

Students' achievement was analysed with the help of 18 items (have written a publication, participated in a scientific conference, etc.) – and we created the index of achievement with the help of these values. We modelled the academic habitus with a question block that measured the attitude towards learning. The rate of accordance is relevant to these statements (also rated on a 4-step scale).⁴ We also configured the index of the learning strategies, which models the ability of learning. We analysed the field with a 4-step 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, etc.*). We analysed the cultural activities of students in the questionnaire, too (the frequency of reading, attendance of theatre, library, etc.). The following techniques were used during the analysis: percent, means, crosstabs, and variance-analysis.

this movement are observable in Hungary too. For example: <https://hu-hu.facebook.com/SlowBudapest> or <http://www.kultura.hu/slow-design-theme-of-9th>.

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

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.*

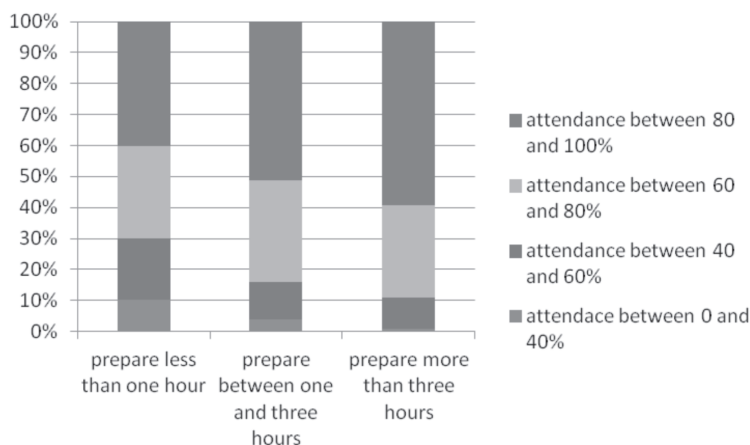
5 We made the index of learning strategies with the following statements: *I am able to study when I have more interesting things to do; I finish the papers in time which are required by the teachers; I am able to get ready for the exams; I am able to focus in the class; I participate in the course/seminar.*

Results of the analysis

Patterns of academic time

Unfortunately, we do not exactly know the means of the academic time because students had to choose terms. 26.6% of the students prepare less than one hour at home, 50.2% between one and three hours, and 23.2% more than three hours a day. These rates are comparable to the data of the Regional University Research from 2005 (then, 28.8% of the students prepared less than one hour and 17.1% of the students more than three hours). As to the strengths of these findings, we can state that the learning-centred attitude of students' way of life has not essentially changed over the last decades.⁶

If we analyse the frequency of lesson attendance, we can see that about 50% of the students take part in almost every lesson (between 80% and 100%) and it is relatively rare that they do not attend the lessons (4.4 percent of the students between 0% and 40%).⁷ We need to know that the students who took part in two or three trainings at the same time were significantly more common after the Millennium. If we analyse the relationship between these two fields, there is a significant connection (chi-square statistics, $p < 0.05$, sig: 0.000). The joint moving of these two dimensions is obvious: students who tend to take part in almost every lesson prepare more time at home, too. Therefore, a significant part of the students' life is learning-centred (*Graph 1*).



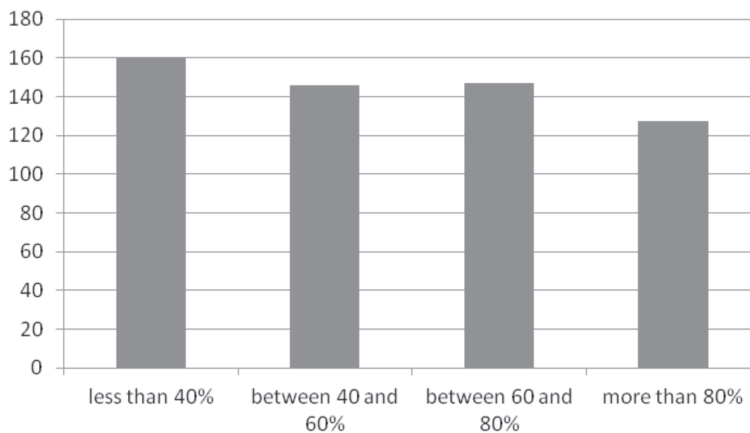
Source: HERD database. N=1,118. Cross-tabulation. Authors' computation

Graph 1. The relationship between the attendance of lesson and the learning at home

⁶ Unfortunately, we have no current statistics that deal with the students' time budget system.

