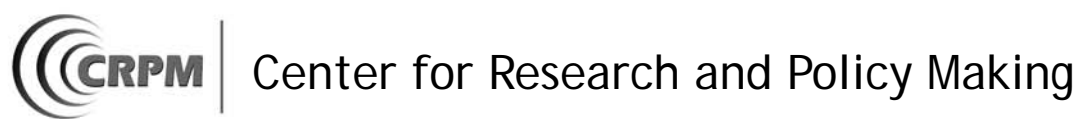





# QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION HOW TO IMPROVE IT?

- LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE LABOR MARKET
- PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES:  
DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY OR JUST IN FINANCES



Research | Analysis | Trainings | Policy advice





Linking Higher Education and the Labor Market  
7 - 65

Private VS. Public Universities:  
Difference in Quality or Just Finances  
72 - 130

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## *Foreword*

For several years now, reforms have been transforming Macedonian higher education. During this process, certain difficulties have adversely reflected in the quality of the reforms. As the joint European higher education area is being created, higher education institutions are expected to become stronger, in order to become more competitive at the global higher education market. However, there is severe criticism concerning the inappropriately conducted transformation of the Macedonian higher education system and the curricula. The deficiencies in the teaching methods and the curricula are believed to endanger the preparedness of the students for a fast transition to the labour market. At the same time, the rapid increase in the number of newly establishment institutions of higher education and the easier access to higher education adversely influence its quality. Despite these warnings, there is lack of extensive analyses of the higher education system, which would encompass all stakeholders and verify the validity of this critique.

Bearing this in mind, The Center for Research and Policy Making conducted research on two topics estimated as most important at the moment: 1) the links between higher education and the labor market and 2) the similarities and differences between public and private universities from an aspect of several quality indicators. The two analyses do not exhaust these topics, especially because of the fact that not all higher education institutions in the country were included in the research. This research aims to provide a source of data and recommendations expected to generate discussions and proposals for further research and activities geared at improving the quality of the higher education.

The analyses encompassed in this publication would not have been realized without the financial assistance and the provided research freedom by The German Marshal Fund of the United States (Balkan Trust for Democracy) as well as the cooperation of all institutions and individuals which served as sources of data for the research. Their openness for cooperation gives us hope that there is great interest for improving the quality of higher education and hope that the offered recommendations will be seriously reviewed and taken into consideration when planning the future development of the higher education institutions.





**LINKING  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND  
THE LABOR MARKET**



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AVRM</b>	Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia
<b>AIESEC</b>	Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales (at the Faculty of Economics)
<b>BEST</b>	Student organization at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies
<b>BRO</b>	Bureau for Development of Education
<b>MON</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>PMF</b>	Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences - Skopje
<b>PFSKO</b>	Faculty of Pedagogy - Skopje
<b>UGD</b>	Goce Delchev University - Stip
<b>SEEU</b>	South-East European University - Tetovo
<b>UKIM</b>	Sv. Kiril i Metodij University - Skopje
<b>UKLO</b>	Kliment Ohridski University - Bitola
<b>FEIT</b>	Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies
<b>CRPM</b>	Center for Research and Policy Making
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources





LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND THE LABOR MARKET



**INTRODUCTION**

## *Summary*

This research aims to offer a complete analysis of the reasons for the gap between the higher education and the labor market. This problem is analyzed from several aspects so that a number of factors are considered. First, a statistical overview of the supply and demand for qualified personnel is presented and then follows an analysis of the skills and knowledge that are acquired during the undergraduate studies at the universities (taking into account the opinions of the teaching personnel, the students and the curriculum). The research concludes with concrete recommendations for the institutions on how to overcome the problematic aspects and establish a better cooperation between the higher education and the labor market.

## *1. Introduction*

The development of technology is so fast nowadays that the biggest number of the most demanded jobs did not even exist 5 or 6 years ago. This means that the contemporary educational system prepares the students for the professions of tomorrow. The key roles of the educational system should be the ability to foresee the changes and the way to adapt to them. It is understandable that the educational system cannot change as fast as the industry, but what it can do is train the students and provide them with skills that will help them adapt to the new conditions in the market. Skills like critical thinking (ability to learn how to learn - i.e. readiness for continuous learning), creativity and courage<sup>1</sup> become more important than the expert skills. These and similar skills are considered the most important in today's "economy based on knowledge," when to be successful means to be competitive. This means investing in people - their education and qualifications, which are more important for the new investments than the competitiveness of the prices<sup>2</sup>

The Macedonian educational system (regardless of the level) is rigid and inflexible. The traditional "values" of rote learning and studying for a grade are still dominant.<sup>3</sup> The need for development of critical thinking and motivation for continuous (life-long) learning are only discussed in the academic circles while the realization of these changes remains declarative and superficial.

To what extent do our graduates acquire these skills in reality and are they ready to enter the global market? In a period of transition in the sphere of education and high levels of unemployment, many young people with university diplomas are searching for their place in the labor market (see case study). At the same time, many employers are complaining of the difficulties to find appropriate personnel that would quickly adapt to the work in the company. Therefore this analysis of CRPM focuses on the gap between the higher education and the labor market by researching the skills that are acquired during the higher education and those that are required by the labor market. The analysis leads to recommendations to all the relevant parties how to develop policies to overcome the gap and improve the cooperation between the educational institutions and the labor market.

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<sup>1</sup>Mark David Milliron, *Transcendence and Globalization: Our Education and Workforce Development Challenge*, New Directions for Community Colleges, Vol. 2007, Issue 138

<sup>2</sup>Visar Ademi, *The Competitiveness Project's Workforce Development themes and interventions*, presentation at the Workforce Development Conference, 14 May, 2008

<sup>3</sup>Analysis of the Potential for Good Management in the Republic of Macedonia, FIOOM, 2007, p. 41; Child Poverty Study in FYR Macedonia, UNICEF, 2007, p. 68

*Case Study 1:***A GPA 9.00 Student is Unemployed for 2 Years**

Marko Ivanovski<sup>4</sup> graduated in financial management with a 9.00 GPA and has been unemployed for almost 2 years. In this period he applied unsuccessfully for more than 40 jobs. In the governmental institutions they asked for a political party membership and in the private ones, even though the selection was more just, a previous working experience was required, something Marko didn't have.

*Most often I look for jobs through newspaper ads. I meet all the other criteria except the working experience, which often isn't even stated as obligatory, but it becomes when they ask for it at the interview.*

*He thinks that the faculty did not prepare him properly for the labor market.*

*We studied only theory and you forget that pretty fast. We had only 1 month of practice in a company and that wasn't enough.*

If he lands a job now, he thinks he would need several months to adapt, even though he thinks that the students who had graduated recently would have bigger chances. The initial enthusiasm receded and he applies for jobs less often. Even though he is discouraged, he does not lose the faith that he will find a job in the near future.

Attending additional training would be a substantial financial burden at this moment, so that is why he decided not to do it. Still, if he had a job and a steady income, he would seriously think about it.

<sup>4</sup>The name has been changed on interviewee's request









LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND THE LABOR MARKET



**METHODOLOGY**

## *II. Methodology*

### **Problem**

The issue of linking the education and the labor market has been raised many times, but rarely has it been systematically analyzed. What is lacking in particular are all-inclusive analyses that will go further than the quantitative analysis of the existing statistical data and will qualitatively analyze separate aspects of the issue. Taking into consideration that this subject has been researched unilaterally, or through the prism of the educational system or the labor market, this research makes an attempt to analyze the connection of the two aspects in a more general way with the use of quantitative and qualitative methodology and inclusion of numerous participants.

### **Questions**

This research analyzes and replies to the following questions:

1. What is the offer of highly educated personnel?
2. What is the demand for highly educated personnel?
3. Which skills are required at the labor market?
4. Which skills are acquired during the undergraduate studies at the faculties?
5. Which aspects are crucial for the incompatibility of the higher education and the labor market and how can that be overcome?

### **Data-collection Methods**

Taking into consideration the complexity of the subject, various methods were used for gathering of data.

The quantitative methods included processing of the secondary data that was available from the State Statistical Office and AVRМ. They were mostly used for estimate of the offer of highly educated personnel.

With the aim to analyze the demand for personnel with higher education and their qualifications, an analysis of the job ads announced in the printed media (published on the web portal [www.najdirabota.com.mk](http://www.najdirabota.com.mk)) was conducted in the period from August to November 2008. All the ads that asked for highly educated personnel were analyzed.

The total number of analyzed ads was 643 with 761 jobs/profiles. The focus was on the quantitative analysis of the following data: most wanted professions by sector/area, most wanted educational qualifications, conditions that need to be met by the candidate (working experience, age, knowledge of foreign languages, computer skills, personal characteristics). Additionally, the reports of AVRМ for the demand of skills were also used.

As an additional source for the demand and offer of personnel interviews were conducted with representatives of the human resource sectors or managers of 15 companies from the following areas: telecommunications, IT, finance, law, education, production. The topics of the interviews included: the most important skills necessary for the adaptation to their companies, the estimate of the readiness of the graduated students, the possibility of practice for the students, professional improvement etc.

Moreover, interviews were conducted with representatives of four employment agencies and other relevant stakeholders: representatives of business centers and career centers, economic chambers etc.

For the analysis of the competencies that the students acquire during their education focus groups were organized, or as alternative, questionnaires were distributed with the aim to discover the opinions and practices of the teaching personnel and the students. 15 focus groups were organized with the total of 95 students from 3 universities (one state university - UKIM and two private ones - SEEU and FON). Students from the following faculties took part in the focus groups: economic/business administration, law, pedagogical and informatics. The following topics were discussed: teaching and assessment methods, ratio of theory and practice in the curriculum, possibilities of practice during the studies, up-to-date-ness of the knowledge, estimate of the ability to enter the labor market.

