A R T I C L E S

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Ten Years of Recruitment for Archaeology in Toruń – Candidate Profiles and the Student Recruitment Process. A Multi-indicator Data Analysis

Abstract

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The article is a research report on candidates for archaeological studies, for which the source of data was the Internet Candidate Registration (IRK) system of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. The analysis was carried out on a sample of 695 people admitted to the first year of archeology at UMK, with the material covering the period from 2007 to 2017. It was decided to build the profile of candidates for students based on six criteria: the size of the hometown and its distance from Toruń, gender, age of the candidates, completed secondary school, results of secondary school-leaving exams and recruitment decisions of candidates (priority system). As researchers, we had no influence on the set of data we had at our disposal, the work was carried out using an already existing database, the primary purpose of which was not research or analyzes similar to ours. The text presents conclusions and generalizations based on proprietary tools for the analysis of the existing database. The conclusions, although they concern archeology itself and candidates for archeology, may be a starting point for further analyzes of other majors. Archaeologists can use these outcomes to evaluate the condition of their discipline.

Keywords: archaeology, university pedagogy, academic education, youth, multi-indicator data analysis, Internet Registration of Candidates, enrollment for studies

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1. Introduction

This text is a report concerning particular academic field of study, archaeology, and the profile of candidates applying to study it. It has been prepared on the basis of data collected by the University Recruitment Committee, which was made available to us by the authorities of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. The analyses were conducted in 2018–2019 and the data covers the period from 2007 to 2017. This specific repertoire of data provided the opportunity to conduct analyses only to a limited extent. Potential archaeology students were surveyed and, to the extent that the collected material allowed, conclusions and generalisations about the field of study itself were built on this basis.

The basis for analysis is data collected in the process of enrolling students at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń in the Internet Registration of Candidates (IRK) system. While registering to study, candidates provide a range of personal information about their previous education and reveal their preferences as to the fields of study.

As researchers we had no influence on the dataset that was available to us, the work was done using an existing database which primary purpose was not research or analysis similar to ours.

The editorial requirements and the profile of the journal resulted in a selective presentation of some of the themes, which in turn are supplemented and clarified in other texts. Here we present content that may be of particular interest to archaeologists or supporters of that field of study.

The data of the archaeology faculty were analysed. We wanted to focus on a traditional academic field, with few enrolments, not too far from our own scientific roots which are pedagogy and sociology. An important motive and driving force behind the work is the "romance" between one of the co-authors, Dr Filip Nalaskowski, and academic and practical archaeology. The choice of traditional and non-mass archaeology (in the sense of mass recruitment that is characteristic for some courses such as Economics) enabled the material to be developed in a relatively short period of time.

The presented study can be treated as a pilot for broader studies for a much larger number of fields of study conducted according to the now developed research strategies and purposes. It is also a text presenting our, author's conception of the study and an attempt to describe young people – candidates for studies. It is a kind of continuation of research projects we have already conducted before, during which we developed our own criteria and methods of researching potentials, plans, capitals and resources of the young generation. However, we decided to devote a separate text to these longitudinal and summary descriptions.

2. Social, economic and cultural context of the research

This study has a clear background, with sources not only in scientific studies but also in our own previous research experience and ethnographic reflections.

During the review process, we met with indications to take a closer look at the social context related to archaeology enrolments, to expose the political-economic threads. The search for explanations, especially in the pedagogical sciences with which the authors are associated, is a key research obligation. We do so in this text, while leaving room for discussion around this issue for the future. As it was written in the introduction, the presented study is a preface to future ones – conducted for the remaining faculties of academic education; humanities, social sciences, and natural and medical sciences. We place the introduc-

tion of a comparative element and supplementing it with explanations of a sociological nature in the sphere of plans for the nearest scientific-research future.

The last 10–15 years have not been favourable for the humanities. It has been a period of very dynamic socio-political changes, accompanied by anxiety of the young about their place on the labour market. We are observing a visible turn towards technical and natural sciences, which are presented, i.a. via the media, as the ones that guarantee a stable and prosperous future. In a situation in which young people experience a lack of security and deficiencies in their family's economic capital, the possibility of studies offering a steady job, high earnings and high social prestige is extremely tempting (Grabowska and Gwiazda 2019, 79–94). This perspective, for humanities, including archaeology, is unequivocally unfavourable.

For more than a decade, we have been observing clear attempts to persuade and encourage high school graduates to study the sciences and natural sciences. We are facing an 'anti-campaign' of the humanities and social sciences, which is happening mostly online (Bochenek and Lange (eds.) 2019, 19–25). This is surely not without influence on the shape and quality of enrolments in, among others, archaeology and other humanistic fields of study. Although this, also thanks to its strong characteristics, seems to resist these trends, the drops in enrolments are quite evident. Numerous campaigns ("Girls go to polytechnics", "It for she", "Career fairs in tech&it", "Learn in stem", "New technologies for girls", ordered majors, etc.) certainly have a strong impact on the decisions and choices of high school graduates – which you can see in the data presented below.

However, this trend does not have to be negative for archaeology in Toruń. It is worth recalling that, although fewer people are taking up these studies after 2014, the indicators that make up the measured strength of a candidate are higher. In a word: we have fewer candidates, but they are "stronger". The same is true for the second main variable – the strength of motivation to study. Also here we observe optimistic changes after 2014. Hence, it is only a step from the general conclusion about the correlation between the main variables: the better the candidate for studying archaeology, the more motivated he or she is to study as well.

An interesting conclusion is that the best/strongest candidates are "visitors" from further away, while the weakest student candidates are definitely young citizens of Toruń.