⁷ 0–40%: 4.4 percent of students, 40–60%: 14.4 percent of students, 60–80%: 31.7 percent of students, 80–100%: 49.8 percent of students.

As we have said, the students' life style is a balancing between learning, free time, and paid work. But this split is not clearly the students' choice because we have to reckon with the institutional features and requirements, the amount of the tuition fee, and the economic background of the students. In Hungary, a significant part of students have to pay tuition fees. Moreover, the system of student work has expanded in the last decade, so these opportunities are manageable from campuses. It is an important research question whether these two fields are opposed to the students' lifestyle or not. In the HERD questionnaire, we used different items to analyse the students' participation on the labour market.⁸ The cross-tabulations show one significant relationship – in the case of the attendance of the lessons (chi-square statistics, $p < 0.05$): students who regularly work during the terms and the holidays attend their lessons more rarely (sig.: 0.000 and 0.001). But we have to see that the participation on the labour market does not reduce the time of preparing in this sample. So, the contraposition of these two fields is not clearly demonstrable in students' lifestyle because the duration of the paid work does not shape the time of learning at home.



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

Graph 2. The relationship between Internet use and the attendance of lessons (in minutes)

IT-use became an important part of students' life after the Millennium. The world of higher education system has adjusted to the Internet, but this time frame is not only connected to the periods of free time since students have relocated a significant part of the learning process to the Internet. If we analyse the time frame of Internet use,⁹ we will find a significant relationship between the

⁸ Two items were used: *I work during the term* and *I work during the holiday*. The eligible answers were the following: *never*, *sometimes*, and *regularly*.

⁹ We could not use a real-time analysis – students have to give the approximate time frame of their

attendance of lessons and the average number of minutes of Internet use during a normal workday (see *Graph 2*, ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.003). The mean value of Internet use is 137 minutes per day at the University of Debrecen. There was no connection between the preparation for the lessons and Internet use – but we have to see that these two activities can interlock during the learning process.

The effect of the socio-cultural and institutional background

When other researchers studied the relationship of academic habitus and the socio-demographic variables at the University of Debrecen, they found that strong academic goals and integration are not typical in the case of students who have a favourable background (Ceglédi 2015). We also tried to give an overview of the effects of gender, parental degree, economic capital, and the type of settlement. In addition, we used the data of nine faculties, too. The following table shows the overrepresented subsamples that give higher rates in the field of academic time.

Table 2. The socio-demographic background of the two fields of academic time

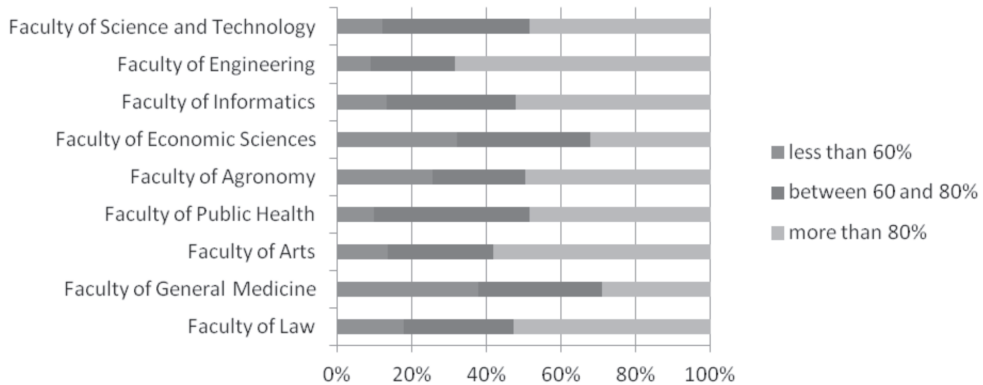
	Gender	Fathers' parental degree	Mothers' parental degree	Economic capital	Type of settlement
Attendance at lessons	women	-	without degree	low economic situation	-
Preparing for lessons	women	-	-	low economic situation	smaller city and villages

Source: HERD database. N=1,118. Cross-tabulation, $p < 0.05$. Authors' computation

The relationship is clearly interpretable – the duration of academic time is longer in the case of students who come from lower social groups. It is a very important question what kind of explanation can be used if we wanted to illuminate this connection. At first, we do not know whether this pattern is available at other Hungarian universities or not. But we can use the phenomenon of 'resilience' during the explanation (Ceglédi 2015), and we have to reckon with the Hungarian feature that the gaps between different social groups are less and universities give a relatively effective path of social mobility. Gender differences can be explained by the fact that women tend to follow stronger social norms (in this case, institutional norms).