With the aim to obtain a better overview of the teaching practices 46 professors and assistants were involved in the research either by participation in focus groups or by answering the questionnaire (with the same questions). They also explained their teaching practices and gave opinions on the ratio of the theory and practice and the competitiveness of the graduates.<sup>5</sup> The focus groups were organized in the period November 2008 - May 2009.

Additionally, the curricula of several faculties and the emphasis on knowledge and/or skills were also analyzed.

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<sup>5</sup> The names of the interviewed students, professors and representatives of companies are not stated in this report for protection of privacy, but are known to CRPM





LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND THE LABOR MARKET



**ANALYSIS OF  
THE CURRENT  
STATE**

### III. Analysis of The Current State

Two major factors affect the way in which the young and highly educated personnel will enter the labor market. First, it is the demand of the market, which primarily depends on the development of the economy and consequently - the need for highly educated personnel, the professions that are in demand, the skills and knowledge etc. Second, the situation in the higher education, primarily the vocations that are offered, the students' interest for certain vocations, the flexibility of the educational institutions, the direction towards development of certain skills and knowledge etc. A continuous analysis of the correlation between these two indicators should result in synchronization of the educational and market policies.

#### 3.1. Current State in Labor Market

The high unemployment rate in Macedonia in the last 17 years is characteristic for all age groups. Although the unemployment rate (15-64 years) has decreased from 35.2% in 2007 to 33.2% in the third quarter of 2008, it is still very high (Table 1).

Table 1:  
Activity Rate of the Population (15-64 years) (2007-2008)

15-64 years	2007	2008-1	2008-2	2008-3	2009-1
Activity Rate	62.8	63.5	63.4	64.0	63.3
Employed	40.7	41.3	41.8	42.8	42.5
Unemployed	35.2	35.0	34.0	33.2	32.9

Source:  
Manpower Poll, 2007, 2008 (1, 2, 3 quarter), 2009 (1 quarter), State Statistical Office

The situation is particularly serious with the young population (15-24 years) whose activity is on a slight rise, but the unemployment remains high (around 54%) (Table 2). This means that more than half of the young people in Macedonia who are looking for a job have problems finding it. For comparison, on a world level the unemployment among the young people (15-24 years) is 47% and in the developed countries it is 16%. What is characteristic is that the unemployment rate decreases with the increase of the educational level.<sup>6</sup>

Compared to the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the situation in Macedonia is the least favorable. Macedonia ranks closest to Serbia where the unemployment rate among the young is a little under 50%. In the other countries the rate is substantially lower: around 30% in Croatia, 15% in Slovenia, around 25% in Greece. The lowest rates are in Switzerland, Ireland and Norway where it is below 10%.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> How are Youth Faring in the Labor Market? Evidence from Around the World, Jean Fares, Claudio E. Montenegro, Peter, F. Orazem, World Bank, 2006

<sup>7</sup> UNCE Weekly: Economic Commission for Europe, Issue N° 266 - 28 April-2 May 2008  
[http://www.uncece.org/highlights/unece\\_weekly/weekly\\_2008/UNECE\\_Weekly\\_2008-266.pdf](http://www.uncece.org/highlights/unece_weekly/weekly_2008/UNECE_Weekly_2008-266.pdf)

Table 2:  
Activity Rate among the Young Population (15-24 years) (2007-2008)

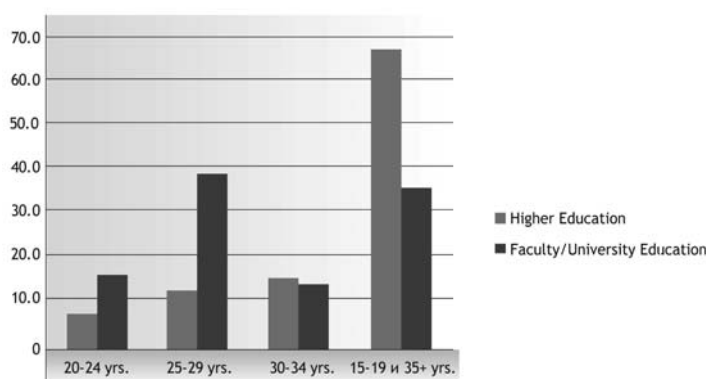
15-24 years	2007	2008-1	2008-2	2008-3	2009-1
Activity rate	35.9	35.6	35.4	37.4	35.1
Employed	15.2	14.8	15.6	17.2	16.0
Unemployed	57.7	58.4	56.0	53.9	54.4

Source:

Manpower Poll, 2007, 2008 (1, 2, 3 quarter), 2009 (1 quarter), State Statistical Office

A significant part of the young population in Macedonia enroll in universities in order to reduce (or postpone) the unemployment problem. In 2008, with the development of the programs and curricula at the private universities and the possibility of dispersed studies in the whole country, there were more places available at the faculties than the total number of high school graduates.<sup>8</sup> Still, in spite of the availability of the higher education, more than half of the unemployed with higher education are young people (20-34 years) and almost 40% of them fall into the group of 25-29 years of age, a group which should be the most productive. (Graph 1)

Graph 1.  
Unemployed by Education and Age, 2007 (in %)



Source:

Manpower Poll, 2007, State Statistical Office

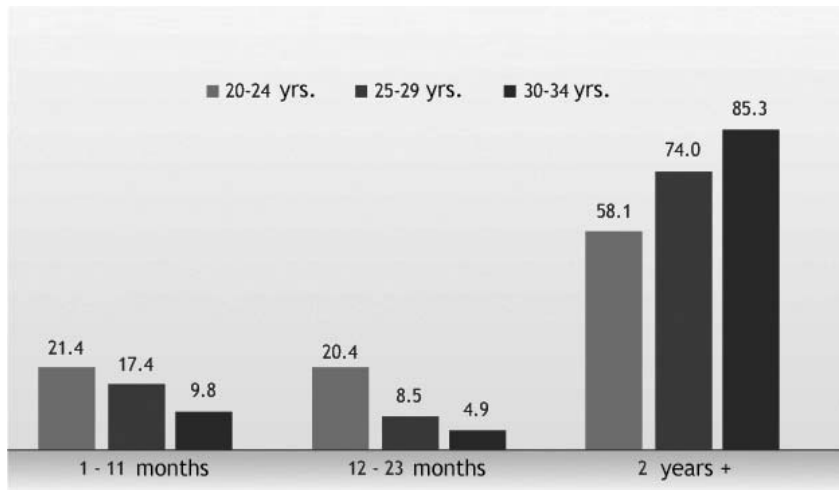
The situation is even worse because of the fact that the majority of the unemployed young and highly educated wait for more than two years to land a job (Graphs 2 and 3). This results in the inevitable outdatedness of their knowledge and qualifications, which makes them less competitive in comparison to the new personnel available on the market. Since the majority of them did not have a working experience after finishing their education, they are in a very unfavorable situation concerning their skills.

<sup>8</sup> In the academic 2008/2009 18 500 places were available at the state universities and more than 4 000 at the private ones, while there were 15 457 high school graduates.



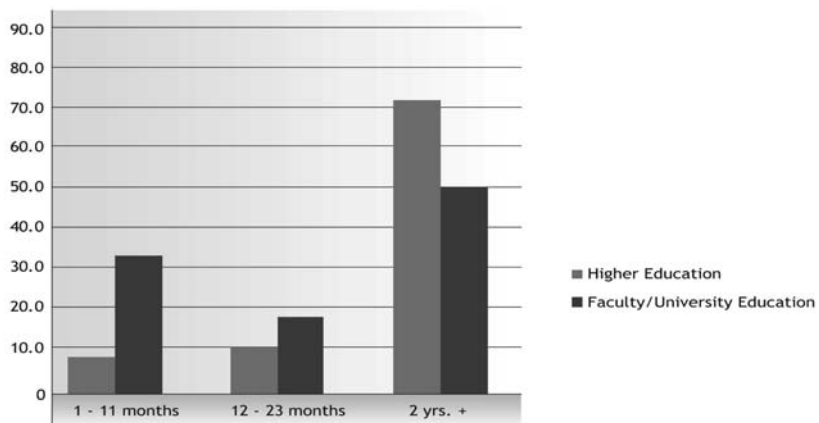
The risk that they will not even enter the labor market is real, or if that does happen they will have to be content with jobs that do not require higher education. The danger is further aggravated by the fact that while their age increases, the companies, especially for the lower positions, ask for younger personnel.<sup>9</sup> Because of these factors, the effort spent on education turns out to have been spent in vain.

Graph 2.  
Long-term Unemployment of the Young (in %)



Source:  
Manpower Poll, 2007, State Statistical Office

Graph 3.  
Long-term Unemployment Among Higher Educated (in %)



Source:  
Manpower Poll, 2007, State Statistical Office

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Afrodita Keramicieva-Panovska, CS Global, 30.10.2008

The employment of this group mainly depends on the demand for new jobs and the synchronization of the existing profiles and the professions that are wanted by the labor market. In 2007 AVRМ made an attempt to predict the demand of profiles and skills. The National Report on the Labor Market Skills Requirement stated that the demand for new employments in 2008 will be low and will not affect the decrease of the unemployment rate.<sup>10</sup> The biggest number of the potential jobs was expected in the industry sector (77.4%) and the smallest one in the finances (1.4%). The estimate for the highly educated personnel was unfavorable with 18% of the total employments in 2008 to be for highly educated personnel.<sup>11</sup> From the AVRМ estimates we can observe that the market does not possess the capacity to include the entire highly educated personnel, especially the one in the area of social sciences, who are less required but are numerous. What is lacking is a continuous general research of the labor market demands and distribution of the data with the aim to synchronize the educational policies as otherwise the results will only serve to diagnose the situation and will not aid the improvement process.