Archaeology, as a traditional and rather image-conservative field of academic education, constitutes,

in our opinion, a kind of lens in which social trends are reflected. The choices of high school graduates are very often dictated by the social expectations of parents, local communities and peers. The economic condition of families and, more broadly, of the country is also important. Also fashion, pop-cultural influences, the historical politics of the country, the intellectual background and – increasingly – the infrastructure of the faculty and department are taken into account. It is also impossible to omit typically image-building promotional activities. Taking into account the above issues, our analyses gain an interesting social dimension. Archaeology has always been, and undoubtedly still is, a field of study that attracts particular adherents, those who are both Romantics and humanists. The functioning of the field, its successes, financial and intellectual foundations tell us a lot about the current situation and atmosphere in the whole country. Therefore, conducting the following analyses was at least twice as interesting for us.

It is also natural to ask what comes after studying archaeology? And just as after pedagogy, which is close to the authors of this text, because of their education and the research issues they take up in their scientific work (strongly contrary to the common beliefs shaped by the headlines), archaeology graduates finish their university education with a ready and complete 'job in hand' and a range of possible employment options. Highly specialised studies and an arsenal of compulsory work placements can be a universal recipe for success and satisfaction in the job market. In addition to the obvious and traditional employment opportunities for an archaeology graduate, such as university, research institutes and, increasingly, museums, new ones are emerging.

Together with the development of infrastructure and the developer market, and the need to adapt building law to EU requirements, there is a growing sector of private archaeological companies and offices carrying out archaeological research and supervision, commissioned by private companies and various building investors. There has also been a growing demand in recent years for the creation of monument registers, mainly commissioned by local authorities. Therefore, archaeology is the study of a specific profession and its graduates have specialist qualifications. In comparison, on the opposite pole of academic education such fields as political science, international relations or management and marketing can be placed.

Below we present, using the form of a research report, a study and an analysis, hoping for an interesting academic discussion on the research procedure.

3. About the study – key information about the research procedure and recruitment for archaeology

As mentioned in the introduction, the source of the data which were used to conduct the analysis for the purposes of this text is the Internet Candidates Registration System at the Nicolaus Copernicus University (called IRK – There is some inaccuracy and in many official documents the anagram IRK is decoded in two ways: Internet Registration of Candidates, and Internet Recruitment of Candidates. We use the first form) and information from the University Recruitment Committee (called URK). We have received permission from the UMK Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs and Personnel Policy to use and publish data from these sources.

The analysis was conducted on a sample of 695 people admitted to the first year of archaeology at the Copernicus University (s1 – full-time, first degree studies). Candidates recruited in the first and second intake were included.

It should be emphasised that the database at the researchers' disposal was already a ready-made one, which secondary function was to be used for their research. Consequently, the researchers did not have any influence on the set of data contained in it, in other words, they could not ask questions, change any words, expand the scope of research topics.

Although the IRK database is far from perfect and complementary with data of interest to education statisticians, the data set contained in it provides a foundation for conducting basic analyses. According to the information obtained from the IRK data operator, the database has never been used to conduct similar educational research before. It has only been used to prepare simple reports for the POLON system.

The novelty of the analysis presented here is based on the use of IRK to try to answer questions about elements of the characteristics of candidates for a given field of study (archaeology) and an attempt at a deeper analysis of enrolments in this field (and in the future – in other fields of academic education).

The way in which the data set was adapted to the research problems posed also seems interesting and innovative. It was possible to determine important values such as candidate strength (SK) and motivation strength (SM) based on this rather limited data set. The indicators of the variable *candidate strength*, so the "tools" we used to measure/weight this variable are: 1) Type of secondary school completed, 2) Number of matura exams passed, 3) Average score in all matura exams, 4) Recruitment points obtained in IRK and 5)

Success in school subject olympics. The indicators of the variable *strength of motivation* to study archaeology at UMK are: 1) Distance between home and Toruń, 2) Method of prioritisation (information which of the courses chosen by the candidate is the most important for him/her), 3) Year of birth of the candidate.

These issues will not be described in detail in this publication. We refer to them here in order to outline more broadly the scope and nature of the entire research.

When looking for weight values for the described variables, we often had to refer to arbitrary decisions based on our pedagogical knowledge and experiences from conducting similar research, during which we also often used authorial tools to measure variables. Their construction often enforced debatable decisions, the need to undertake expert and public consultations and to refer to autoethnographic experiences and reflections (Dejna and Nalaskowski 2013a; 2015; 2020).

The establishment of these values strongly contributed to the usefulness of the collected data and made it easier to interpret. The topic of strengths is discussed in more detail later in this article.

In the following text, the workshop and methodological aspects are not presented in detail, as they are the subject of separate publications (Dejna and Nalaskowski 2020, 45).

3.1. Characteristics of enrolments in archaeology

The research sample was 695 individuals who applied to become archaeology students between 2007 and 2017. Candidates from both the first and second intake were included in the research. The quantitative distribution across the years is as follows (Fig. 1):

The most numerous intakes (2007–2009) brought 96–112 candidates, the weakest (2014–2015) 18–19. Since 2010, a second intake has been conducted for archaeology (s1). Thus, in the initial years 2010–2011 it brought 17–18 candidates, in the last 4 years it is just amounted to 4–6 people. It should be mentioned that in recent years (since 2015), the formal limit of candidates was 60 people, in earlier years 120.

An initial analysis allows us to make a careful division into 3 periods: prosperity, sharp decline, low stagnation/rebound. These correspond respectively to intakes 2007–2009 (prosperity) averaging 103 admissions, 2010–2014 (sharp decline) from 90 to 19, 2015–2017 (stagnation and gentle rebound) 18–22 candidates.

