# Leave or Stay? School Leaving Problems

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*Abstract: In Hungary, school leaving is a huge problem. It is not unusual to measure about 50 percent dropout rate, which is higher than Europe's average, so I started studying this incidence's background. We already know that the most common reason behind that big number is demotivation, leaving school for work, losing their community, and so on, but I started analyzing these situations deeper. I realized that universities have already tried to lower the rate with unique solutions, like mentor-programs, tutoring, e-learning etc., and it already decreased the chance of school leave, but in most cases, they have no documented ranking how much student-keeping projects helped one by one. I would like to revise these programs, rate their efficiency, likability and compare them to student's preferences. When it is completed, I properly rank them, this way I can show which ones are not useful. In the current state of the inquiry, I already created a beta-test, where I asked my focus group about the core questions and they gave ideas about how I can improve it. My goal is to ask most of the Óbuda university junior, this way I can collect data and analyze correlations. At the end of the study, I want to present a solution that will help reducing this percentage.*

*Keywords: Drop-out, Student-keeping projects, Junior preferences*

## 1 Drop-out

Dropping-out of a school can be devastating, especially if it is not planned. This is the worst case that can happen to a student and it can destroy their goals, lifes. Most of the time a student who dropped-out because of bad grades, doesn't start over at another school, they just gave up on studying and start to work. The probability that they will not enjoy the work they do is high as well. As a university, we should prioritize this problem and try to decrease it's percent. [5][13]

- **Definition**

"Dropping-out" is a process, where the student of the highschool or college, leaves the teaching system without a degree. This is just the last step of a whole staircase that leads them to this choice. Plenty part of the student's life can affect their road towards the school-leaving. Students, who leave the school are more likely to require social support and their chances to improve are lower. [1][8]

- **Unified values of leaving**

Until 2016, there was no unified way to measure dropping-out. Every university had its own way to define this problem and this is why the Hungarian Rector Conference created a new workgroup to map out drop-out tendency and the way that leads to leaving in every institution. Their goal was to unify the values and analyze it that way. In 2019, there are 65 Universites in groups of governmental, ecclesiastical and private. This project became harder since there was no common property in the leaving-process. In the beginning, the values were quite diverse and they were incomaprable but most of the universities, that has been analyzed, defined it as "drop-out happens when someone leaves the school without a degree.". This is flawed since not every student who leaves stop studying and goes to work. There are occasions when a student plans the leave for another school that is more appealing. In the end, this is the most precise definition, because it is really hard to follow a student and check if the studying continues or not.[14]

- **Hovdhaugen grouping**

In Hovdhaugen's book, he grouped the affected sides of a drop-out as national, institutional and individual. Every part is involved in decreasing it's rate, but they all have different significant interests why they want it. The broadest one is the national since it can be influenced by various external variables. The Institutional level's viewpoint describes the drop-out rate the most since it stands the closest. It's most important value to keep the student who applied to their school and help them to recieve a degree. The last level is the individual where we see the problem from the student's point of view. We can analyze their choices and the progress towards the school leaving.[3]
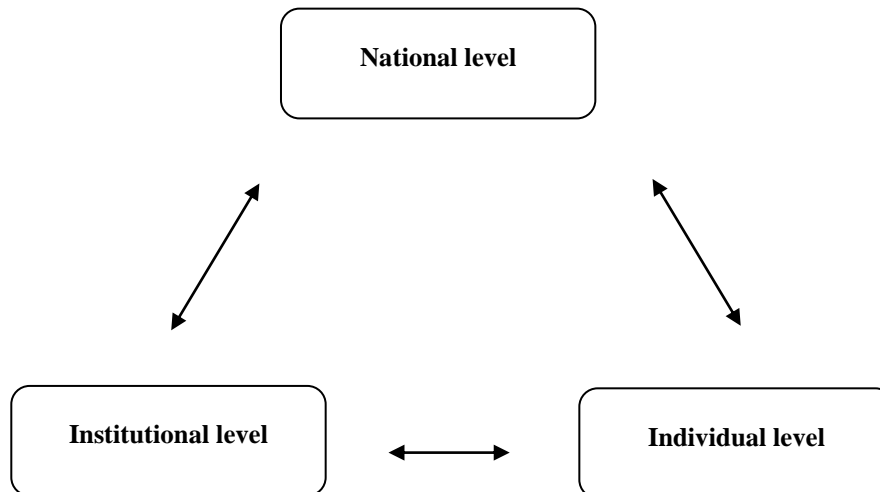
Figure 1

