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# Analysis of statutes of Gypsy/Roma student colleges

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## ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

*In Hungarian higher education Gypsy/Roma student colleges (szakkollégium) are new developments, which rely on the many decades of old tradition of student colleges as an institutional form. Their basic institutional structures, aims, and functional frameworks are laid down in their statutes. This study analyzes the fundamental document of six Gypsy/Roma student colleges.*

### Introduction

In the European Union, since the Central European enlargement, the population of Roma minority is approximately 10 million (Bačlija, 2008). This population is heterogenic, both linguistically and culturally, thus making scientifically well-grounded statements hard to make. But a significant rate of this population's living standards, which were measured by numerous social-economical dimensions, are well below the EU or national average. In this population, low levels of education, a high rate of unemployment, low financial penetration of the households, and dependency on social services are all present. Human-capital theories prove that the lasting escape out of deprived socio-economic circumstances is education. To reach this, however, the educational space must become inclusive, since this would permanently foreground the labor market inclusion.

The criteria of the effectiveness of the educational environment is specified by Bačlija's (2008) study of Slovenian educational policies of the Roma minority: (1) the clearly declared policy of intergroup solidarity at a national level; (2) the guarantee of minority rights in language and culture; (3) educational policies that support the enforcement of constitutional rights; (4) group level isolation, avoidance of "ghettoization"; and (5) the option of minority self-identification for individuals, which includes the potential of leaving the minority group as well.

The legislative conditions of inclusive educational space on the level of lawmaking in the European Union<sup>1</sup> or its member states are useless if there is not a system of sup-

<sup>1</sup> Above all the community legal sources the general employability directives of equal treatment: directive 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC.

portive services. These services, on the level of higher education, include the institution of Roma student colleges.

The Gypsy/Roma<sup>2</sup> student colleges offer a wide variety of research topics. One can research their membership, the communities formed by them, also their students as individuals, or the network of student colleges can be examined as well. In this study<sup>3</sup> the Roma student college is above all an institution; an institution that is constituted by law related documents and its structure, and its function is defined by these documents as well. Thus, in certain cases these solid documents can be a reference point. Given these documents, we are going to examine the institutional statutes (OS).

The OS is a constitutive document assigned to an institution. The Roma student colleges were born of the establishment of two institutions, which have millennia-old traditions: one of them is the university (or college, as we will find some examples of it), the other – considering only the newest group of student colleges – is the Church. Therefore I take my concepts from (higher education) institutional research, and the theoretical framework's guiding literature is taken from there as well. First, I place the Roma student colleges in the context of legislation; then, I continue with qualitative content analysis of OSs. The categories for content analysis were based on the discussion about OSs, and were formulated inductively due to the empirical foundation of research that is based on formal documents.

## Sample

Due to the availability statutes of the functioning Roma student colleges in Hungary today, documents of six institutions were examined. The first table summarizes the student colleges and some of the related information included in the sample. The analysis was done on 20 December, 2012 on effective OSs.

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- 2 In the study I use the words *Gypsy* and *Roma* interchangeably, as synonyms. The greater proportion of Hungarian Gypsies, which consists mostly of Romungros and Boyash (Beás), do not consider the word *Roma* acceptable, because it is linguistically alien to them. This word originates from the Romani language that is spoken by the Oláh Gypsies, but which the Romungros no longer speak... And in the language of the Beás there is no such word as *Roma*; their primary self-identifying word is *Gypsy* (In Hungarian: *Cigány*). But during the examination of certain student colleges, I consider applicable their statute's self-identifying word. I use the word *Gypsy/Roma* if I specifically refer to all student colleges.
  - 3 The study was created with the support of, and made under the tendering procedure of TÁMOP-4.1.1.D – 12/2/KONV-2012-0009 "Development of complex student services for underprivileged students under the organization of Wlislöcki Henrik Student college."

Table 1.

Name	Sustaining institution	Established in
student college <sup>1</sup> #1	university	2012
student college #2	college	2011
(C) student college #3	church	2012
student college #4	university	2012
student college #5	university	2002
(C) student college #6	church	2011

Source: student college OSs<sup>4</sup>

## Regulatory environment

During the institutional research, the connections to the system of traditions, values, aims, and functions are unavoidable. Every institution can be interpreted and placed in this system, but the ad hoc regulation is not based on that; the ad hoc regulation is set by the regulatory environment.

Szczepański (1969) emphasized that the concept documents of higher educational functions are created in a wide range of forms—forms that extend from legal regulations to policies. In the case of Roma student colleges, the government as a final funder uses the call for tender as a direct tool to financially shape the institutions that are based on resources provided by the government itself, which in turn shapes the state's conceptualization of the functions of Roma student colleges as well. The call for tender is grounded on the values and traditions of the society; every regulatory decision, every condition of the tender, is a statement of the value preferences of the government and society. (These two do not necessarily overlap.) The values, traditions, and everything else that arises from them are put down in the fundamental document of the institution through the intermediation of the call for tender. A large-scale governmental call for tender signifies a transformation point of a society's values and norms; it is a decision for or against something, it is taking sides. Furthermore, it is the leading document of the values put down in writing. In the language of institutional research: the context directly defines the structure when it sets up the strategy and then assigns the institution to it.