4. Who are the archaeology candidates and where do they come from? Background of future archaeologists

4.1. Size of hometown and distance from Toruń

In the years 2007–2017 190 candidates declared that they came from the countryside and 505 from cities – of various sizes (Fig. 2). It should be noted here that candidates provided this information themselves when filling in the IRK form, no criteria were given to guide them, and this information was not verified. Our slightly deeper analysis was based on assigning candidates to a location category based on the postal code of their hometown. The categories themselves are consistent with CSO standards, where we have small towns of up to 20,000, medium-sized towns of
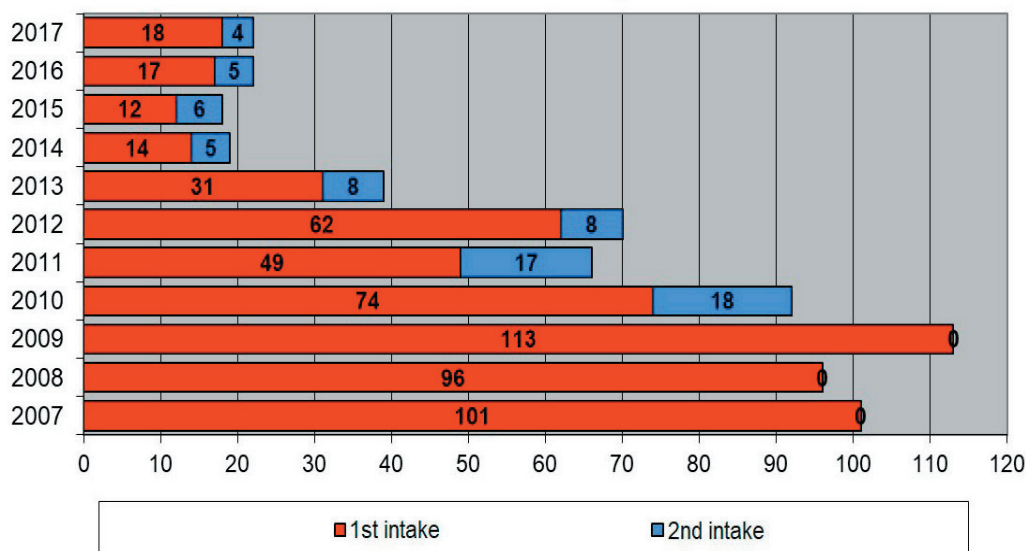

Fig. 1. Number of summer enrolments in the archaeology course.

up to 100,000 and large towns of over 100,000 inhabitants.

More interesting information was provided by data concerning the distance to the Nicolaus Copernicus University. For ease of interpretation, the data was classified into 4 categories (Fig. 3). Distance up to 20 km – candidates from Toruń itself and its immediate vicinity – suburban settlements, communes directly adjacent to Toruń. Between 20 and 100 km – students from the region, those who, in a large number of cases, had the closest proximity to the University, but were often forced to move to Toruń because of the distance. Next, the macro-regional category – from 100 to 200 km, here there are certainly candidates who had alternative universities closer to them and changing their place of residence was a necessity. The last category, of at least 200 km, was the national category, people who very often decided to study at the Nicolaus Copernicus University while skipping several other universities "on the way".
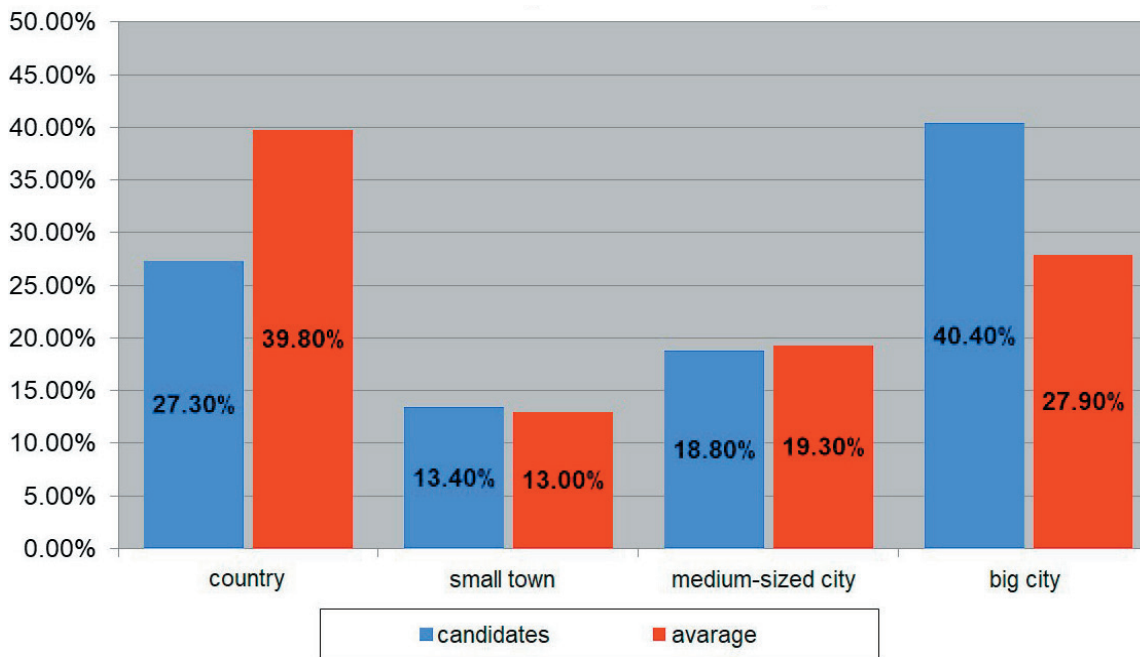