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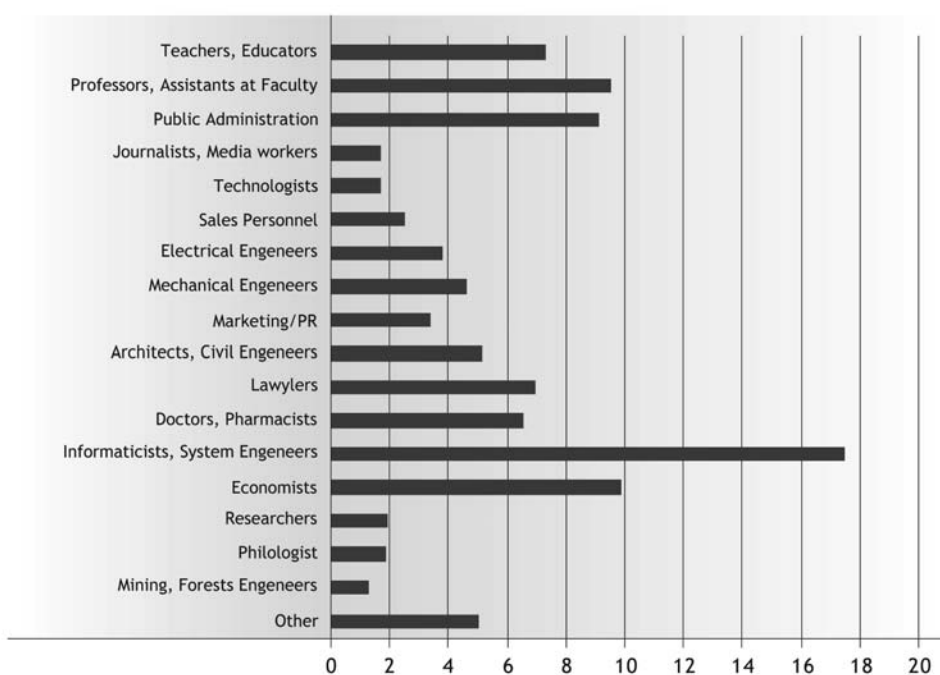
<sup>10</sup> APV National Report from the Analysis of the Labor Market Skills Requirements in the Republic of Macedonia , AVRМ 2007, pp. 12-13

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 14

### 3.1.1. Profession Requirements

The analysis of the content of the job ads showed that the most wanted profiles are those from the area of informatics (17.5%), followed by economy (9.9%) (with emphasis on the finances and business administration) and different profiles from the education sector (primary and secondary schools and universities/faculties)<sup>12</sup>(Graph 4). These positions, together with the professions from the building sector, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering are twice as much demanded by the private companies as compared to the state companies.

Graph 4:  
Demand for Certain Professions



Source:  
Analysis of the job ads (August - November 2008)

The experiences of the employment agencies generally coincide with the results from the analysis of the job ads. They also state that the most demanded positions are from the technical areas and the IT sector (electrical engineers, programmers, system administrators) as well as mechanical engineers. From the social sciences the most demanded are the financial managers and the sales and development managers.

<sup>12</sup> The high percentage of the positions from the educational sector and the other positions from the public administration is owed to the fact that it is obligatory to announce them (even in cases of re-election), which is not the case with the other positions.

According to the representatives of these agencies, the most difficult positions to fill are the high managerial positions that require technical knowledge (expertise) and a longer working experience (for example 10 years). These profiles are still rare in Macedonia because the development of modern managerial personnel is still at its initial stages. Therefore, “buying of managers” is a process that is on the rise.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of the high rate of unemployment, the technical profiles are still the most difficult to find. Even though the majority of the interviewed representatives of the human resource sectors state that generally they manage to fill in the positions, they do admit that the most difficult to find are the technical profiles with working experience, which are difficult to discover due to their occupation. Concerning the social sciences profiles, they find it most difficult to find personnel with thorough knowledge of project management.

Almost all the companies whose representatives we interviewed hire personnel that has just graduated, usually employing them as trainees, assistants etc. This trend is particularly characteristic for the technical area because due to the lack of personnel the companies recruit students during their studies. Concerning the qualifications, the majority state that even though the graduates have solid theoretical knowledge, they barely have any practical experience. As a result, according to one director of a marketing agency, what is necessary is ‘a longer training period (at least 6 months). The younger generations are more rebellious and vain and the training sometimes does not give positive results.’<sup>14</sup> The general impression of the HR experts is that there is no awareness of employability in Macedonia. The personnel is programmed to be employed but not to be ready to be employed at any moment.<sup>15</sup>

The AVRМ analysis also shows that the majority of the interviewed employers (80.8%) do not face a lack of employees for the advertised vacancies. Still, a small part of them (19.2%) have faced a lack of suitable employees, most often because the candidates lacked working experience. This was characteristic for the companies in the processing industry.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Darko Velkov, Vrabotuvanje.com; 25.09.2008

<sup>14</sup> The interview was conducted on 29.01.2008

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Afrodita Keramicieva - Panovska - CS Global, 30.10.2008

### 3.2. Current State in Higher Education

There are four state and five private universities in Macedonia. Also, there are eight private faculties.<sup>16</sup> The total number of graduates in 2007 was 8360, in 2008 it has increased to 10027, while 18 583 students have enrolled into first year in the academic 2007/8.

Due to the high unemployment rate, the enrollment at a university is an option that many young people see as a temporary solution to the unemployment problem. According to the data from MON, in 2008 a whopping 85% of the high school graduates enrolled at a university (as compared to the 64% in 2007 and 42% in 2006). One of the reasons for this state is the fact that the interest for the vocational high schools is declining and the majority of the high school graduates do not possess a vocation they can utilize to enter the labor market.

Before the establishment of the private universities many high school students with lower grades did not continue their education or enrolled at less demanding faculties. At the moment a lot of attractive programs (like business, law, informatics) are available at the private faculties where the selection process is less strict, thus making the enrollment easier.

Even though the purpose of the private faculties/universities is to follow the demand of the labor market, even they contribute to the 'over-saturation' of the labor market with particular vocations/profiles. Consequently, the policy to lower the number of available quota for enrollment at the state faculties of social sciences<sup>17</sup> cannot affect the synchronization of the demand and offer because the rest of the students find their place in the private faculties where the programs from the social sciences are dominant.

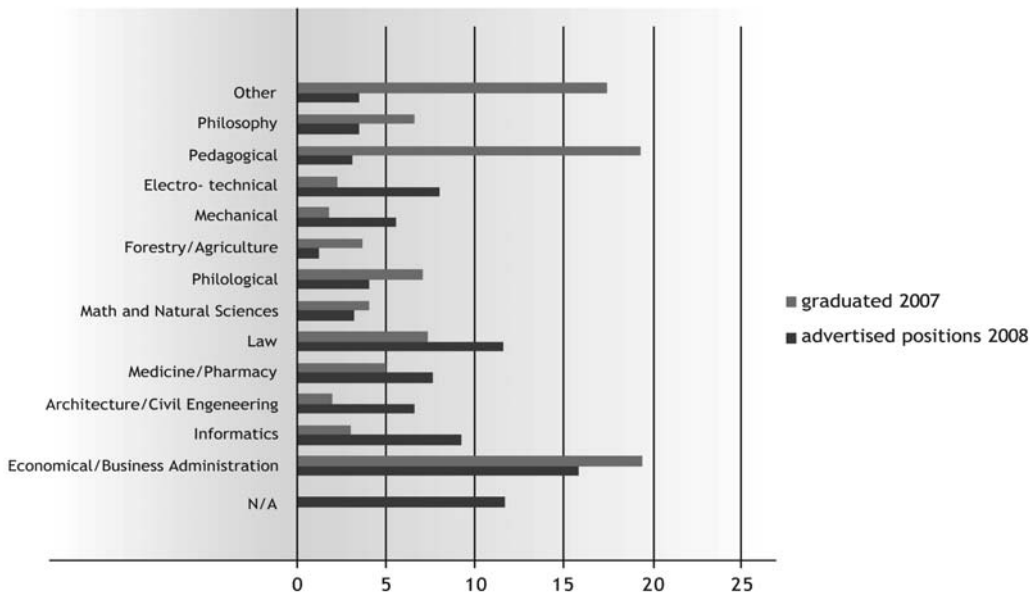
<sup>16</sup> see: [www.mon.gov.mk](http://www.mon.gov.mk)

<sup>17</sup> At the Faculty of Economics in Skopje from 550 to 495 students, at the Faculty of Law from 400 to 260, at the Faculty of Philosophy from 280 to 224, at the Faculty of Philology from 485 to 436, at the Faculty of Pedagogy from 290 to 274 (Vest, На државните универзитети повеќе места за информатичари, 31.05.2007 (More Places at the State Universities for Students of Informatics))

### 3.2.1. Personnel Availability

The trend of 'mass production' of profiles from the social sciences has been dominant for a longer period. We can see in Graph 5 that 2007 saw the biggest number of economy graduates and teachers/educators graduates. Still, while the offer and demand for economists is rather balanced, the situation with the graduates from the pedagogical faculties is the most problematic. They made 19.5% of the total number of graduates in 2007 and the percentage of their demand in one quarter of 2008 is 7.3% of the total number of advertised positions. But here we must take into account that the analysis of the job ads was done in the period of August to November when the demand for these profiles is the highest and the data can be considered fairly reliable as it is obligatory to announce these positions in the daily printed media.