Among the institutions in the sample, student college #5 is the oldest, having begun operations in 2002 under a PHARE tender. Its financing framework, as in the case of all the other student colleges, is provided by "Support of Roma Student colleges Social Renewal Operative Program," code TÁMOP 4.1.1.-D12/2/KONV. Therefore, we consider this as a guide in every case of the examined student colleges, and before the analysis of the OS we analyze the related sections of the tender as well. The tender documents are relevant and important above all in our research due to the set objectives and regulations of membership. The call for tender will lead us to the legal sources of the student colleges as well.

According to the call for tender, the aim of the TÁMOP 4.1.1/D is to improve higher education and increase its role in the expansion of employability. It is also amongst the

4 In the study, student colleges were indicated with numerals. The letter "C" between the brackets refers to student colleges of the church.

general aims to provide and maintain comprehensive student services that will help lead to successful graduation and that will help find the social responsibility of those *underprivileged students, mainly of Roma origin* who are admitted to university and college. The attributive construction of *underprivileged students, mainly of Roma origin* can be found multiple times in the tender, and this structure marks the target group on which the tender's ratio will be defined. The formula reveals that the program takes two variables (social status and ethnicity) into consideration simultaneously; thus, in theory the program does not exclude underprivileged non-Roma students, but it does exclude the students of Roma origin who are not underprivileged. So the TÁMOP 4.1.1/D is promoting equal opportunity, and it is an educational policy program that widens access to fair higher education. The general introduction assigns talent management as a tool to the above-mentioned aims, in addition to learning methodology and remedial services. The tender, as the content and institutional development of higher education, is embedded in the construction of a knowledge-based economy, development of access to higher education, program of lifelong learning, and social as well as public policy aims of social integration. The specific tool assigned to achieve the aims of the tender is the Gypsy/Roma student college.

In regards to the operative principles of the student college, the Student college Charter is the guideline that was accepted in March 2011, and which contains the wide autonomy and self-government; furthermore, it emphasizes the high standards of professional work and social sensitivity.

The Roma student colleges are specified in § 54 of chapter XIV that defines the rules on talent management and PhD training of Act CCIV of 2011:

**§ 54** The responsibilities of higher education institutions are to identify those underprivileged students, and students with multiple disabilities, who are capable of exceeding the requirements of the curriculum, who have outstanding talent and attitude, and to facilitate the professional, scientific, artistic, and sport activities of these students. The higher education institution independently, or in cooperation with other higher education institutions, operates talent management and remedial systems and programs: within this framework it can operate scientific student circles, student colleges, and Roma student colleges. Those can establish student colleges and Roma student colleges in cooperation with higher education institutions who are eligible by this act to establish and sustain higher education institutions. The higher education institution provides help to underprivileged students to develop their talent within the framework of a mentoring program.

The legal regulation tries to jointly manage deviation in any direction, and that is why talent management and underprivileged situation, both of which lead to performance that is different than average, appear together. One of the institutional tools of talent management and remedial system is the Roma student college, which can be established and sustained by an institution that is eligible<sup>5</sup> to establish and sustain a higher education institution.

The TÁMOP 4.1.1/D call for tender contains the definition of the Roma student colleges: Roma student college is a student college which claims to be one according to its

5 This condition grants the historical churches legal participation.

deed of foundation and at least 60% of the admitted students are of Roma origin. The assessment of origin is based on personal statement. The call for tender further defines the aims of the Gypsy student colleges grounded on the legal regulations and the Student college Charter.

The specified partial aims are: advancement of academic success, involvement in research activities, and the strengthening of social responsibility. Thus the tender strives to support institutions that are securing the training of intellectuals who combine professional excellence with social responsibility. Training of the elite and social responsibility originate from the two historical and great traditions of Hungarian college movements, Eötvös Collegium and Nékosz-movement.

## The statutes

During the qualitative content analysis I created a matrix criteria (category system) of 14 elements. The categories are as follows:

1. The Roma student college's place and legal status in the university/college/ church institution
2. Self-identification
3. Institutional self-definition
4. Official representative
5. Related disciplines
- 6/a. Entry conditions - admission requirements
- 6/b. Admission procedure
7. Aims
8. Agencies, posts, and powers
- 9/a. Strategic tools
- 9/b. Operative tools
10. Types of membership
11. Rights of membership
- 12/a. Obligations of membership
- 12/b. Disciplinary regulations
13. Management

## The results of qualitative content analysis

During content analysis, separation of categories wasn't difficult, as the organizational and operational regulations offered those in a similar, nearly predetermined sequence. Therefore, their creation was done in an inductive way based on the empirical data. These categories, however, should be filled with meaning besides their occasional realization; hence we place them in the conceptual space of institutional research of the student colleges (Demeter & Mtsai, 2011).