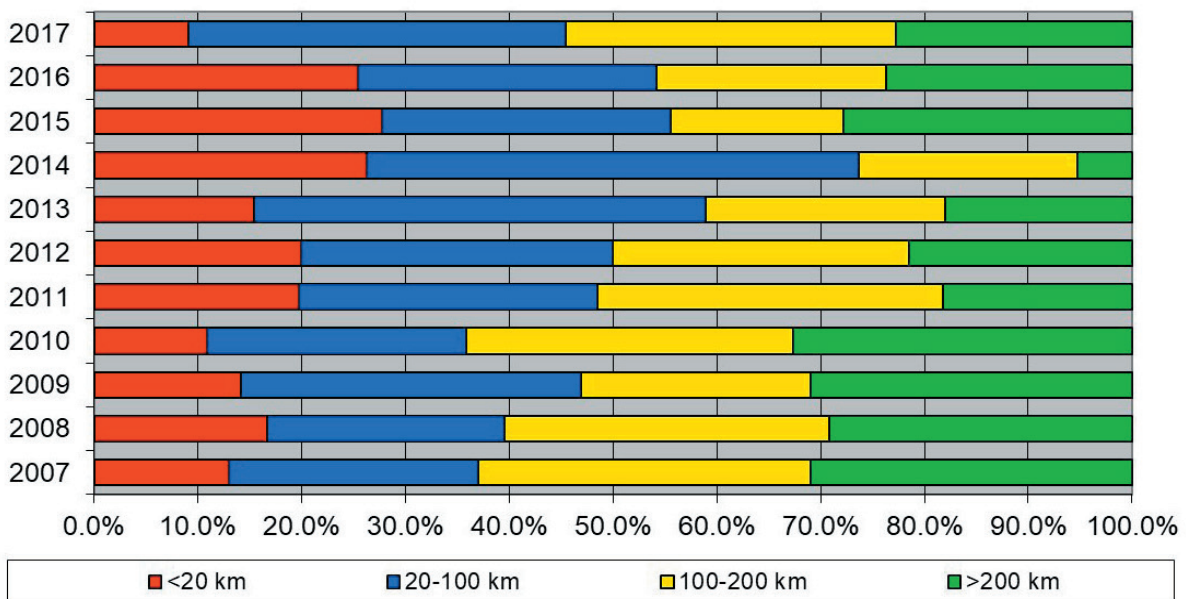**Fig. 2.** Candidate origin vs. national average.

Fig. 3. Distance of candidates' hometown from the Nicolaus Copernicus University.

Figure 3 shows the data in the following years. At first glance there are no clear differences. Although a closer look shows that the first half of the period mentioned was dominated by clearly incomers (100 and more kilometres), in the second period there is an opposite trend – people from the region (up to 100 km) dominate.

The trend noted earlier is also gently emerging. In the years of prosperity, the course was dominated by incomers, as the number of enrolments decreased the enrolments "regionalised", in recent years the number of incomers has slowly increased again.

4.2. Gender

Although gender was not considered as a variable of the highest significance in the study, it is worth noting its distribution over the years (Fig. 4).

It is worth noting at this point the relatively equal distribution of gender proportions with some deviations in 2013 and 2015. In a word of summary, it can be said that on the scale of the 10 years analysed, the faculty is slightly feminised, as 56% (392) of the candidates admitted as students were women.

4.3. Age of candidates

Potentially important information is provided by the graph of the proportion of students' ages by particular years (Fig. 5).

It is important to note that candidates aged 18–19 – i.e. just after matura exam – absolutely dominate,

depending on the intake they accounted for between 48% and 82%. It can also be noted that the number of older candidates (20 and over) increased steadily until 2014 (when they accounted for as much as 52% of all those admitted), in the last 3 years we have seen them drop to 18% in 2017.

Juvenile candidates (presumably those sent to the first year of primary school at the age of 6) made a marginal presence in 2007 and 2011.

As a conclusion we can point out some characteristics of an archaeology candidate that distinguish them from other candidates. Firstly, it seems that a passion for archaeology is far more common among young people from large cities (over 100,000 inhabitants) than the national average would suggest, and it is far less common among rural residents than the national average.

Secondly, archaeology, at least that offered at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, is not a 'local' course dominated by local students. Local fields of study are those, where the percentage of students from the same town or area is at least 50%. For this particular course the average value did not exceed 20%. Moreover, it can even be concluded that the geographical distribution of students' place of origin suggests a nationwide scale of faculty (not local, not regional).

The gender ratio is equal, which, contrary to popular belief, is not the case in higher education. In addition, it is interesting to note that this fairly equal gender ratio also applies to later academic staff, although this problem may be the subject of a separate analysis itself.
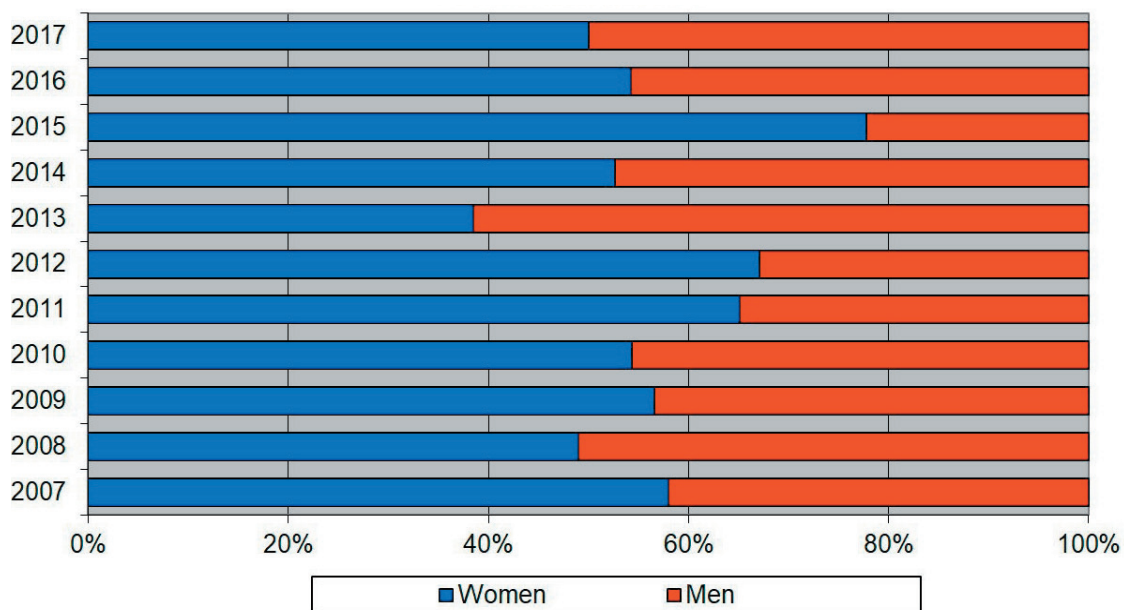