Hovdhaugen levels[3]

### National level

As I mentioned above this is the broadest level. One of the goals is to help the individuals to maximalize their talent while making sure this is the most benifical way to integrate the students to the labor market. This can be reached if we support and help the pupils to reach their degree and confirm that the nation's investment in the university does not go to waste. In Hungary, our government tries to encourage who want to improve their skills with a wide range of assistance. They grant multiple places in a university where the good students does not have to pay for their semester. They support these people with scholarship, petitions where they can research, presentate, improve their competence.[3]

### Institutional level

This level can measure the drop-out rate and the successfully earned degrees at the same time, they can have the biggest impact on the issue. Their primary goal is the same as the first importance for the national level.

Decreasing the number of the students who leave can be a prestige requirement since fewer drop-out means the school is more successful in teaching. For example, University of Obuda have multiple ways to decrease this rate. They apply mentor program, have ways to practise specific lecture by students who already finished the lesson. In the past few years they started e-learning with more or less success. The main problem with these programs is that it has not been analyzed how it affects the student drop-out rate. It should be main priority since that way they could grant or take resources from a specific project that does well or does not help to decrease school-leaving.[3][6]

**Individual level**

This might be the hardest level to analyze since we can not ask every student about why they chose to leave. In this part we can group this level to push, pull and fall out. The pull, when the student is affected by something that is not connected to university. The most common pulling factor is work or family related. The push, when the school leaving happens because of the university. Usually this means the school is more difficult than it was expected. In the end, fall out is the process that contains every situation that is not push or pull. Demotivation, lack of social interaction and friends or just simply the student is disinterested.[1][3]

# 2 Circumstances of applying

In theory, students who did not apply to a university does not affect the drop-out rate since the is no student status but if we further investigate it we will realize how a mass of pupils choose the wrong university for them because this is that period where they have to decide about their future and they are more likely to get influenced. If we want to decrease the drop-out rate, it should be our necessity to inform juniors in a compact, understandable, clean way about the school's expectations. It is in the favor of the institution to apply students who are properly informed, otherwise the chances of leaving increases. This is the reason why universities hold events such as open days, various days about the profession that is being studied there. These programs are usually for everyone because this way a school can increase it's fame among the people.[2][7][9]

**Family and money related issues**

In the last middle-school year, most of the students start to show interest towards university. They usually read about the stereotypes of the universites broadcasted by the media which has the ability to distort the truth. A student's plan is mostly affected by their socioeconomic status and their families microenvironment. What are their family status, what are their parents highest degree, what do their relatives work, how are their financial status and it can be an influental factor where do they belong in the society. If a student comes from a family with higher standards, his future plans will be more important and he starts to realize how important studying is. Contrary to the last sentence, if someone comes from a family with lower standards, it will be harder for him to apply to a university since they might not be able to afford it. His plan will be based around working as soon as possible to create a living space for himself. [4][10]

**Social issues**

The decision of studying or going to work put a huge pressure on last year students, this is the reason why they can over exaggerate or compensate it with unconcern. The examples they see in the family group or by relatives can make it harder to decide since it shows them how good or bad studying can be. It is a common concern if someone chooses a faculty, it determines where the student will work for the rest of the life. This is a false view because it is very common that students after university start to work in a different work place. [11]

As described so far, students must choose wisely where they apply. They should know their skills, abilities, limits otherwise, the chance of making a bad decision about their carrier is going to be higher than it should be. Career guidance counseling helps enlighten students about their interests. [12]

## 3    Research and early analyzed data

As the quantitive part of our research we created a questionnaire survey with google forms since it is easy to use, it's user interface is informative and it is an overall good choice. This was the beta phase of the test where we asked our focus group of 7 about the reasons of drop-out, the usefulness of the programs what is trying to decrease it's rate and the overall satisfaction about the university work against school leaving.

**Hypothesis**

Since we made a beta-test with our focusgroup, we couldn't validate our hypothesis, but we are looking forward to confirm them in our public survey. We tried to define specific theories, this way we can confirm or disprove them. In the later stages of our research, we will ask teachers about why and when and we will improve our hypothesis.

- We think that if we average the answers for "How big was the drop-out rate in 2018?", they will reflect the actual percentage, which is around 40%. Students exactly know how big of a threat this can be and they are enlightened about the size and volume of the school leaving.[13]

- We agreed on the most impactful reason why someone would leave school is demotivation. Students usually give up after the blockades they meet in the first few semester. This part is the hardest to analyze because multiple reasons can cause loss of motivation. We will try to inspect this reason thoroughly.