Graph 5:  
Ratio (in %) Graduated Personnel - Demand for Personnel According to Faculty



Source:  
Graduated personnel - State Statistical Office data; personnel demand according to faculty - job ads analysis August-November 2008

**Notes:**

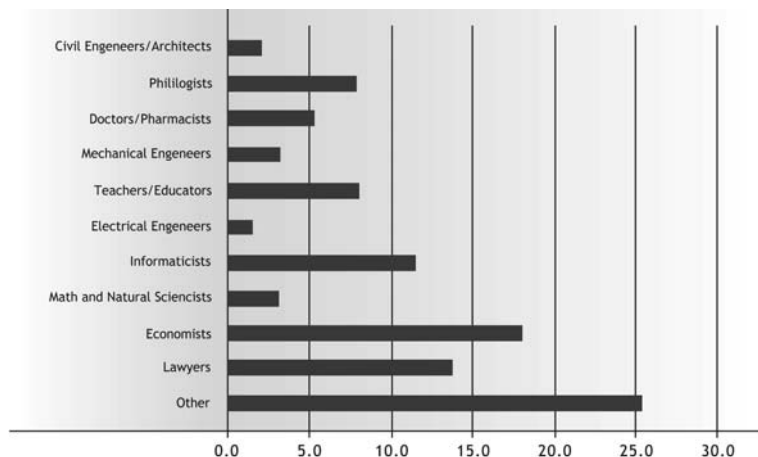
- \* in part of the job ads personnel from more than one faculty is demanded, therefore the number of the announced positions does not correspond to the percentage of personnel according to the faculty
- \* in a significant part of the announced positions for informatics personnel a faculty diploma is not required as a condition. Therefore the IT personnel in the graph is not dominant.

On the other hand, the IT personnel, which is the most demanded on the market, is not sufficiently represented among the graduates (3.1%). Therefore, a big number of IT companies do not require a diploma as a necessary condition for employment and part of them recruit students while they are still studying. Still, in spite of this kind of alternative recruitment, it is the opinion of the majority of the representatives of the informatics companies that what is lacking is personnel with working experience and that is the reason why they put the experience ahead of the diploma.

The situation with the demand for informatics personnel is expected to improve in the future, having in mind that the quota for enrollment has increased and the new faculties also offer this profile, providing for a higher total number of enrolled students (see Graph 6). If we take into account that there is a deficit of academic personnel in informatics it is necessary to introduce activities for professional academic development of the new personnel, incorporation of professionals/experts as lecturers at the faculties and import of foreign academic personnel. These activities should go hand in hand with the strategy for keeping this personnel in the country because the informatics personnel is scarce and in a number of countries the brain drain is a common occurrence.

As far as the social sciences are concerned, what is lacking is a development of programs for interdisciplinary scientific areas such as public relations, human resources, public administration. While part of the faculties recognize these needs and to a certain extent manage to respond to the fast changes in the market, the majority remain rigid and fail to adapt their curricula and introduce new areas that are demanded by the labor market.

Graph 6:  
Enrolled Students According to Profile (2007/2008)



Source:  
State Statistical Office and data obtained from several faculties/universities

In the following years a rise of the percentage of graduated lawyers and economists is expected. The incorporation of this personnel in the market will mostly depend on the development of the economy and the possibilities for the development of entrepreneurship. Still, the skills acquired during the studies will also be important, especially due to the fact that the educational institutions are still subject to criticism that the teaching staff is focused on the teaching material and not on the competencies that the students need to acquire. According to the Analysis of the Potential for Good Management in the Republic of Macedonia<sup>18</sup>, the educational institutions do not pay much attention to the way in which the students apply the acquired knowledge, skills and opinions in real life situations. Studies that integrate the knowledge, skills and opinions and set them as parameters for the evaluation of the achievements of the students are lacking or are scarcely present in the classroom. What is needed are not only structural changes, but also a change in the mentality that includes focus on the student and goal-orientation.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3. Education - Labor Market Transfer in the National Policies

#### 3.3.1. Legislatives and Strategic Documents

##### 1. The Law on Higher Education

The changes and addendums to the Law on Higher Education from August 2008 should lead to reducing the gap between the education and the labor market. First of all, it is obligatory that 10% of the mandatory subjects and 10% of the optional subjects of every academic year are conducted through clinical teaching (i.e. by a prominent expert from the subject area). The requirements that need to be met by the prominent expert are defined by the Minister.<sup>20</sup>

Also, 'each academic year the students are obliged to attend practical tutorials that cannot be shorter than 30 days as one of the conditions for enrollment in the next academic year. The conditions for organization of these tutorials are defined by the Minister.'<sup>21</sup>

This law should be enforced in 2010. By then many ambiguous points should be cleared up (the requirements that need to be met by the expert for the clinical practice, how the faculty/university will implement and regulate the practical tutorials etc.) so that the activities can be implemented without obstacles.

<sup>18</sup>Analysis of the Potential for Good Management in the Republic of Macedonia, FIOOM, 2007, p. 38

<sup>19</sup>EUA, Evaluation Report of UKLO, 2004, p.11

<sup>20</sup>Law on Higher Education (changes and amendments) Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, number 35 from 14.03.2008, Article 99, Paragraph 4, 5, 8.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. Article 99, Paragraph 8



In the meantime, the institutions that offer intern jobs should define the requirements, the rights and obligations of the trainee and the institution (for example, the beginning and end date of the training, the number of working hours, the wages to be paid according to the contract, the organizational issues, the primary obligations, tasks and responsibilities of the parties, working conditions, security at the working place etc.)<sup>22</sup>

## 2. The Law on Labor Relations

The Law on Labor Relations does not focus much on the regulation of the practical work of the students. In Chapter 23 it states that 'the employer can recruit students who have turned 14 years of age and students who attend practical training within the framework of a curriculum'.<sup>23</sup> Still, there is no law or act for the students' practical training and the conditions under which it should be implemented are not regulated and this can lead to many manipulations.

## 3. The Law on Volunteering

This law offers a possibility to volunteer in state institutions or non-profit organizations where the organization should cover the expenses for food and transport of the volunteer.<sup>24</sup> Volunteering is an opportunity for many students or unemployed to develop their working skills and civil liability. Still, volunteering is not popular enough and only a small number of students and graduates are acquainted with the opportunities and the rights they have as volunteers. Thus, volunteering is still considered 'a non-paid job' and a way to employment in the given organization. 'Unfortunately, because of the scarcity of the formal volunteering in the Republic of Macedonia and the existing high rate of unemployment, the understanding of volunteering as an activity where the person "gives" value and quality, knowledge and skills and he/she does all that mainly out of altruistic reasons, is misinterpreted'.<sup>25</sup>

## 4. Strategy for Educational Development

In the last Strategy for Educational Development (2005-2015), carried in 2004, the preparation of the students for employment is considered an important goal that could be achieved by flexibility of the study programs, their academic validity and relevance. This kind of programs should lead to development of the students' imagination, their ability to analyze and generalize, as well as their ability to manage the social changes. With the aim to improve the chances for employment of the graduated students in the European market, a development of study programs that would additionally qualify, re-qualify and change the qualification of the graduated students is planned.<sup>26</sup>

With the introduction of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) there are wider options for employment in the European market, but the inflexibility of the study programs and their weak connection with the practice still remain as the biggest weaknesses of the higher education. Also, the programs for re-qualification and change of qualification of the graduated students are still missing.

<sup>22</sup>USAID Project on Competitiveness; Brochure: Methodology for Practical Training

[http://www.macedonia21.com/macedonian/fact/Broshura\\_Metodologija\\_za\\_Praktikantska\\_rabota\\_MK.pdf](http://www.macedonia21.com/macedonian/fact/Broshura_Metodologija_za_Praktikantska_rabota_MK.pdf)

<sup>23</sup>Law on Working Relations, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, 62/2005 and 106/2008

<sup>24</sup>Law on Volunteering, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, 85/07

<sup>25</sup>Strategy for Volunteer Promotion (2007-2011), Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, p. 6

<sup>26</sup>Strategy for Educational Development 2005-2015, MON, 2004, p. 186/187

### 5. National Employment Strategy

The National Employment Strategy (2006-2010) foresees special measures for addressing the unemployment of young unemployed persons (15-25 years of age): conducting analyses of the necessary skills, improved coordination between the education and the demands of the employers, volunteering practice for high school and university students during their education, employment of the trainees, training for all the young unemployed persons 6 months from the beginning of the unemployment at the latest, with the aim to weed out long-term unemployment of the young<sup>27</sup>

Part of these measures has been implemented, although there is a lack of continuity in their implementation as well as a broader spectrum of implementation that mostly depends on the finances that are available. Specifically, a very small number of young people are included in the internship program and the analysis of the necessary skills was conducted only in 2007.

If these strategies are realized the effects should be felt in a few years. Still, the chronic lack of initiative by the institutions and the fact that the majority of the projects are implemented by the international institutions (donors) frequently lead to their unsustainability and return to the old ways.

## 3.3.2. Institutions - Link Between Education and Labor Market

### 1. Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia

The regular activities of AVRМ, the institution responsible for the transition from educational institutions to labor market, include: professional orientation, active measure for employment, trainee program, training for unemployed, re-qualification etc. Still, the problem lies in the small part of the people included in these measures and especially the fact that the specific groups of citizens that can be helped lack appropriate information of for the possibilities offered by the Agency.

### 2. Economic Chamber of Macedonia

In 2008 the Economic Chamber signed a contract for cooperation with UKIM that includes implementation of clinical practice as well as student activities within the framework of the Chamber and its members. The best cooperation is with the Faculty of Economics and the practical training is verified by a written evaluation by the company that serves as a proof for the work that the student has done. Still, the number of students who have the opportunity to be included as trainees with the aid of the Chamber is very small (around 10 every year).

<sup>27</sup>National Employment Strategy (2006-2010), Government of the Republic of Macedonia, December 2006, p.

### 3. USAID Competitiveness Project

Within the framework of the USAID Competitiveness Project there are several activities with duration of 5 years that were recently included for development of manpower. They are primarily focused on a better involvement of the internship as an option for an easier transition from education to labor market. Therefore they cooperate with the educational institutions (memorandum of cooperation signed with SEEU, Tetovo University, Slav University and American University) and companies, acting as a middleman for the students between the two sectors. One of the first activities was the creation of the site [www.mojakariera.com.mk](http://www.mojakariera.com.mk) that represents an online labor market for the potential trainees. The project also works on the improvement of the students' job-searching skills as well as on the promotion of the idea and methodology for internship among the companies.

