

HOW ARE GRADUATE CAREER STARTERS SEEKING A JOB?

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ABSTRACT

After the political transformation, changes in economy and social structure of Hungary have started. This economical-social transformation had an effect on higher education as well, but not so dramatic as in other sectors of the economy. As a result of the expansion in higher education, the labour market situation of the graduated career starters has strongly changed. First of all rather quantitative changes have taken place in the higher education, and concerning the qualitative changes, we are possessing very few and hardly defined data. Due to the excellent natural endowments, agricultural production counts as a traditional activity in Hungary. The role and importance of this sector are changing causing changes in the number, composition and expected demands of the agri-education applicants. Students who graduated before the political transformation could undoubtedly find a position at a big farm, but nowadays this opportunity arises for a very few graduated students. The number of investors is rather low in the agri sector and the labour market supply is more typical than the demand.

Keywords: career tracking, labour market, career, graduate

INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian agriculture, which has an essential role in the exploitation of favourable ecological conditions and country development, is a determinant sector of our national economy. The natural endowments of the country, the number of sunny hours, the configurations of the terrain, the excellent productivity of soils ensure good results in the cultivation of the most cultivated plants and based a historically stable agriculture in Hungary. 62.9% from the 9.3 million hectare area of the country is exploited by the agriculture. This rate is far beyond the European Union average. Beside the advantageous geographical conditions, the commitment of the population for the agriculture and also the high quality educational and cultural background mean further advantages. National economy importance of the agriculture has remarkably decreased in the last one and a half decades, and has also influenced the labour market demand. This fall is due to the international trends and the political transformation following structural reform (Borbély *et al.*, 2007).

In the changed economical and social environment a competition is being formed among employees during the job searching period. Even graduate people are using different job searching techniques during the labour market entrance. Try (2005) emphasises in his studies the determinant factor of the social capital among informal job search methods. Those graduates who use the public employment service (PES) have the smallest possibility to find a job. 50% of the responders use

more than one job searching methods. Answering ads is the most popular job search technique among the Norwegian youth. With this manner most of the applicants (little more than 50%) can find a position in the public sector. Concerning Hungary, *Micklewright and Nagy* (2001) analysed the value and dynamics of job searching with the help of the HCSO (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) labour force survey's data. The two researchers distinguish two different methods of job finding: passive (through labour force agents) and active (ads, contacting potential employer).

Unemployed people who do not find a job can be classified into five groups:

1. Have no intention to work
2. Wait for recall
3. The hopeless
4. Have intention to work
5. Casual workers

Based on their research they draw the following conclusion: those men who looked for a job with the help of PES and beyond that they used another search method as well could not find a job with higher likelihood than men who were not looking for a job at all, but intend to work. Finding a job for people who used only PES is not more probable than for those who do not intend to work at all. In the research paper they assess that unemployed people change their job search method on a small scale. Job searchers rarely stop searching while people who do not look for a job are not possible to start it.

When analyzing job searching methods, a distinction must be made between employed and unemployed job searchers.

Galasi (1996) analyzed the Hungarian unemployed job searching methods based on the Hungarian household panel data. He attributes the decrease of the possibility to find a position to higher reservation wage, and the growth of possibility to find a job to more intensive search. At the same time, the rise of unemployment benefits and other non-relating job incomes improve the chance to get reemployed. According to Galasi two employment policy conclusions can be made: On the one hand, finding a job beside higher benefits is more possible, since higher benefits decrease the net cost of unemployment. On the other hand, the income of the unemployed should be known to be able to value the benefit system. The goal of this paper is to analyze the job searching activity of agri-graduate persons.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The goal of this paper is to analyze the job search behaviour of Kaposvár University's regular agri-graduates. The research focuses on students who graduated between 2005 and 2007. The graduate-follow up survey was made in the first year after diploma. Respondents filled in the questionnaire themselves.

The total number of participating graduates was 355. It was reasonable to involve all of the 355 graduates into the survey. We aimed at 60% response from the graduates, and due to some motivating tools, 216 appreciable questionnaires returned.

Primary data were analyzed with SPSS 13.0 for Windows statistical software and Microsoft Excel. Crosstabs, distributions and means were made beside 5% significance level (95% of confidential level) and tested with Chi² probe.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

