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Professors of the Pécs Erzsébet University

Research possibilities based on a new database

Studying in the social history of the citizens – either students or professors – of universities has a significant tradition, and has produced serious results both within Hungary and abroad. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this research: university instructors themselves are decisive members of the knowledge elite and through higher education they have the greatest influence to determine who gains access to this elite group. Ideally, the processing of resources into public databases coincides with the scientific synthesis based thereon. As far as the processing of university teachers is concerned in Hungary, we should first mention the work of Gábor I. Kovács who lists the database of professors of the period between 1848 and 1944 in terms of denominational distribution, as part of his historical elite research. Recently, several smaller and larger studies have dealt with the analysis of professors as a social group rather than just on the level of individual biographies.¹

Covering the period between 1923 and 1950, this paper deals with professors who taught at the Erzsébet University, which first operated in Bratislava, then after a temporary stay in Budapest, was finally placed in Pécs in 1923.

¹ KOVÁCS I. Gábor – KENDE Gábor: Egyetemi tanárok rekrutációja a két világháború közötti Magyarországon. [Recruitment of university teachers between the two world wars in Hungary.] In: KÖVÉR György (ed.): Zsombékok: Középosztályok és iskoláztatás Magyarországon a 19. század elejétől a 20. század közepéig. [Marsh Thickets: Middle Class and Schooling in Hungary from the Beginning of the 19th Century to the mid 20th Century.] Budapest, 2006, pp. 417–506. KOVÁCS I. Gábor (ed.): Diszkrimináció – emancipáció – asszimiláció – diszkrimináció. Magyarországi egyetemi tanárok életrajzi adattára I. Zsidó és zsidó származású egyetemi tanárok. (Történeti elitkutatások 8.) [Discrimination – Emancipation – Assimilation – Discrimination. Biographical data of Hungarian University Professors I. Jewish and Jewish-born University Professors. Historical Elite Research 8.] Budapest, 2012. KOVÁCS I. Gábor (ed.): Hit – tudomány – közélet. Magyarországi egyetemi tanárok életrajzi adattára II. A debreceni tudományegyetem református hittudományi kara (1914–1950) professzorainak életrajzi adattára és életútleírása. (Történeti elitkutatások 9.) [Faith – Science – Public Life. Biographical data of Hungarian University Professors II. Biographical Data and Career Descriptions of the Professors of the Reformed Theology Faculty of Debrecen (1914–1950). Historical Elite Research, 9.] Budapest, 2014.

In the current paper we cannot provide a complete overview and analysis of the subject. Our aim is to present the possibilities of using a database made at the University Archives of the University of Pécs and how these can be supplemented with other resources for historical elite research.

The University of Pécs's Almanac has a twofold purpose: on one hand it presents the academic achievement of higher education in Pécs, and on the other it provides help for the researchers of the various professions and social history. The first volume², which covers the period from the beginning until the 1950s, was published in 2015, the second volume, which contains data until 2000, was released in 2017.³ The database containing these volumes can be accessed online with a multi-criteria query.⁴ It is important to mention that sometimes the activities of a professor could cover both periods; in this case they were included in the volume that contains the more significant period, or when the professor in question was the leader of an institution or the university.

The database only collects data on scientific work, specifically, on scientific work carried out at today's university and its legal predecessors, so it does not include data regarding religion, the parent's/ guardian's name or social status, for example. In order to gain data about social mobility, for instance, researchers need to carry out additional gathering work, but the scope of project could not allow the collection of these data.

Who was included in the database? The requirement for inclusion was the existence of an academic title (nowadays, the title of PhD). Only full-time employees of the university were admitted into the database, but not only from the faculties, but also from the library, or the offices if the person in question had an academic title. Our work focuses only on the Pécs period of the university and the following data are included:

Birth records (Year/Place/Country)	Year of habilitation
Death records (Year/Place/Country)	Year of candidacy
Main faculty / other faculty	Year of PhD
Place of work	University positions (year/institute/post)
Diploma (year /university/major)	Study visits
Studies (university)	Memberships in academic organisations
Qualifying exams (postgraduate)	Awards (year/award)

² LENGVÁRI István (ed.): Pécsi egyetemi almanach [Pécs University Almanac] I. 1367–1950. Pécs, 2015.

³ POLYÁK Petra (ed.): Pécsi egyetemi almanach [Pécs University Almanac] II. 1950–1999. Pécs, 2017.

⁴ <http://almanach.pte.hu>

Reason for leaving the university	Research projects
Main works	Scholarships
Literature about the professor	Research group
Editor/Editor-in chief	

Fig.1. Database entries of the Pécs University Almanac project

The faculties of Pécs are represented by 281 persons, which figure does not include the teachers of the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Sopron. Most professors are to be found at Faculty of Medicine (175), where in addition to the high number of instructors, clinicians are also included in this number. There are 74 at the Faculty of Law and 51 at the Faculty of Humanities. Surprisingly, the principal workplace of many qualified professionals (11) was the University Library.