- We expect to see a common unsatisfaction towards the programs which are made for decreasing the drop-out rate. Juniors usually

think that it is not beneficial for the university to decrease this percent. Moreover, they think universities are causing the school leaving with classes that produce the most fails in the first and the second semester. These lessons usually have 70-90% fail rate.

## Questions

Since the created survey is not relevant other than gaining experience and improving our questions and getting ready for the public form, we would like to discuss about why we want to ask the specific questions we chose. First of all, we asked about if the students of the University of Obuda know the actual percentage of the average of drop-out rate. This question tests their common knowledge of the area so we thought this would be the easiest way to check if people are proficient or not.

After that question, we made them a chart where they could value the relevance of specific school-leaving reasons. This will help us understand what students feel the most relevant and we will be able to focus on that area.

The next question was almost like the last one but they can give points to programs that are useful in decreasing the rate of drop-out. Our main goal, other than mapping out the reasons behind leaving school, is to analyze already used projects that is helping or at least we think is helping to decrease the percentage.

We want to check these projects more in-depth, that is why we made another question about them but this time they had to rank them. With this 2 question, we will be able to create a ranking system where we can order by the most useful towards the least efficient.

## Improvings

After we gave the survey to our focusgroup, they filled it out and gave us comments about the questions. After we revised their observation how we should improve the form, we made some modifies the the survey:

- They proposed that we should examine how travel time or college dorm affects this rate so we will add another question about how much time it usually takes getting to school and how harder does it become to keep up to date because of that.

- They mentioned that we should ask seniors about which semester was the hardest this way we can prove or disconfirm if the first two semester is the hardest.

- They said that we should add another question where students can write about how could the university increase its effectiveness and maybe some of the ideas might be good to check out.

- **Drop-out values of Neptun**
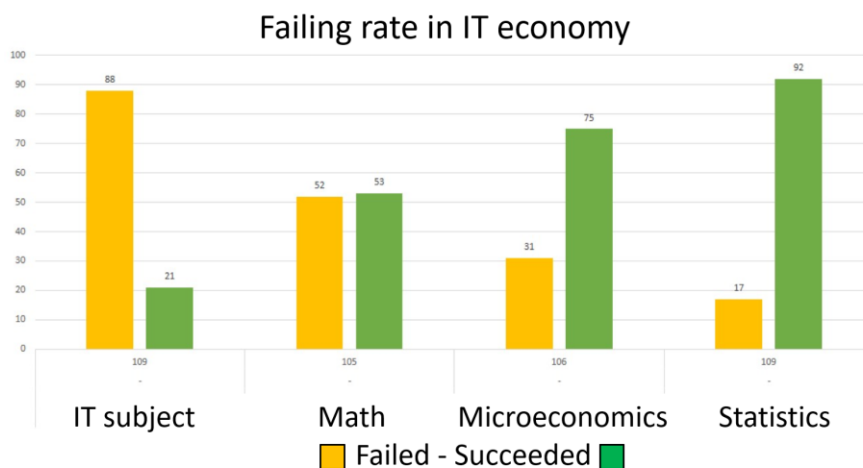


Failing rate in IT economy

Figure 2

Failing rates in a semester(Neptun data)

This semester was the first for the IT economy. It became obvious that the IT subject was too harsh with the first year pupils, mostly because the first expectations were wrong. Noone knew that it will be this difficult, because everyone who applied thought that this department would be more focused around economic, not IT. This shows that the university did not informed the students about the seriousness of IT part. Since then, they changed the curriculum of the IT economics so the Informatic side became easier in the first two semesters. Moreover, the university tried to inform the students about the equal difficulty in the economic and the Informatic side. This helped reducing the fail rates and it definitely helped decreasing the drop-out rate of the department.

**Conclusions**

The importance of this topic needs us to map out the problem. Even though the university has around 5 to 6 projects that help reducing the drop-out rate, this percentage hardly decreases and mostly just stagnates. There is no universal solution to this problem, so we have to identify what would be good for the students in this school.

We are in the most important stage right now. We read the theoretical background of the topic, we created a beta-form that we got improvements from our focus group and now we have to modify our google survey and send it to every student of the University of Obuda. If everything goes as planned, we will be able to send

out the form around January. From Februrary, in the next 5 months we will analyze the datas, ask the teachers about their perspective on this topic, create the ranking system for the projects that helps reducing the drop-out and in the end we might be able to reduce this rate. Even if it decreases by one student thanks to our research it definitely worth our time.

**Acknowledgement**

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