### 4. SECI Project

#### (Strengthening Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Innovation)

The SECI activities are focused on development of entrepreneurship, which among other things includes activities from the sphere of higher education as support for the inclusion of entrepreneurship in the curriculum. The program has been presented before the Rectorate of UKIM and a textbook has been written in cooperation with the Business Start-Up center.

### 5. Career Centers

The career centers at the universities represent a direct link between the students and the companies and should facilitate the transition from education to labor market. They also strive to train the students for better self-promotion by teaching them how to write a CV, letter of motivation etc. Unfortunately, they are primarily formed at the private universities and are not equally engaged in support of the students from all faculties/study groups. Usually, due to the type of work requested by the companies, the economics and informatics students have the biggest number of opportunities<sup>28</sup> Formally, the biggest state universities (UKIM and UKLO) do not have organs that would represent a link between the students and the companies which leaves the students alone to solve the problem of practical training.

### 6. Student Organizations

Part of the student organizations (especially the local branches of the international organizations such as AISEC, AEGEE, BEST) is rather active in development of opportunities for upgrade of the skills of their members. These activities include establishing connection with companies from the complementary area, sending students abroad for practical training, organization of job fairs, seminars and workshops for development of various skills, organization of employment fairs etc. Still, the effects of their activities are felt only by their members and they represent only a minority.

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Zana Zekiri, Career Center at SEEU, 16.04.2009

### 7. Business Start-Up Centers

These centers are formed on university level with the aim to support the students and graduates who have a desire to start their own business. They organize training for preparation of business plans etc. and financially support the most successful. Still, not all the students are equally interested and motivated for entrepreneurship. The estimates of the Business Start-Up Center at UKIM are that entrepreneurship as a skill is more present with the students of electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, informatics, economics and agriculture. However, the general opinion is that 95% of the students are more inclined to joining an existing company while only 5% are ready to start their own business<sup>29</sup> This means that the faculty has not given them proper training in entrepreneurship skills so they rarely take up self-employment after their graduation.

### 8. Training Centers and Informal Education

The establishment of 'training centers' that offer training in different skills necessary in the labor market (communication, organization, project management, team work, sales etc.) is on the rise at the moment. Their existence is primarily owed to the fact that there is a discrepancy between the skills obtained from the educational system and those that are required by the market and the increased need for continuous/life-long learning. Unfortunately, due to the high price of the offered courses the students and graduates rarely decide to take up this kind of education when they have to pay for it themselves. Therefore, it is the big companies that have resources to spend on their personnel's training that are the main users of these services. Unlike them, the small and medium enterprises most often do not allocate resources for continuous professional training. Of course, part of the problem lies in the lack of a standardization and accreditation system for the training providers which makes them suspicious and discarded by certain employers.

It can be concluded that there is a sufficient number of institutions that, among other things, work on the connection of the education and the labor market. Still, their activities are mostly isolated, which often leads to their duplication and remaining partial. The efforts for a better coordination are rare, usually not supported by the system and if they are not based on the market principles - unsustainable.

<sup>29</sup>Interview with Radmil Polenakovic, Director of Business Start-Up Center, 13.12.2008

### 3.4. Comparative Experiences: Synchronization of Educational Policies and Labor Market

The transition process from the educational institutions to the labor market is different in different countries. While in Spain approximately 40% of the persons who have finished formal education are unemployed, the same applies for 10% in Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Germany. According to Van Der Velden and Wolbers, the educational system and the employment system are considered important factors, apart from the economic situation.<sup>30</sup> Especially important are the differences in the educational system, which can be academic or profession-oriented, i.e. oriented towards general knowledge or specific skills. Although the potential students of the latter are attractive to the employers because of their "ready to use" skills, these skills are usually relevant only for a small number of positions and in their absence the unemployment risk is rather high.

The Van Der Velden and Wolbers research shows that the safest way for integration with the labor market is the so-called "dual system" where education takes place simultaneously with the practice because it allows the students to become insiders in the market while they are studying. In Germany, Denmark and Switzerland this system is compiled and implemented by cooperation of the companies and the appropriate faculties. It is considered that it is beneficial for all the three parties: the students increase their employment options, the educational institutions widen their program range, the companies maintain contact with the potential young workers who might be employed in the future. As a result, around 82% of the graduates in Germany land their first jobs within the first 6 months after graduation.<sup>31</sup>

As opposed to this system is the educational system that is considered "general/academic" - characteristic for the United Kingdom. It can also be successful because the academic skills (for example, reproduction, analysis, synthesis, generalization) and the motivational skills that are acquired can be significantly linked to the further results in the labor market.<sup>32</sup> Still, the researches show that the accomplishment of abstract tasks in a formal setting (for example, a classroom) often results in imprecise judgment for the behavior of individuals in real-life situations.<sup>33</sup>

The debate over which system is more efficient is continuous and many countries strive to find the right balance of practical and academic skills with the aim to overcome or reduce the incompatibility between the skills and knowledge that are offered and required by the labor market. The problem of incompatibility is becoming prominent in the last few years when 'the trend of changes is speeding up, the jobs are becoming more technologically advanced, service-oriented and demand more input from the employee.'<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> R.K.W. van der Velden & M.H.J. Wolbers, The Integration of Young People into the Labour Market: The Role of Training Systems and Labour Market Regulation, In: W. Müller & M. Gangl (eds.), Transitions from Education to Work in Europe. The Integration of Youth into EU Labour Markets, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 12

<sup>31</sup> H. Ehlert, H. Cordier, Germany in The Transition from Higher Education to the Labour Market: International Perspectives and Challenges, H. Ehlert, H. Cordier (Eds.), 2002

<sup>32</sup> Semeijn, J. & Velden, R., Van der, Aspects of learning style and labour market entry an explorative study, 1999

<sup>33</sup> Handel, M. J. 2003. "Skills Mismatch in the Labor Market." Annual Review of Sociology 29, p.20

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.2

The educational systems are less flexible than the labor market by default and are slow to adapt the new market rules. Contrary to this, the companies often require personnel that is ready to adapt to their demands even though they are not always open to cooperation with the educational institutions.

With the aim to overcome this gap, various national policies have been created. For example, Sector Skills Councils were established in United Kingdom and they include employers, labor unions and professional bodies that define the needs of the businesses. The Sector Skills Development Agency supervises their work and establishes links with the government. For example, after the analysis that was conducted in 2006 showed inadequate skills in the property and housing sector, various activities were organized for the employers' training, development of qualification procedure, ICT skills training etc.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the majority of the students in Britain take up free-lance jobs for specific projects and short-term positions.<sup>36</sup>

In Australia standards for the system of vocational education that define the accreditation and registration system of the training providers were introduced in 2002. As a result, the majority of the study and assesment programs in Australia are based on nationally recognized training packages that are connected with the training demands of the industry or particular companies. The training packages describe the skills and knowledge that are necessary for an effective performance at a given job.<sup>37</sup>

The inclusion of internship during the studies is a tradition that is present in all Western countries. In France 70% of the students perform this kind of a job in the last 2 academic years. Most often they are business students and less often art or social science students. In The Netherlands internship is obligatory at many faculties and it can last from 6 to 12 months. Depending on the difficulty, the student's practical training can give a maximum of 20 credits and is controlled by the teachers. Another specific aspect of the Dutch universities is the so-called Problem Based Learning which starts with the practical problem instead of a theoretical introduction. The problem is considered in smaller groups and the theoretical basis for its solution is gradually discovered.<sup>38</sup> In this way the students get a real experience on how to tackle problems and approach them in a critical way.

In the last few years the private and newly formed state universities in Poland have reformed their teaching programs and have incorporated more interdisciplinary studies (for example chemistry with marketing and public relations), with the idea that knowledge of more subjects increases the chances of the graduates for an employment.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/download/ilcreport.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> H. Cordier, United Kingdom in *The Transition from Higher Education to the Labour Market: International Perspectives and Challenges*, H. Ehlert, H. Cordier (Eds.), 2002

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> V. Canals, C. Diebolt, France in *The Transition from Higher Education to the Labour Market: International Perspectives and Challenges*, H. Ehlert, H. Cordier (Eds.), 2002; Roland Richter, The Netherlands in *The Transition from Higher Education to the Labour Market: International Perspectives and Challenges*, H. Ehlert, H. Cordier (Eds.), 2002

<sup>39</sup> H. Hein, Poland in *The Transition from Higher Education to the Labour Market: International Perspectives and Challenges*, H. Ehlert, H. Cordier (Eds.), 2002



LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND THE LABOR MARKET

**IV**

**RESULTS:  
HIGHER  
EDUCATION  
AND LABOR  
MARKET**



## IV. Results: Higher Education and Labor Market

### 4.1. Profile of the Perfect Candidate

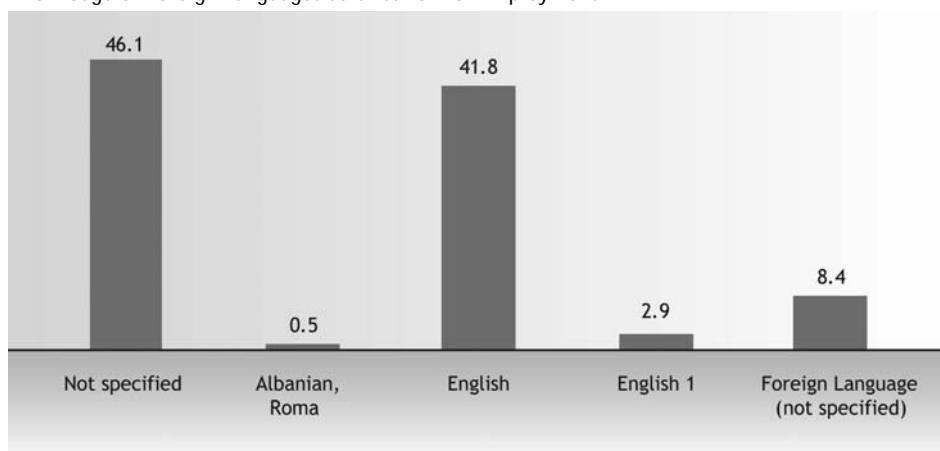
In the present-day labor market the faculty diploma is not the only criterion for job application. More and more often the employers have a defined list of competencies (skills, knowledge, personal characteristics)<sup>40</sup> that the candidates should possess and they range from specific knowledge to the personal characteristics of the applicants. The bigger companies often test their candidates with the aim to choose the best one.