When we use the variable of the faculties, it is important to know that rules and norms are different inside the campus as well as the requirements. In some

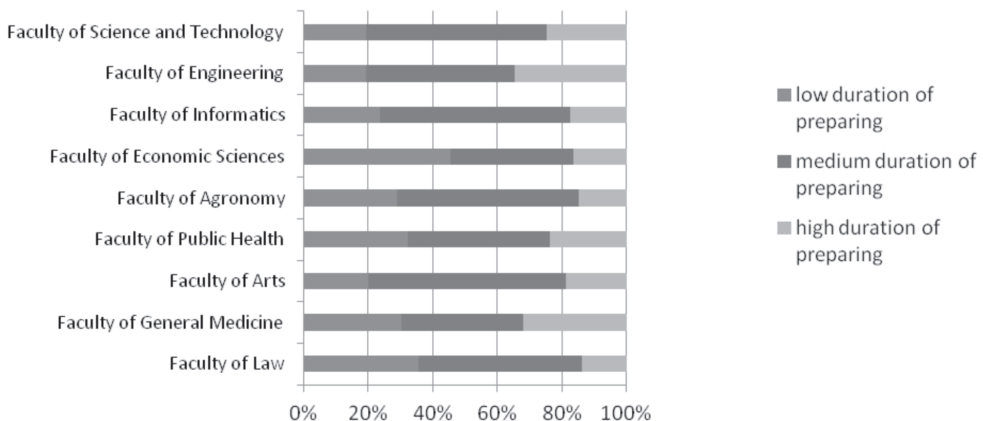
faculties, attendance is stressed and important, but in others the results of the examinations are more important. If we analyse the effect of the faculties, two significant relationships can be found (graphs 3 and 4).



Source: HERD database. N=9.52, ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

Graph 3. The relationship between attendance at lessons and the faculties

The patterns of the diagram show us different activities in this field. But we have to know that this is not the only element of the academic time, and not every attendance is effective. Some faculties with high prestige have got low proportions (Faculty of Economic Sciences, Faculty of General Medicine), but this connection is not typical in every case. A higher rate of proportion is typical at the Faculty of Engineering and at the Faculty of Arts.



Source: HERD database. N=9.52, ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

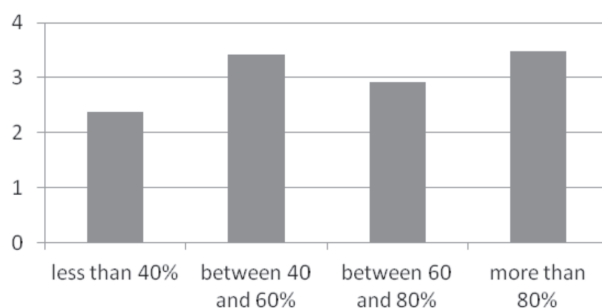
Graph 4. The relationship between preparation time for lessons and the faculties

The data referring to the time spent for preparing for the lessons are not in opposition with the previous pattern. The extent of academic time is minor for example in the Faculty of Economic Sciences or the Faculty of Public Health. Preparing for the lesson is more typical in the Faculty of General Medicine. Nevertheless, we have to handle these data carefully because the survey was conducted during the semester and not the examination period, and the high inputs of academic time are not a guarantee for efficiency in every case. But it is clear that the institutional segments generate the different patterns of academic time and the students' entire lifestyle.

Analysis of students' academic attitudes

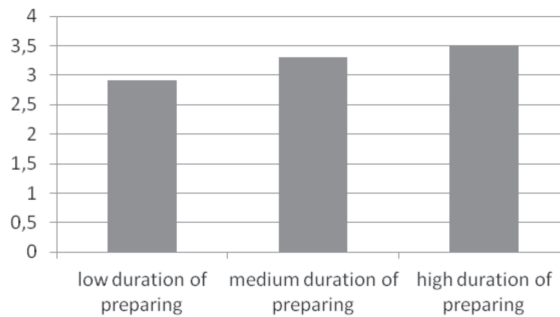
Students' academic habitus was analysed by the values of academic habitus, learning strategies, and achievement. From these listed values, we created an index. As we mentioned before, the scientific literature tends to contend that achievement is not associated with academic time in every case. One of our earlier researches showed that the wider academic time does not generate higher grade point averages (Bocsi 2013b) – but the GPA is not equal to the achievement.