It was revealed during the admissions procedure that in case of one half of student colleges in the sample (student college #1, #2, #3), the power of admissions is exclu-

sively in the hands of the management of the student colleges. This is specific for the office-type higher education institutions and the sustainer-type student colleges. In the case of two institutions (student colleges #4 and #6), the admissions committee contained student representatives as well. In the case of one institution (student college #5), there was no traditional admissions procedure; instead, the OS defines requirements based on attendance and continued participation. This is specific for self-governing type higher education institutions and association type student colleges. In the OSs, there's no or minimal academic or professional-scientific admission requirements; if such do appear, it is because of the decision-making position due to limited capacity. This displays the Gypsy/Roma student colleges as institutions that prefer fair access to education, in which talent management and training of the elite is only of secondary importance.

An examination of the aims reveals that the Gypsy/Roma student colleges are trying to represent the Hungarian student colleges' two great traditions: the social idea that not only guarantees equal opportunity, but also realizes access to fair education and the training of the elite that is based on talent management. In regard to their aims, the Gypsy/Roma student colleges show similar images. These images, in the case of institutions that are sustained by the church, are complemented with the spiritual aspects and with the immaterial dimensions of enrichment of the personality.

Structural analysis revealed that both association and sustainer type student colleges can be found. The immediate marker of this can be seen on the institutional figure: it is a sustainer type student college if the executive board is positioned above the general assembly, but below the sustainer. The operative management of the association type student colleges is not connected to the sustainer but to the general assembly. In the case of sustainer type student colleges, the sustainer appoints an institutional head who ensures the employers' rights on behalf of the sustainer. The supreme decision-making rights are not performed by the general meeting, but by the executive board.

Finally, below is a summary table that categorizes student colleges by the examined institutional structure, management, and admissions procedure. The last column shows the type of the given student college.

Table 2.

Number of student college	Institutional structure	Management	Admissions procedure	Type
#1	S	A	S	S
#2	A	A	S	A
#3	S	S	S	S
#4	A	A	A	A
#5	A	A	A	A
#6	S	S	A	S
<i>Legend: A = association type, S = sustainer type</i>				



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We got into the university without knowing many people, but here we immediately got into a community. That is why I have had friends since the beginning. It is really positive. Of course, the evening get-togethers matter as well because those were the occasions when we had really good conversations, and during the various programs this was not really possible. To be honest, due to this I like scheduled programs a bit less. These are the values that this student college has given me.

Based on the categories that were created during the examination of the OSs, we placed the institutions on the axis of self-governing and sustainer supervision. It is visible that the ecclesiastical–non-ecclesiastical categorization is segments of the Gypsy/Roma student colleges in this regard. Three institutions are sustainer-type student colleges: student colleges #1, #3, and #6. The clearest type is the ecclesiastical type institution, marked #3, where the sustainer control is obvious. Its management and admissions procedure definitely classifies it as sustainer type institution. Also #6 is clearly classified as sustainer type, though its student college members can be granted places on the executive board and they have an effect on the admission procedure as well. Student college #1 is the farthest away from the clear sustainer type model, since its budget is accepted by its general assembly; but due to its institutional structure and admissions procedure, it is rather a sustainer type institution. Student colleges #2, #4, and #5 are functioning on the basis of the association type model. The peculiarity of #2 is that this type of model does not apply as clearly; the sustainer has more influence on the admissions procedure, but even with that its management rather shows the image of an association type student college. Student colleges #4 and #5 function on the basis of the association type model in every aspect.

The tradition that is mentioned in the foundational documents of each institution was not a separate category. The reason behind it is that it couldn't have been consistently applied, as not all OSs mention such traditions. Amongst the non-ecclesiastical student colleges only student college #2 mentions progressive college traditions. In this context it can mean above all the program of social renewal or of modern civil society, but it can be interpreted as a historical reference to the Nékosz-movement also, though the particular text item does not support that. The OSs of ecclesiastical student colleges refer to the traditions of protestant colleges under which these newly established institutions would like to endure.

The formation of the Gypsy/Roma student colleges are recent outcomes of the Hungarian higher education system, though as an institutional entity, the student colleges are not new at all. Through their creation, a previously existing entity, which was already known in Hungarian educational history, was able to address the problems of social, public, and educational policy, and to become a tool to handle these.

The OS constitutes an institution and sets the conditions; in the case of every institution it is the foundational document of functions and activities which can declare traditions and values, but its primary purpose is to set the aims and tools that are assigned to these aims. Besides regulations, it is the manifesto of self-identification which sets the framework of the common activity space brought to life because of the institution's function. An OS reveals much about the institutional policies, but tells very little about the institutional culture, which is defined together by students, employees, and the sustainer: they are the ones who fill the framework provided by the OS with life, and they are the ones who fill the institution with life.

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