According to the AVRМ analysis of the necessary skills of the newly employed, the employers favored the following skills: knowledge of foreign languages, computer skills, communication and organization skills and capacity for team work.<sup>41</sup>

The results of the analysis of the job ads confirm this view.

Although for less than half of the positions (46%) the **knowledge of a foreign language** is not stated as a criterion, all the others require it as one of the most important criteria (Graph 7). Most often a solid knowledge of the English language is required (42%) and in a small number of ads (3%) there is also a requirement for knowledge of another foreign language. The knowledge of a foreign language was set as a condition in 60% of the private and 43% of the state institutions/companies. According to area, the knowledge of a foreign language is most important for the area of economics/finance, informatics and institutions from the higher education.

Graph 7.  
Knowledge of Foreign Languages as Criterion for Employment



Source:  
Job Ads Analysis August-November 2008

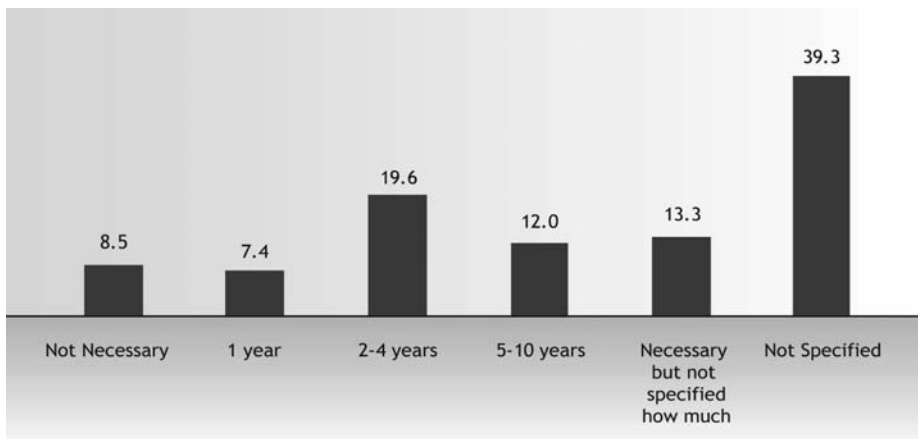
<sup>40</sup> These terms will occasionally be used in the text as synonyms for the term competencies.

<sup>41</sup> APV National Report from the Analysis of the Labor Market Skills Requirements in the Republic of Macedonia, AVRМ, 2007

**Working experience** is stated as criterion in more than half of the jobs (53%) although some of them do not state the length of the working experience (Graph 8). Most often a working experience between 2 and 4 years is required. Although almost half of the positions do not state the need for working experience, only 8.5% explicitly state that the candidates are not required to have working experience. We could conclude that the graduates without working experience should look for their employment within these 8.5% of positions, which only limits their opportunities even more.

The working experience is less important for the graduates from the technical spheres (electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, informatics) and it is more important for the graduates from the faculties of economics and law. This situation is logical because the former are sparse and it is difficult to find candidates that have the suitable qualifications and working experience.

Graph 8.  
Working Experience as Criterion for Employment

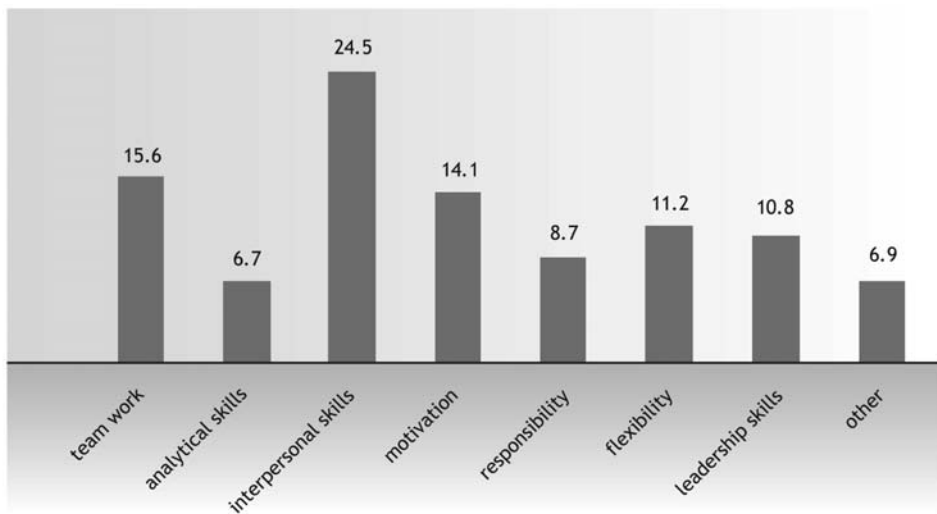


Source:  
Job Ads Analysis August-November 2008

The computer skills are required in 33% of the ads and usually refer to knowledge of the MS Office package. In 19% of the ads (usual for the technical profiles) an additional condition is possession of advanced computer skills, such as SQL, .NET, AutoCAD and Oracle.

Apart from the traditional requirements for knowledge of foreign languages, possession of working experience and computer skills, more and more companies stress the importance of possession of certain personal characteristics (so-called soft-skills) that are important for the job. These are primarily the good interpersonal skills (communication, negotiation) of the candidates, which are stated in 15% of the total number of ads (or 25% of the ads with stated personal characteristics) (Graph 9). They are most common for the candidates from the sectors of IT, finance/economics and law. For the IT sector it is equally important for the employees to be responsible, flexible and motivated. For the sectors of finance/economics, law and public administration the ability to work in teams is stated as the next most important characteristic.

Graph 9.  
Personal Characteristics as Criterion for Employment



Source:  
Job Ads Analysis August-November 2008

There are apparent differences between the characteristics that are required from the potential employees in the private and the state sector. While the interpersonal characteristics are considered important by almost all the companies (they are required in 24% of the ads of the private companies, in 20% of the ads of the state companies and in 44% of the ads of the non-governmental and international organizations)<sup>42</sup>; certain characteristics are differentiated according to the importance given to them by different companies. The analytical and leadership abilities are more important for the private companies (both are required in 11% of the ads), while the state companies require them in 2.7% of the ads. On the other hand, responsibility (loyalty) is considered as one of the priorities by the state institutions (18.6%) and to a much lesser extent by the private companies (6%).

<sup>42</sup> The percentages were calculated from the total number of companies according to ownership (private, state, international/non-governmental) that required personal characteristics in their ads

The representatives of the private employment agencies say that the employers usually do not have a precisely defined list of characteristics and this can be seen from the big number of ads that do not require them. Most often they ask for 'a good man/woman', within a certain age-range etc. The working experience is also one of the characteristics that is very important to the employers.

*Almost nobody wants personnel that has just graduated. They want at least 1-2 years of working experience as some sort of guarantee for possession of working habits.*

Darko Velkov - Vrabotuvanje.com

Those who look for personnel without working experience are mostly interested in the intellectual and social characteristics of the candidates.

*The working experience is less important for the big companies because they often want personnel they will further train according to their needs. In those cases the employers are interested in numbers, like IQ, social skills and similar numeric indicators.*

Igor Cekarov - Dekra<sup>43</sup>

The knowledge of a foreign language and basic computer applications are also skills that are required by every candidate as well as informal education. From the so-called soft-skills, the most important are: presentation skills, management, project management, decision making etc.

The interviewed representatives of the employment agencies agree that the companies often give more importance to the personal characteristics of the candidates than to their skills.

*It's important that they are loyal, diligent, with a sense of initiative. The skills can be learned, and they want to mould the personnel as they like.*

Darko Velkov - Vrabotuvanje.com

According to the data obtained, the ideal candidate should have the following characteristics:

- good command of the English language
- working experience from 1-4 years
- proficiency in the MS Office applications
- possession of good interpersonal skills (communication, negotiation, capacity for team work)
- to be diligent and responsible
- to be motivated for continuous learning
- to have a driver's license and 25-35 years of age

<sup>43</sup> The interview was conducted on 25.09.2008

## 4.2. Qualifications of the Available Personnel

It is easy to define the ideal candidate for a given position, but is it realistic to expect to find him/her? The general opinion of the human resource experts is that the personnel on the market is relatively well prepared professionally (theoretically), except for part of the technical profiles whose knowledge is often outdated.

*The professional skills necessary for the international industries are 10 years ahead from what we learn here.*

Igor Cekarov - Dekra

In this context, the MASIT<sup>44</sup> research that included a big number of IT companies in the country shows that a massive 88% of the polled said that the faculties from where the candidates came only partially meet their demands and 11% think that the diploma is practically worthless because the knowledge they have does not conform to the company's demands. Half of them think that the students need around 3 months to half a year to adapt to the work in the company, mostly because of lack of practical training.

Due to these shortcomings in the students' qualifications, the agencies strive to look for potential employees that are closest to what is required and then the employee is further trained by the company. Still, this prolongs the period necessary for complete integration in the company. According to Vasko Bosevski, from the AIMS Human Capital Agency, this period can last up to 18 months.<sup>45</sup>

The opinions differ concerning the professional skills necessary for integration in the labor market, although there is a general opinion that there is a mismatch between the offer and demand of skills. The following were identified as factors for this situation:

### ■ Inadequate goal-orientation of the teaching programs

The faculties offer too many general programs that have a wide area of study and that is a reason why they are not adapted to the needs of the market.<sup>46</sup>

### ■ The educational system is obsolete and leads to lack of knowledge of the modern skills

The inadequate goal-orientation of the programs aside, the educational system is also out-of-date and is inadequately adapted to the modern needs of the industry. This, according to Darko Velkov, leads to 'many employees in the sectors that are rapidly developing to have inadequate knowledge and the small and medium enterprises do not have the resources to invest in their training.'