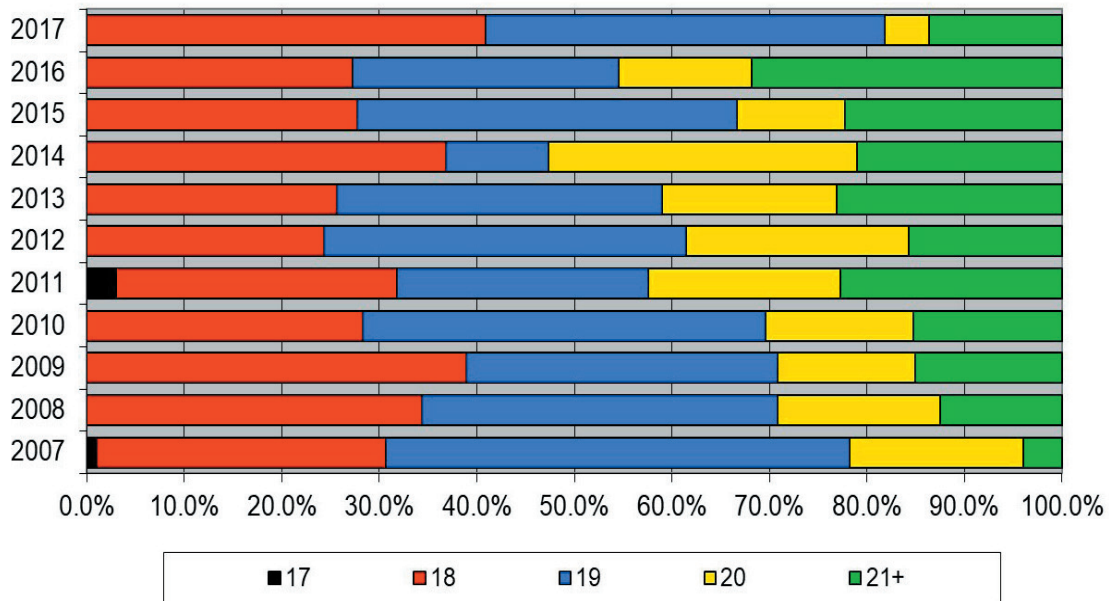**Fig. 4.** Gender distribution among university applicants: blue – female, red – male.

Fig. 5. Age of university applicants by year.

A final peculiarity worth noting is the age proportion. Archaeology attracts a surprisingly large number of people of 'post-secondary' age, i.e. older than 18–19. Importantly, subsequent analysis has shown that these people are not 'dropouts' – students who have failed other courses, but rather people with above average academic results.

4.4. Secondary school

Characteristics of a candidate's secondary school and academic performance at this stage were done in three approaches. The type of secondary school, the "strength" of the secondary school, and the characteristics of the results of the matura exam were taken into account. Firstly, the type of secondary school – comprehensive secondary school (CSS) graduates absolutely dominated in enrolments – they constituted over 93% of candidates (Fig. 6).
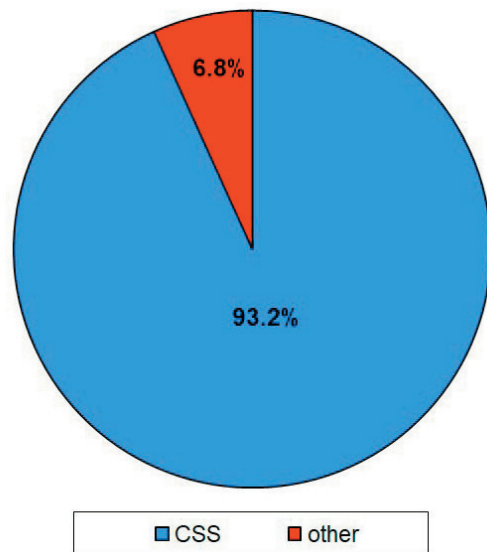
Secondly, the "strength" of this school was taken into consideration. To determine it, we used a somewhat arbitrary rating based on the *Perspektywy* ranking. The magazine publishes a list of the best secondary schools every year, taking into account a number of variables for evaluation. The use of the annual ranking for analyzes covering ten years is justified by the fact that in the period 2007–2017 there were no significant changes in the scope that would potentially affect the findings and explanations. Such decisions were introduced at an early stage of research. We have as-

Fig. 6. Type of secondary school completed.

sumed that candidates, who declare to have graduated from one of the 15 highest ranked schools for a given voivodeship, will be placed in 1st category. Then, we established the 3rd category of schools, which included graduates of technical secondary schools, specialised secondary schools, evening schools and supplementary schools. The middle category (2nd) included all "average" students. To verify this selection, we decided to check whether the type of school category would correlate with the average results of the secondary school

matura exams, where the expected outcome was: the better the school, the better the results.

The results obtained proved to be interesting. As many as 24% of the respondents (168 persons) graduated from one of the 15 best secondary schools in their voivodeship. What is more, only 9% (63 persons) graduated from one of the weakest schools (Fig. 7).
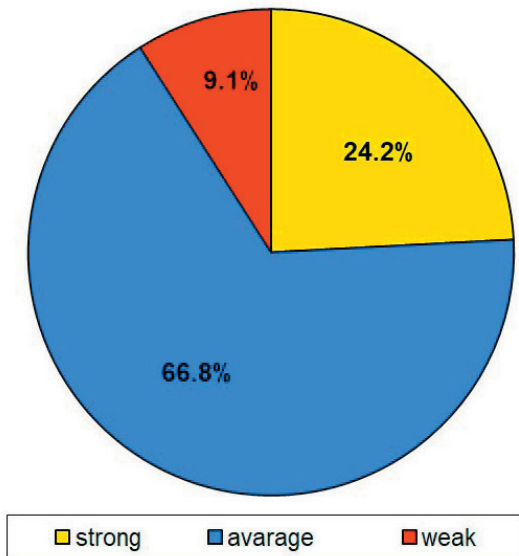

Fig. 7. "Strength of secondary school" measured using the ranking of the magazine *Perspektywy*.