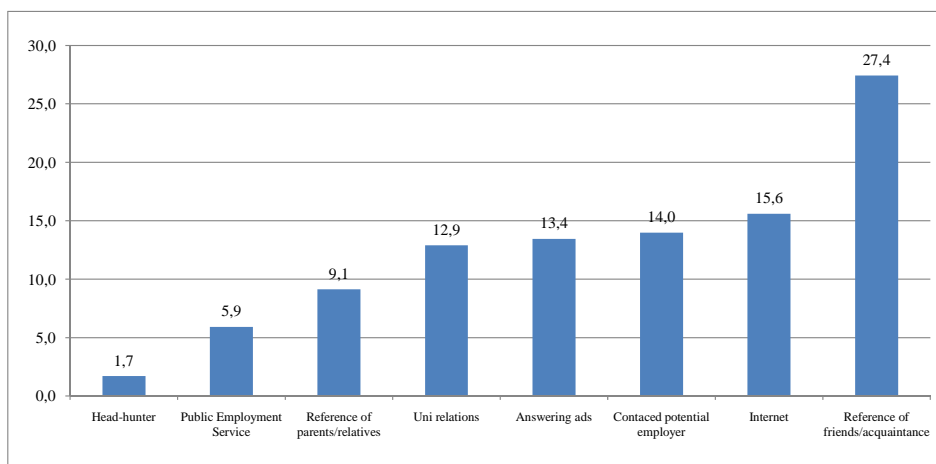
Information channels of job search

The analysis of the job finding procedure includes the reveal of job searching information channels, and determines the starting date of job finding period and the transition period after graduation. Social capital has an essential role in case of job search behaviour of agri-graduate carrier starters (*Figure 1*). Reference of friends and acquaintances is prominent among job search information channels.

The internet (15.6%), contacting a potential employer (14%), answering ads (13.4%), and university relations (12.9%) have approximately the same emphasis in case of finding a position. Reference of parents and relatives (9.1%) and use of PES (5.9%) are another group in job finding. In early period of job search head-hunters (1.5%) have a less important role. A low demand for head-hunters is due to the fact that companies spend less money on career starters since head-hunters are used for the recruitment and selection of “key men”.

Figure 1

**Information channels of job search distribution, %
(n=186)**



A significant difference was experienced ($p=0.022$; $C=0.267$) between the three classes and the typical job search methods. Using the rate and rank of job search methods differences can be seen by the analyzed results of graduate students in different years (*Table 1*).

In case of the analyzed three classes it can be said that social capital has a determinative role on finding a job, but different social capital elements have different emphasis on job search. First of all, contacting a potential employer and secondly, reference of friends and acquaintances was typical in case of the class of 2006. The Internet use in job search was the most preferred method for the class of 2007. 6.3% of the respondents from the class of 2005 used the Internet for job search, while this rate was 17.2% in class of 2006. New methods become more popular, therefore, personal relation based methods have a smaller role and impersonal methods come to the front.

The role of the family in job search is constant since this method was the least used in case of the three classes. In our opinion the reason for this neglected method is the following: 70% of graduates' parents do not have higher qualifications, so these graduates belong to the first intellectual generation. University relations in job search are more and more irrelevant, because only 7.8% of the class of 2007 could find a job this way.

This change can be explained by the growing number of students, so lecturers have to deal with a higher number of students. On the other hand, the result of the credit system makes a more flexible way of subject handling, therefore, students from one class finish their studies not at the same time. The long time used ALUMNI system by the western countries can make an opportunity to intensify the role of personal based job search methods. Hungary is still in the early stage of developing ALUMNI systems. PES becomes more and more neglected because the number of graduate positions in the Transdanubian Region has been decreasing during the last few years.

Concerning job search methods a slight difference was experienced in case of the job search information channels analyzed by the studied three study programmes, as it was in case of the classes. 33.3% of the graduate agricultural engineers, 38.9% of the graduate animal production engineers and 21.2% of the graduate agricultural engineers of economics used the method of the reference of friends and acquaintances in job search. Only agricultural engineers (4.3%) could use head-hunters successfully. Head-hunters, as a job search method, are more typical for the later stage of career.

Table 1

**Information channels of job search by classes, %
(n=186)**

	2005		2006		2007	
Reference of friends and acquaintances	26.6	1	19.0	2	35.9	1
University relations	18.8	2	12.1	5	7.8	6
Answering ads	14.1	3	13.8	4	12.5	3
Public Employment Service (PES)	12.5	4	1.7	8	3.1	7
Contacting potential employer	10.9	5	22.4	1	9.4	4
Reference of parents/relatives	9.3	6	10.4	6	7.8	5
Internet	6.2	7	17.2	3	23.5	2
Head-hunters	1.6	8	3.4	7	0.0	8

Women (33.3%) mostly prefer the reference of friends as a method, while men (21.8%) use most of the time the Internet for job search. Afterwards, 18.2% of women contacted a potential employer and men (20.7%) used the help of friends and acquaintances. I found a significant difference between the education level of the father and the used job search information channel ($p=0.024$, $C=0.256$). The lower education level the father has, the smaller importance the Internet has in job search. 24.4% of responding graduates with a father having higher education degree used the Internet, while graduates with elementary education father did not use it at all. Quite the same tendency can be noticed in case of relatives' reference. 15.6% with parents having higher education degree used the help of relatives, while at the same time 3.6% of graduates with skilled worker parents used this method. As a conclusion it can be said that graduates with parents having higher education degree use more diverse job search techniques compared to graduates of lower qualified parents. Graduates with a father having elementary education look for a job on two channels: reference of friends and contacting the potential employer.

Most of the employed graduates—concerning the job change willingness—are satisfied with their current job. Only 16.7% looked for a new position and 83.3% would stay in the current place. Employed graduates searching for a new job are looking for a full time position (88.5%) and 11.5% would work in part time. 17.2% of 2005 graduates and 22.4% of 2006 graduates would change a job, while only 7.8% of class of 2007 would work at a different place.