<sup>44</sup> MASIT (Macedonian Association of Information Technology), The Macedonian Information Technology (IT) Workforce Demand Survey, 2005

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Vasko Bosevski - AIMS Human Capital, 13.10.2008

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Afrodita Keramicieva Panovska - CS Global, 30.10.2008

### ■ Lack of practical experience of the teaching staff at the faculties

The majority of the teaching staff at the faculties does not have practical experience in the area that they are teaching. Most of them were employed by the university/faculty immediately after graduation and even though their academic experience and qualifications may be solid, they are not able to pass on to the students the appropriate practical experiences. This means that, according to Vasko Bosevski, 'the students who graduate outside Macedonia are better trained.'<sup>47</sup>

### ■ Tendency to favor knowledge over skills

The situation of inadequate practical skills of the teaching staff results in focus on theoretical knowledge and neglect of skills. This further leads to the students' difficulties to adapt to the jobs due to the necessity to develop new skills.<sup>48</sup>

What everybody agrees that is lacking the most are the so-called soft-skills (presentation skills, leaderships skills, decision making skills, work in a business environment etc.), especially for work in an international company. Also, the professionalism and responsibility (working habits) of the employees are considered scarce among the candidates. In order to overcome these obstacles part of the big companies organize training for the new candidates where among other things introduce them to the communication channels in the company.

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<sup>47</sup>Interview with Vasko Bosevski, AIMS Human Capital (13.10.2008)

<sup>48</sup>Interview with HR officer at a telecommunication company (16.09.2008)

### 4.3. Knowledge and Skills That Can Be Learned at the Faculties

The issue of competencies is a complex one and depends on many factors. First of all it depends on the way in which the goals of the studies are set, the methods that are used in the teaching process, the assessment methods, the ratio between theoretical and practical teaching, the up-to-dateness of the skills etc. These indicators were researched through an analysis of the teaching programs (curricula) and organization of focus groups and individual interviews with the teaching staff and senior students.

#### 4.3.1. Analysis of the Curriculum<sup>49</sup>

The direction of obtaining certain competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities etc.) should be clearly outlined in the curriculum of every study program. In this way they serve as a direction for the teaching staff concerning the way of teaching and assessment. At the same time they also help the students adapt to the methods of teaching and have in mind the competencies they are required to obtain.

Only small part of the faculties have set concrete goals in their curricula while the specific competencies the students are required to obtain are defined in even smaller number of faculties. Those who have set goals have not paid much attention so these goals only partially refer to the different qualities of knowledge (reproduction, understanding, critical analysis) and practical skills. Only in the curricula of SEEU have the learning outcomes been outlined (knowledge, skills) together with the ways in which it should be taught and assessed. Part of the curricula at the UKIM includes goals set at a level of analysis and understanding. The FEIT curriculum includes set goals and general competencies (learning outcomes) that the students should obtain. Also, the goals of the Marketing department at UKIM have been set reasonably with emphasis on implementation of concrete knowledge and skills. However, what is lacking is a definition of the ways in which they should be achieved.

Still, just to set the goals and remain without a plan how they should be achieved is not enough as a prerequisite for successful teaching and obtaining proper competencies. Also, it is very important whether the set goals and competencies are only formally given or the teaching staff follows the methods for their achievement.

This situation shows that the faculties still keep the focus on memorizing and reproduction of the material (taught or written in the textbooks) while the 'quality of the knowledge (flexibility, dynamism, durability, applicability, comparability etc.) and the process component of the teaching are marginalized.'<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> The curricula were taken from the web sites of the faculties

<sup>50</sup> Analysis of the Potential for Good Management in the Republic of Macedonia, FIOOM, 2007, p. 41

### 4.3.2. Opinions and Practices of the Teaching Staff

The opinions of the teaching staff concerning the competencies students should acquire during their education were analyzed from several aspects. First of all, their opinions concerning the most important skills the students should acquire during their education as well as the ways in which they teach these skills (methods of teaching and assessment).

#### 4.3.2.1. Opinions of the Teachers

A vast majority of the teaching staff that was interviewed answered that they try to synchronize the theory, applicability and practice in the teaching process. Some of the most commonly mentioned skills that are expected to be acquired by the students are:

- Critical thinking
- Practical implementation of the knowledge in real-life situations
- Individual and team work
- Communication skills
- Basic/principal knowledge of the subject

Concerning the competencies, there are not any major differences between the teaching staff in the private and state faculties since the importance of obtaining practical skills has been recognized and emphasized by the majority of the interviewees. In this sense the teachers at PMF (UKIM) could be singled out with the opinion that a wide knowledge of a subject is a priority that helps the students learn the practical part.

*To get a good theoretical foundation (models, methods, principles...), which will help them understand easier the continuous changes that happen in informatics (...); individual search for knowledge from additional sources (internet).*

Professor at PMF - UKIM

*Dealing with and successful solution of real and practical problems, ability to learn fast and adapt.*

Professor at FEIT - UKIM

*The companies want ready personnel, that was lacking in the country and we think that we are solving it here. We insist on practical training. We do it by keeping contacts with the companies that inform us about our weaknesses, which gives us positive feedback for further improvement.*

Professor at the Faculty of Economics - FON



*In our programs we have set the expected outcomes of the studies and the most important skills that need to be acquired. We give preference to the practical part.*

Professor at the Faculty of Communication Sciences -SEEU

In accordance with this, while defining the knowledge and skills that the students should acquire the biggest importance is given to the implementation of knowledge in real/fictional situations and ability to analyze the material, while the reproduction of the material is given less importance or no importance at all. Still, in spite of the declarative emphasis on practical skills, the majority confirmed that the biggest part of the lectures are theoretical although there are attempts to include interaction in the teaching by introduction of presentations and discussions.

#### 4.3.2.2. Teachers' Practices

Even though all the teaching personnel stated that it is more important to acquire concrete applicable knowledge, in the teaching methods there is still predominance of lecturing and acquisition of theoretical knowledge instead of concrete skills.

*In the beginning, when the subject and the lectures are introduced, the professors usually promise interactive way of teaching, but then they return to the old ways with the explanation that we would not have enough time for all the lectures etc. and in the end the interaction is missing again.*

Student at the Faculty of Communication Sciences - SEEU

*The lectures are almost 100% classical with an exception of 2-3 professors who practice a more interactive teaching... Some even dictate so we have to write down what is most important and what we will need for the exam.*

Student at the Faculty of Pedagogy - UKIM

Due to the tendency towards application of the Bologna principles, in the last few years part of the teachers have tried to change their teaching methods with occasional introduction of discussions with the students, student presentations on given topics etc. These methods often serve as basis for definition of the part of the grade that is based on the student's activity. Still, their application is formal and boils down to the student giving a lecture on a subject from the textbook.

*I don't know why we even have professors when all they do is sit there and let us do the lecturing.*

Student at the Faculty of Law - UKIM

It is very rare to have clinical teaching (a lecture by an expert from a given area) or application of problem solving methods like a simulation of real or fictional cases and situations, even though these methods are considered as the most useful by the students:

*Once we had an owner of a PR agency in class and he spoke for half an hour what is PR and we learned more than during half the semester of lectures. A totally different picture than the one we had from the theory we studied.*

*Student at the Faculty of Communication Sciences - SEEU*

There was an example from the Penal Law subject at FON when a simulation of a court trial was made, or another one from the Communication and Business Administration students at SEEU who occasionally make case studies etc. Unfortunately, according to the students of Business Administration at SEEU, the responsibility for this discontinuous use of these methods lies not only with the teaching staff but also with the students and their interest. They estimate that around 30% of the students are active and motivated to work on projects like case studies, companies' real experiences, problem solving etc. while the others are accustomed to the classical ways of teaching.

One of the reasons for the sparse use of the interactive methods is the big study groups. Especially worrying is the fact that some faculties (usually from the area of informatics) have a rapid rise in the number of students in the last years while the resources (classrooms, computers, teaching staff) remain the same. This is a major obstacle to interaction in the teaching process and diminishes the possibility for individual approach and student-oriented teaching.

Part of the faculties (usually the private ones) practice occasional visits to institutions with the aim to give the students an opportunity to see how they function in practice. This is a good practice that should not be taken formally and the institutions should offer the students information that cannot be obtained at the faculty. According to the students, these visits are seen as especially useful, but are very rare.

*At the Faculty of Law we have a need to attend certain cases and the faculty does not provide this opportunity. Once the students from the Student Union organized an attendance to a case - it was a special experience.*

*Student at the Faculty of Law - SEEU*

Project work is becoming more frequent because it forms part of the grade. Still, the understanding of a project (by both the teachers and the students) is rather narrow and often it boils down to copying information from the Internet without any analytical or investigational aspect.

According to the SEEU students the quality of the project tasks is different and it depends on the professor. The students of Business Administration stated that around 1/3 of the tasks are of a good quality (analytical, investigational) while the others are copied.

|| Very often we copy the information because the professors do not even read the project papers.

The informatics students (PMF-UKIM) agree with this opinion and say that the project papers (or seminar papers) are given only formally and what is important is to write them to get the credits while they are not even read. This is quite demoralizing for the students so they rarely dedicate themselves to research or analytical projects.