It should also be noted that the aforementioned verification, confirmed the correctness of the classification of schools. In the chart below (Fig. 8) progression is clearly visible – graduates of better schools recorded, on average, higher results on matura exams.
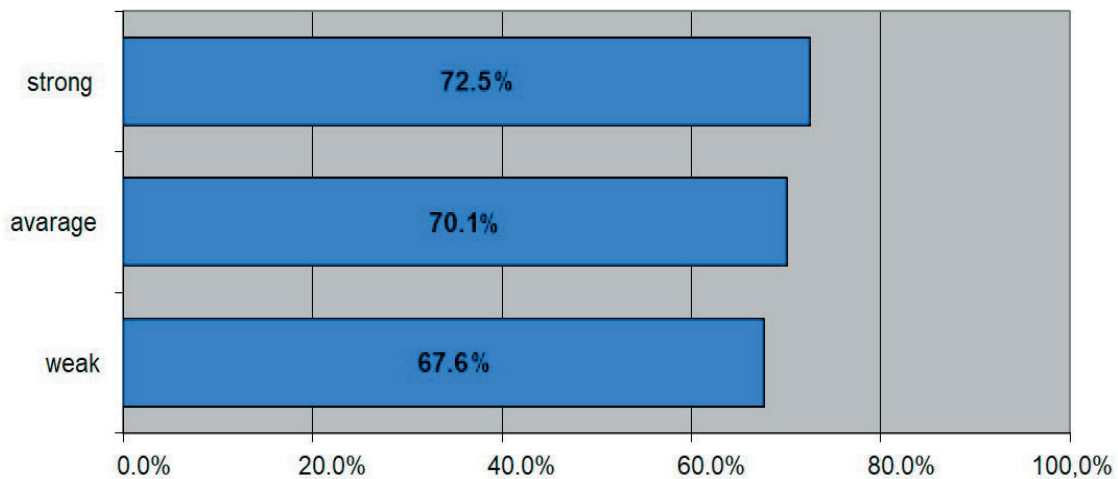
5. Candidates for archaeological studies – a multi-indicator analysis of the educational thread

5.1. Candidates' matura results

The last part that characterises the path to university is the results of the matura examinations. The analysis of this element was made particularly difficult by the multiplicity of variables involved. These issues are analysed in detail in a separate study. Here we only want to signal the most interesting conclusions.

English was an especially favoured language among young archaeologists (90%), far ahead of German (9%). When assessing students as young archaeologists we have to pay attention to their interests related to archaeology. Thus, only slightly more than half of the candidates took History as their matura exam subject, but 10% took the rather "exotic" History of Art. Sometimes indicated as related and helpful to archaeology, biology and geography were selected by 9% and 30% respectively.

It is interesting to note that Latin, until recently considered very useful for archaeology, was only declared by 4 students in 11 years of recruitment. A comment on Mathematics is also worth mentioning. Mathematics has been a compulsory examination since 2010. This means that in the discussed period, three years (2007–2009) did not have to deal with it, and eight (2010–2017) already had this obligation. It turns out that only half (346 people) of all young students took this exam in either version, this means that while eight year groups had no choice but to take Mathematics, among the initial year groups, in

Fig. 8. Average matura exam results of school graduates in each of the assumed categories: strong, average, weak.

a choice situation, almost no one (26 out of 310 people) took the Mathematics exam.

The analysis of the data obtained shows that, in general, archaeology students score above average on the matura exam. They score best in History, Geography, Political Science and English. The most difficult subjects are science and natural sciences (mathematics, chemistry, biology) and German. On the basis of these data, it is also possible to characterise next first year students.

Thus, in the light of the method used by us, the last three years' students stand out, "winning" ¾ of the contests with the average. Clearly *in minus* are the "declining" years: 2010 and 2014, which were defeated in most categories on national averages.

Other year groups were slightly, and sometimes significantly, better than the comparable averages, which allows us to maintain the thesis stated at the beginning that we are dealing mainly with candidates who are above average in their matura examinations.

5.2. Candidate priorities in the recruitment process at the Nicolaus Copernicus University – archaeology vs. the competition

In order to fully interpret the results of the recruitment process at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, it is necessary to familiarise oneself with its rules. Candidates applying for admission in the first intake for full-time first degree studies choose any number of courses they are interested in – this should be treated as initial interest. Then they pay a fee for each indicated course – which is already a serious declaration, because it is related to costs. They rank the courses they have chosen and paid for in order: from the one they care most about (priority 1) to those they care less about (priority 2, priority 3, etc.).

Firstly, it is worth looking at what priority the discipline had for future archaeology students at the time of recruitment – we called this the strength of priority. For as many as 84% of candidates archaeology was number one on their list of priorities – this is what they cared about most – in this case the candidate showed the highest priority strength. The most frequent competition for archaeology was History – 96 people also applied for it, but note: for none of the respondents it was a higher priority (sic!) – none of the young archaeologists would prefer to be on History. Then there are many other disciplines related to archaeology: archival science, ethnology, cultural heritage protection, art history, cultural studies, conservation. Significantly, in almost all cases (apart from

conservation) archaeology was much more often indicated as the main priority. In fact, among young archaeologists their discipline has always won in the competition of priorities. The group of courses breaking out of this trend is relatively small: law, conservation, internal security – these tended to be ranked higher than archaeology as alternatives.