Users of the database can easily study the academic careers and their ends of professors teaching at the Erzsébet University during its life span first in Bratislava, then Budapest and finally in Pécs.⁵ At the same time, for example, it can be well traced that many of the professors of the former Episcopate Lyceum of Law were re-employed at the faculty of law.⁶

Following the University's placement in Pécs, a slow rise in the number of teaching staff, especially in the medical (clinical) field can be seen. The specialization required new clinics, along with new specialists.⁷ The database records the departure of most professors to other universities after the Faculty of Humanities was dissolved in 1940.⁸

However, statistical data can only be one of the sources for the characterization of professors in Pécs. We need to include in the study the document sets created by the university as an institute and a few recollections that paint a powerful picture.

What was it like to be a professor in Pécs? – we can ask the question. The recollections show very differing feelings. Tivadar Thienemann, a literary historian at the Faculty of Humanities, did not consider his stay in Pécs as a setback: he maintained international relations, provided a publishing company,

⁵ LENGVÁRI, István – SCHMELCZER-POHÁNKA, Éva: The Hungarian Royal Erzsébet University. In: FEDELES, Tamás – LENGVÁRI, István – SCHMELCZER-POHÁNKA, Éva – POLYÁK, Petra: Centuries of Higher Education in Pécs. Pécs, 2017, pp. 35–49.

⁶ Ibidem p. 40.

⁷ Ibidem p. 42–45.

⁸ Ibidem p. 46–47.

and served as a link between the scientific life of Pécs and Budapest.⁹ Károly Kerényi, a scholar of ancient history, had a completely different experience and used the words “bleak” and “cold” to describe the university town.¹⁰ The first rector of Pécs, philosopher József Halasy-Nagy, likewise writes: “the professors of humanities themselves felt like foreigners in Pécs. They considered their post as a bit of an exile.”¹¹ The latter (as the first rector) attempts to reveal the reasons behind his experience: the low number of students, the threat of the termination of the faculty and the university, and the indifference of the intellectuals of the city – he notes among other things.¹²

Currently it is exceptional that a detailed examination of the institutional, science policy background and the individual possibilities and dilemmas is available, such as the one Gábor Szeberényi provided about the appointment of medievalist József Holub from Pécs; utilizing institutional archival resources and remaining private correspondence.¹³ Similar analyses may well tune the image of university teachers and their inclusion in knowledge elite.

In the case of professors of law and medicine, we find fewer mentions of complaint. The Almanac database also shows that, without exception, all 281 professors have participated in foreign study trips, and 15 of them visited the U.S.A. Professional organization memberships (which are also presented in the survey) refer to extensive networking systems.

Certainly, the university’s infrastructure was far from ideal. The placement of clinics and educational institutions was temporary and the situation did not improve much in the 30’s and 40’s either. Although a new building was built for the faculty of law, this did not significantly reduce the shortage of classrooms. The records show that almost all faculties reported recurring placement problems every semester. Ensuring appropriate housing for professors was an im-

⁹ LENGVÁRI István: Thienemann Tivadar az Erzsébet Tudománygyetemen. [Tivadar Thienemann at the Erzsébet University.] In: P. MÜLLER Péter (ed.): Thienemann Tivadar és a mai szaktudományok: Írások születése 125. évfordulójára. [Tivadar Thienemann and Contemporary Sciences: Papers on the 125th Anniversary of his Birth.] Pécs, 2016, pp. 162–173.

¹⁰ HAVASRÉTI József: A „Táj” és a „Szellem”: Kerényi Károly és Pécs (1934–1940). [The “Landscape” and the “Spirit”: Károly Kerényi and Pécs (1934–1940).] In: HAVASRÉTI József – K. HORVÁTH Zsolt – SZIJÁRTÓ Zsolt (eds): A város láthatatlan mintázata. Pécs városa mint az emlékezet helye. [The Invisible Pattern of the City. The City of Pécs As a Place of Memory.] Budapest–Pécs, 2010, pp. 18–48.

¹¹ HALASY-NAGY József: Az erkölcsi élet. [The Moral Life.] Kolozsvár–Szeged 2002, p.428.

¹² Ibidem pp.428–430.

¹³ Szeberényi Gábor: Holub József és a Tagányi-könyvtár Pécsre kerülése. Egy „vidéki” történelemszakkönyvtár egységeinek elhelyezkedése az 1920-as évek elején. [József Holub and the relocation of the Tagányi Library to Pécs. The existential opportunity-conditions of a small town history professor at the end of the 1920’s.] *Per Aspera ad Astra*. 1, 2014/2, pp. 117–137; 2, 2015/2, pp. 84–102; 3, 2016/1, pp. 92–107.

portant factor in retaining the teaching staff in Pécs. Although a separate academic residential building was built, this only partially alleviated the shortage, and the allocation of apartments caused great dispute.¹⁴



Abstract

Professors of the Pécs Erzsébet University Research possibilities based on a new database

The article, based on a recently published database from Pécs University Archives, deals with the Pécs university professors as a significant part of the knowledge elite. Data contained in the database, supplemented by other archival sources and memoirs, will contribute describing this important part of the society.

Keywords: Pécs, university history, prosopography, knowledge elite, professors

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¹⁴ LENGVÁRI – SCHMELCZER-POHÁNKA: The Hungarian Royal Erzsébet University. In: Centuries... (as note 5) p. 35–49.