In our first step, we used the index of achievement, and its means were analysed by ANOVA test (graphs 5 and 6.). Two significant relationships were found, but only one is linear. We have to claim that the achievement stays in a clear connection with preparing for the lessons; so, this element of academic time seems to be more effective. Attendance at lessons is rather part of the institutional requirements and not an autonomous choice of students.



HERD database. N=1.118. ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

Graph 5. The relationship between the index of achievement and the attendance at lessons



Source: HERD database. N=1.118. ANOVA: $p < 0.05$, sig.: 0.000. Authors' computation

Graph 6. The relationship between the index of achievement and preparing for lessons

When we used the index of learning strategies and academic attitudes, we found a significant and linear relationship. Therefore, commitment towards academic goals and plans generates higher durations in the fields of preparing and the attendance of the lessons (Table 3). The most different fields of academic time stay in connection with academic habitus, but there was no linear relationship between the attendance of the lessons and the index of achievement.

Table 3. The academic times' relationship with the academic habitus and the learning strategies

Attendance at lessons	Mean of academic habitus	Mean of learning strategies	Preparing for lessons	Mean of academic habitus	Mean of learning strategies
less than 40%	12.75	13.55	low duration of preparation	15.57	16.83
between 40 and 60%	14.82	16.31	medium duration of preparation	16.4	18.47
between 60 and 80%	16.13	17.86	high duration of preparation	17.22	19.37
more than 80%	17.11	19.42	<i>sig.</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>
<i>sig.</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.000</i>			

Source: HERD database. N= 1,118. $p < 0.05$. Authors' computation

Cultural activities and academic time

These two fields (cultural activities and academic time) are important elements of students' lifestyle and time budget. As we mentioned, the proportion of free time has changed over the last few decades, but we do not know the exact trends regarding the Hungarian student population.

Reading can significantly improve the measure of cultural capital, but not every form of this activity belongs to the high culture. Moreover, it is a typical intellectual activity. Some segments of reading undoubtedly link to the academic time. We analysed the connection between frequency of reading and two fields of academic time, but we have not found any relationship. In the following step, we looked into the frequency of different cultural activities (theatre, multiplex cinema, traditional cinema, museum, concert, and library). The relevant data can be seen in *Table 4*.

Table 4. The relationship between academic time and cultural activities

	Attendance at lessons	Preparing for lessons
Theatre	–	–
Multiplex cinema	negative relationship	–
Traditional cinema (for example, art cinema)	negative relationship	–
Museum	–	positive relationship
Concert (classical music)	non-linear relationship	positive relationship
Library	positive relationship	positive relationship

Source: HERD database. N = 1.118. Cross-tabulation, $p < 0.05$. Authors' computation

The positive connection in the case of library attendance is a common feature, but we have found different patterns. First, we can declare that academic time does not shape every item of cultural activities and the directions of these two fields are different, too. Preparing for lessons can be linked easier to the high culture, but the effect of attendance at lessons is not univocal. If this time frame is significant, students tend to go to cinema rarely (though traditional cinema is closer to high culture), and we have found a non-univocal pattern in the case of concerts.¹⁰

Summary

The lifestyle of students has changed and the academic time has been reduced – this is the main edification of some international researches. The mass higher education system may give a favourable context to this transformation in Hungary,

¹⁰ Students who never go to concerts are overrepresented in the subsample, which is characterized with attendance at lessons between 60 and 80%.

too. In this study, we have tried to give an overview connected with the notion of academic time. Our findings are not generalizable because only the subsample of the University of Debrecen was used during the analysis.

The main edification of our work is that the students' lifestyle is henceforward learning-centred. But these patterns are embedded in socio-demographic backgrounds and the more significant amount is typical in the case of students from the lower social groups. We used two dimensions of academic time: the attendance at lessons and the preparation for lessons. The second dimension can be linked easier to the achievement and to the high cultural activities. Not univocal and linear connections can be observed in the case of attendance at lessons, but this time frame may be due to institutional norms and requirements and not to findings of independent choice in every case.

We can declare that with the help of these findings academic time, academic attitudes, and cultural activities have got several intersections, but we know that these connections are not punctual and deep enough. In the future, it will be very important to conduct qualitative analyses on this topic (academic time, academic attitudes, and students' lifestyle) and make a longitudinal survey too.

If we wished to connect our findings to the problem and chance of slowness, we could state that the students' time budget and the spacious duration of free time can offer these conditions. But we suppose that there are different circumstances which encumber, for example, the unreasonable length of screening time and the unpredictable and hectic way of student life. Our earlier research (Bocsi 2014) showed that these movements have reasons for existence at universities, too.

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