In light of this interpretation of candidates' declarations, it can be concluded that only less than 5% of archaeology students can be said to be at risk of being unfulfilled adepts in other academic disciplines.

It is also quite interesting to note that the strength of each candidate's priority for archaeology was juxtaposed with the distance of their hometown from the University. This comparison revealed that the further away a candidate was from the Nicolaus Copernicus University, the higher priority they tended to give to archaeology. For just over 80% of respondents from Toruń, archaeology was the highest priority, and for 95% of respondents who had more than 200 km to the UMK.

5.3. Candidate Strength (SK) and Motivation Strength (SM) – variables characterising archaeology candidates

Creating the characteristics of archaeology candidates from the data available through the Online Candidate Registration System, we identified two key variables – candidate strength (SK) and motivational strength (SM). These variables were matched with indicators to produce a kind of interesting tool that allows for a deeper description of candidates for the purpose of e.g. creating promotional campaigns for archaeology as an academic discipline, modifying the educational offer or even building an image of archaeology and archaeologists.

A detailed description of the construction of variables and the selection of indicators can be found in another study (Dejna and Nalaskowski 2021). Here we only signal another aspect of the described research. Candidate strength is a value that describes, based on the data available to us, the intellectual and cultural potential of a candidate. The indicators of the variable candidate strength, and therefore the "tools" we used to measure/weight this variable are: 1) The type of secondary school completed, 2) the number of matura exams passed, 3) The average score of all matura exams, 4) The recruitment points obtained in the IRK, 5) If they had won a major competition or *Olympiad*. It was considered that the variables indicated were the closest to reflect the essence of what the candidate's

strength was referred to. The values obtained in the above-mentioned categories were put into an algorithm which allowed calculating a single, unified, value. By measuring this value, we get an answer to the question of whether a candidate is likely to be a strong academic student. The second category, strength of motivation, answers the question of how determined a candidate was to take up a particular course of study. The indicators of the variable strength of determination to study archaeology at UMK are: distance of residence from Toruń, method of prioritisation (information on which of the fields of study chosen by the candidate is the most important for him/her), class year. As in the case of candidate strength also here a unifying algorithm was used. The measurement of this value clears up doubts about random choices of the field of study and provides answers to questions about possible alternatives (Dejna and Nalaskowski 2021).

What do the analyses reveal? Among other things that: 1) The further away a candidate has to UMK, the better intellectual/cultural "coming generation" he/she is most often, the weakest candidates are from Torun itself. 2) We have only few accidental and completely unsuitable candidates, and the decision to study archaeology seems to have been well thought out. 3) Those from rural areas recorded a slightly higher motivational strength but were noticeably less prepared for study – SK. 4) No statistically significant differences emerged in relation to SM and SK in the context of gender. 5) candidates with lower SM and

SK are accepted in the second intake. While SM remains unchanged, a difference is drawn in SK, i.e. in the second intake similarly motivated candidates are accepted but they are less prepared.

6. Summaries and conclusions

The data presented enables certain conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, there is a clear trend of decreasing popularity of the described course over the years. This trend can be divided into a period of "prosperity" and "decline". In the first period, a higher percentage of "incoming" candidates was recorded. In the second period 'locals' began to predominate. Moreover, as it has been shown, with the decline in popularity came a tendency to accept candidates with relatively weaker results from the matura examination. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that candidates for archaeology are, in relation to the national average, those with higher results and often graduates of outstanding schools. Archaeology is also more likely to be taken up by urban and more mature young people. Also compared to other competing disciplines, applicants are more decisive and consistent in their choice.

It is also possible to make a rather bitter observation about universities. On the one hand it is possible to hear complaints about students in the corridors of universities, or more precisely "archaeological" ones – certainly not everywhere and not always. However, as a researcher myself, I have more than once witnessed
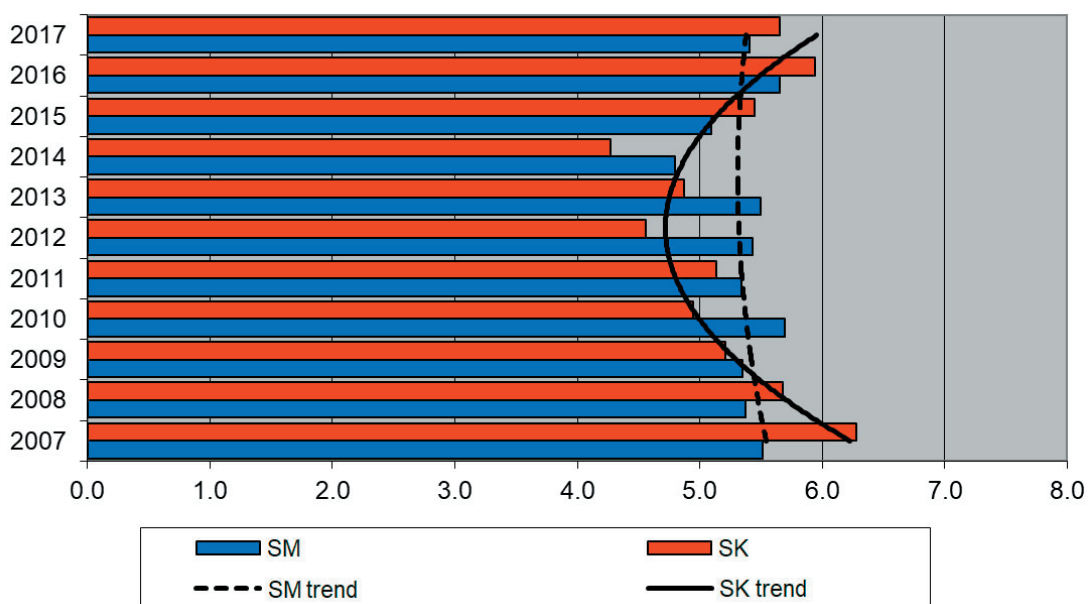

Fig. 9. Candidate Strength (SK) and Motivation Strength (SM).

conversations dealing with the broadly defined condition of archaeology students. They are criticised for laziness, lack of passion, lack of commitment, opportunism, wasting the potential and finally for the "poor quality" of graduates. The opinions quoted are just a compilation, an averaging, of the voices heard. On the other hand, as our analysis shows, archaeology is taken up by young people with above average talent, characterised by significant motivation to study this subject. One might ask: why is there such a dissonance between opinions (or perhaps facts?) about students and facts about candidates (Dejna and Nalaskowski 2013b)?