Probably the reason for the change is connected to wages. Analyzing the job change willingness by wage category, 88.9% with average wage, 84.6% with a bit more than average wage and 100% with high above average wage do not want to work anywhere else. 23.7% of graduates who earn below the average level, and 37.5% with the lowest wage are looking for a new position.

Differences can be experienced by study programme. There is a stronger relation to the work place in case of engineers of agricultural economics because only 13.1% of them would change a job. 15.9% of agricultural engineer graduates have a higher willingness for change, but the animal production engineers (27.8%) think mostly about another workplace.

Starting date and period of job searching

Job searching procedure is started at different times (*Table 2*). 41.8% of career starters search for a job after the diploma. Some relaxing time is needed before they start to work, graduates explained. 28.6% looked for a job during their studies and 29.6% of the respondents searched during the diploma period hoping to work as soon as they can.

Concerning the three classes two main groups have to be formed regarding the starting date of job search. Basically the class of 2005 and 2006 start to look for a job about the same time, but the class of 2007 start searching later. Only 16.9% of 2007 graduates start to find a job during their studies or before their diploma (29.6%), and an especially high rate (53.5%) of the graduates start to search after their diploma. A balanced distribution is experienced regarding the starting date in case of class of 2005. But starting date begins late for 2006 graduates, since more than a half of the

class 2007 (53.5%) start to search only after diploma. This could be the reason for the more and more declining employment data. I found weak and significant differences between the starting date and the year of classes ($p=0.045$, $C=0.151$).

Table 2

**Starting date of job search
(n=214)**

Starting date	Distribution (%)
During studies	28.6
Before diploma	29.6
After diploma	41.8

82.5% of the respondents who have an average or above average wage began job search during their studies. It cannot be said about graduates who searched just after their diploma.

After analyzing the starting date of job search by agri study programme, we found that university and college programmes have small differences. One third of the uni graduates start to look for a job before their diploma, while students from college studies (60%) begin to search after their studies. Probably this factor is influential on the unfavourable labour market position of animal production engineers compared to other study programmes. In case of uni study programmes the early job search behaviour is more typical for agricultural engineers, while engineers of agricultural economics started their searching activity during the diploma period.

In graduate follow-up surveys transition period has an emphasised role (*Table 3*). We investigated how many months graduates need to find a position after the diploma. The transition period of graduates (81.8%) typically lasts from 1 to 11 months. Some relevant information is that 65.4% of graduates found a job within five months after graduating or even under their studies. Only 24.8% found a job quite late (between 6 and 12 months), and less than 10% are still without a job.

Table 3

**Transition period of agri-graduates
(n=214)**

Transition period	Distribution (%)
Without a job	9.8
Less than one month	12.1
1-2 months	16.4
3-5 months	31.3
6-11 months	22.0
One year or more	2.8
I had a job during my studies	5.6

Concerning the transition period differences can be experienced between classes. The classes of 2005 and 2006 showed a more favourable transition period compared to the whole target audience. 68.4% from 2005 class and 65.7% from 2006 class could work in the first five months, while 62% of 2007 graduates could find a position in the same period. The rate of 6-12 month transition period is growing. 19.7% of 2005 graduates needed 6-12 months to find a job, while this rate was higher in case of 2006 (25.4%) and 2007 (29.6%) graduates. It is interesting that the rate of graduates without work is decreasing parallel with the increase of the transition period: 11.8%, 9%, and 8.5% of 2005, 2006 and 2007 class.

Between the transition period and wages a weak and significant difference has been found ($p=0.001$; $C=0.245$). Graduates with average wage or above (91.7%) already had a job during their studies. Furthermore 81.8% of graduates with 1-2 month transition period earn on average level or above as well. On the other hand, graduates of one year or more transition period earn on the average (66.7%) or under the average level (33.3%). 70.9% of engineers of agricultural economics found a job in the first five months while this rate was 64.2% in case of agricultural engineers and 43.5% of animal production engineers. The unemployment rate is almost the same in case of agricultural engineer (12.3%) and animal production engineer (13%) study programmes. From this aspect engineers of agricultural economics have a more favourable labour market position because only 7.3% of them are unemployed one year after diploma. It is also important to report that only university graduates had a job during their studies.

Concerning transition period women have a more advantageous labour market situation in the first five months. 66.7% of women and 63.8% of men could find a position in that period. Men are more active in the 6-12 month transition period because 30.9% of them already have a job.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study focuses on and analyzes one segment of job search behaviour of the agri-graduates. Harmonising with the studies of *Try* (2005), we could prove the importance of social capital in graduate job search. In our research the influencing factors of graduates' job search behaviour were analyzed. This paper pointed out that a change in the scale of values went on among graduates. This change is appearing in job search since the analyzed group preferred non-personal methods compared to personal ones. Earlier researches have already studied the role of the family in job search. The higher education level the parents have, the wider range of job search methods is used by the agri-graduates.

In the future motivating trainings for employment have to be more emphasised in education. Hereby, students can begin their employment period during their studies. According to the results, students who work during their studies have a shorter transition period after their diploma compared to students without a job during their university studies.

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