It seems that it may be a change in young people's attitudes to archaeology, and to studying more broadly that is occurring during the course of their studies. What is responsible for this? It is difficult to tackle this serious problem in such a short text, so we are left with careful speculation. It may be a disappointment with the course itself, the practice of which is different from what was originally imagined. Perhaps the study programme turns out to be moderately entertaining. Maybe it is finally the lack of developmental stimuli and requirements that enables young people to fall into unsatisfactory averageness? It is certainly worth further analysis in this field in order to reach clear conclusions.

At this point it is worth returning for a moment to the point made at the beginning of this text about the broad sociological context and conditions for undertaking humanities. As our research shows, the group of those willing to study archaeology is steadily decreasing, their 'quality' leaves much to be desired, and the frustration of lecturers and course managers is growing. After something of a "boom" in studying archaeology, which could be attributed to the policy of Leszek. Miller, consisting in enabling almost all willing secondary school graduates to have access to universities (one of the motives was an attempt to reduce unemployment among secondary school graduates and an attempt to "catch up" with Western countries in terms of the percentage of people with higher education in society), a period of stagnation came. The "Boom" passed, giving way to the phenomenon of pragmatisation of young people's awareness. The phenomenon of pragmatisation of consciousness, in the context of the presented reflections, consists in perceiving social reality through the prism of benefits, and goals set for oneself through the prism of competition with peers. This tendency is visible in the reduction of the goals set mainly to one's own material situation in life (Bardziejewska, Brzezińska and Hejmanowski 2004).

Today's secondary school graduates and students are extremely practically oriented towards life. Exposed to the aforementioned social campaigns aimed at discouraging the study of the humanities, regularly exposed to content and media messages promoting material success in life, raised by overworked parents and grandparents who are still very active professionally – they experience a pragmatisation of consciousness which is responsible for their educational decisions.

Young people expect direct gratification for their educational efforts. Their efforts are to be crowned with achievement of a high social and professional position and the resulting benefits (Ziółkowski 1995, 8–15). This phenomenon can be illustrated by a dichotomy taken from Erich Fromm (1995). Being educated (i.e. treating education as a value in itself) replaced having an education (i.e. treating education as an instrument through which one acquires specific skills and qualifications needed to occupy a desired position in the social structure). This phenomenon is related to the process which is referred to as commodification (Wasilewski 2001) of education. Looking from the perspective of an individual it consists in treating education as an investment for the future and a diploma as a market good (Wasilewski 2006, 124). Perhaps the issues signalled here are the source of recruitment problems not only for archaeology in Toruń, but for archaeology in general. This is just a contribution to further research and discussion.

7. Conclusion

In the context of the analyses and conclusions presented above, an important and interesting issue would be to question the legitimacy of introducing or reinstating entrance exams for archaeological studies. Supporters of such a solution argue that it would give the possibility to select candidates, which could easily result in the quality of students. Therefore, let us follow this mechanism. Certainly, two-stage entrance exams are the most selective form of recruitment. At the first stage the candidates' knowledge in selected areas is checked, at the second stage – an interview – it is additionally possible to get to know their motivations, other interests. Less selective is of course the form with the exam itself, then the interview itself. In the first case, only formal knowledge is taken into account, while in the second usually a slightly less formal process, also unmeasurable, with more subjective factors. Another mechanism is the certificate competition. According to its assumptions, in the case of archaeology, there is no possibility of verifying field knowledge, the evaluation

is based solely on the results obtained in the matura examination, mainly in school subjects, which do not include archaeology. A pre-set number of candidates with the highest ranking score are admitted through a certificate competition. The next strategy is the admissions based on a points criterion (a combination with a certificate competition is possible here), those candidates are admitted (possibly all) who, after recalculation of the matura results, have reached a minimum, previously set, points criterion.

In the last years of recruitment to archaeology in Toruń, only the strategy of a certificate competition was used. The reason seems to be clear – the very small number of candidates. Considering the limits set by the authorities for candidates for the course (60–40–30) the number of actual applicants was, as has been shown, far lower. In practice, absolutely all candidates were admitted to archaeology, provided they had a secondary education. The actions and motivation of the authorities also seem to be justified by the desire to ensure continuity of the course. The management practice at the Nicolaus Copernicus University points to the closure of courses where there are no candidates (environmental protection, sculpture, Baltic studies, European studies). Any form of selection (exams, interviews, point criterion) would, by definition, serve to reduce the already low number of applicants, which would result in the closure of the course. It seems that in recent years there was no practical possibility of any deeper verification of students' intake and in practice it turned out that the list of candidates for studies with the first priority of archaeology was the same as the list of those accepted.

Archaeology is undoubtedly a niche field of study in Toruń, as well as in Poland. Its specificity is created by the candidates for students, the students themselves, the atmosphere of the faculty, the infrastructure and the lecturers. However, only by extending the analyses according to the presented scheme, which we are planning to do, with the characteristics of the candidates for other courses, we would be able to gain a full insight into the recruitment situation at the University and the condition of particular courses. In the face of dynamic changes which are currently affecting Polish higher education institutions, such a research perspective seems tempting. Because research on the profiles of candidates for various university courses, located at the border between general education and higher education, may be a source of interesting and useful explanations and hypotheses.

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