The assesment methods are similar to a great extent among the different universities and faculties due to the implementation of ECTS, which in principle means that the grade is formed of 70% of the student's knowledge, 10% of the student's attendance, 10% of the student's activity during the classes and 10% from the projects (although the teaching staff can make small adjustments to these percentages). Still, the ways in which these aspects are evaluated can vary significantly. The comments of the students show that in the majority of the subjects what is required is reproduction of the material from the textbooks no matter whether it is in a form of a test or essay-type of questions.

|| *The exam questions come from the textbook, literally out of context. Theory.*  
Student at the Faculty of Economics - FON

|| *Often we learn by heart fast and forget even faster.*  
Student at the Faculty of Law- SEEU

It is very rare to ask for a higher form of knowledge (understanding, analysis, generalization, application of principles), except for the students of the technical sciences where it is necessary to solve problems that require understanding. The project tasks are often performed only formally because they bring only small percentage of the grade:

|| *Depends on whether the work is valued. If it is, then you try harder. If it's some project you have to do by yourself, that is nice and not very difficult, but they give you 2-3 points out of 100, so it's normal not to waste too much time on it.*  
Student at the Faculty of Law - UKIM

Apparently there are differences among the opinions for the importance of the practical skills and the teaching and assessment methods that are used. If we follow the logic that says that the way the students will learn depends on the way they will be assessed, it is understandable that they will learn how to reproduce the material while their practical skills stagnate. Also, according to the opinions of the vast majority of the students, the competencies that are required in the modern labor market (critical thinking skills, creativity, motivation), are inadequately promoted by the teaching staff.

### 4.3.3. Up-to-dateness of the Knowledge

Generally, the vast majority of the students feel that they learn the basics for the understanding of the problems. The students at certain faculties are worried because the material they study does not include the contemporary topics they will need in practice.

*There are topics, like The Computer in the Classroom, it is something completely new, we don't even have textbooks, absolutely nothing. Even though it is included in the program, we skip that part because there is no material available.*

Student at the Faculty of Pedagogy - UKIM

The students at FEIT (Informatics) were satisfied with the up-to-dateness of their knowledge. Since the lectures and the tutorials are not always sufficient for the necessary research on a given topic, they are given this opportunity with the term papers they prepare. The problem they face is that the other people's term papers are not available for the ones who want to get acquainted with the topic. The informatics students at PMF think that the up-to-dateness of the knowledge as required in Macedonia is solid, while compared to the Western world there is a 5-10 year gap.

Still, no matter how contemporary is what they study, the students feel that they lack practical knowledge, something they face when they attend lectures from experts from their study area. Hence, apart from the modernization of the theoretical part of the studies, they suggest a parallel process of implementation of the learned material in practice.

Although the students are legally entitled to influence the teaching program (changing, updating etc.) through participation in the teachers' councils, the general conclusion is that there is very little (if at all) discussion about the teaching program or undergraduate studies. Big part of the students have not even thought of the possibility to suggest changes in the curriculum of the undergraduate studies because they think they would be rejected a priori.

## 4.4. Competencies and Labor Market

### 4.4.1. Preparedness of Labor Market - Opinions of Teachers and Students

The teaching personnel of all the faculties that was included in this research agree that their aim is to develop personnel that will quickly and successfully adapt to the labor market. Almost all the polled professors and assistants replied that in their opinion the majority of their students are ready for successful adaptation. Still, a smaller part think that because of inadequate preparation of the students they will not be able to meet the standards for successful adaptation to the labor market. One of the factors for the inadequate preparation of the students is the fast-changing labor market, especially the area of industry. The Faculty of Communication Sciences at SEEU stated that they cannot specialize the students for a certain company or industry because that company or industry is changing all the time.

The opinions of the students - participants in the focus groups - were less unanimous concerning their preparedness for incorporation in the labor market. Their opinions depend on the study group they belong to and also the university they come from. The students of the social sciences, particularly from the state universities, are very insecure concerning their knowledge and skills, while the students of the natural and technical sciences, which are more exact, are more confident in their knowledge.

The majority of the FON students said that they feel capable and able to enter the labor market due to the good conditions offered at the faculty and the orientation toward practical work. All agree that the studies offer possibilities to develop skills that are required in the labor market and they are often in contact with the 'reality of the market' by visiting institutions, case simulations (at the Faculty of Law) and mandatory practical work in the last academic year.

*As opposed to UKIM, where they get excellent theoretical knowledge, we put the emphasis on the practice, which I think is the more important element.*

*Student of Informatics - FON*

Still, around half of the students at the Faculty of Law and a smaller number from the Faculty of Informatics at FON think that they would need additional training and practical work.

On the other hand, the majority of the students at SEEU and UKIM showed lack of confidence concerning their abilities to adapt to the labor market, mostly because of the lack of practice. Big part of them said that they do not have the idea of what is going on at the labor market in their area of expertise. The majority have never visited an organization from their area of expertise and think that that should be a common practice.

*First somebody has to invest in creation of a program for cooperation with firms, media etc. and only then to open a faculty. It's the other way round here... I don't know why there is no link between the newspapers and our faculty, they can find talents here while they're still studying. Free practice, that's how the exam should be for this subject.*

Student at the Faculty of Communication Sciences - SEEU

They also note the lack of activities for development of the personal characteristics/skills by the faculty and this means that they need additional training within the framework of the informal education.

*Exactly because of the necessity to possess skills like public speaking or internet tools and other interpersonal skills for success in the business world, I alone invested in myself outside the faculty classroom.*

Student at the Faculty of Economics - UKIM

The general conclusion is that practical work at most of the faculties is scarcely present and at some it is even completely non-existent. The students feel that they have wide theoretical knowledge of the subjects, but have no idea about their responsibilities and obligations at the working position. They also lack practical skills that are required after graduation (for example, writing a complaint for lawyers, developing a market strategy for the economists etc.)

*There is no connection between the faculty and the labor market. They are like two parallel lines that do not cross. The law that we're studying for 3 years, we don't get many skills we could use tomorrow and be useful to the employer. So nobody's interested whether I know the functions and principles of a given legal science.*

Student at the Faculty of Law - UKIM

*The problem is lack of practice, especially here, maybe the others have the same problem. I can't learn marketing by just reading. They'll explain guerilla tactics or they give some definitions. I don't have a clue what that means, I only know the definition.*

Student at the Faculty of Communication Sciences - SEEU

*We have mandatory practice of 1 month but that's hardly enough. They don't take you seriously with a 1-month practice and they don't give you difficult tasks.*

Student at FEIT -UKIM

The Students at FEIT agree that one month is too little for the student to acquire concrete practical skills, but if there is a possibility to continue the practice the attitude changes and the company then pays more attention to teach the student.

*It all depends when you come to a firm, and what kind of firm it is. Sometimes they can tell you to work on a project, if it happens they need an extra help at that time... Still there is no guidance.*

Student at FEIT -UKIM

They are aware that the job ads require working experience that they do not have and part of the professors have emphasized that what they teach is not what it will be implemented in practice. Another problem is the inadequate development of thinking skills and focus on research and development of personal opinions.

*In the essays we should write what we think, but we're limited. I have tried to write what I think but I got 6-7 points and when I wrote what was written in the book - 10 points, which is the maximum. So they don't value my opinion and I learned by now that I should stick to the book.*

Student at the Faculty of Law - UKIM

Although the insecurity the students feel is normal because it is a result of the uncertainty of the future, there is an apparent difference in the perceptions of the students that have had practical experience and/or have been exposed to practice. They have an idea what is expected from them in the labor market and they know how to prepare and present themselves to their future employers. This should give them more confidence in situations when they face their potential employers and also help them adapt more easily to the tasks ahead.

#### 4.4.2. Preparedness for Labor Market - Opinions of Employers and Human Resource Experts

It was already emphasized that the faculties are more oriented toward acquisition of academic knowledge than practical skills. Still, a big part of the companies do not consider the academic achievements as priority and they give preference to the practical experience that is the best tool for a quick adaptation of the students to the new working position. For the biggest part of the IT companies whose representatives were polled, the most important criterion is a solid practical experience of the candidates. Although for the majority of the companies from the other sectors the experience is primary, there is a differentiation according to the given job. According to the majority of the interviewed, the candidates with good grades have not always been the best workers, while the ones with working experience were quicker to adapt to the job requirements.

*The students who haven't had practice or any touch with concrete projects or working environment in general, need much more time to adapt to the job.*

*Representative of HR sector in an IT company<sup>51</sup>*

*The students who have had practice grasp the material more easily and also are quicker to adapt to the working environment when they start to work as interns.*

*Representative of a law firm<sup>52</sup>*

Still, not all employers agree with this. A representative of a marketing company said that the practical experience is not always crucial for the quality of the worker:

*'In our experience so far, the difference, if it is visible at the beginning, has a tendency not to be essential in time, it is the students without experience have also adapted easily to the job (adaptable, eager to learn, to train).'*<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the two characteristics from above (academic success and practical experience), for the companies the most important issue is possession of certain personal characteristics that are essential for successful adaptation of the candidates to the company. First of all these are the ability to work in teams, responsibility, good communication skills and motivation for success and personal growth.

<sup>51</sup> The interview was conducted on 10.09.2008

<sup>52</sup> The interview was conducted on 6.04.2009

<sup>53</sup> The interview was conducted on 27.10.2008



*These characteristics usually are not acquired during the studies, but during the work. We have particular problems with the students who don't have a habit for team work.*

*Representative of HR sector in a telecommunication company<sup>54</sup>*

The personal characteristics represent a good basis for the companies on which they can evaluate the candidates without prior working experience. Therefore, by evaluating the characteristics they decide whether a given candidate could be beneficial for their company. Still, the lack of certain business skills among the Macedonian graduates forces certain companies (mainly in the areas of business and marketing) to admit students from foreign private universities (for example Thessaloniki, Prague) where there is more emphasis on the development of these skills.

We can conclude that generally one can find good personnel, although more work is needed on: acquisition of practical experience, up-to-date knowledge, development of creativity, business skills, working habits and ability for team work. These skills are best developed by continuous cooperation of the educational institutions and the labor market.

#### 4.5. Practice (Internship) - Link Between Education and Labor Market

It is common in the teaching programs to treat the practice as a segment of the studies that should be covered during the tutorials. Still, the tutorials frequently are not practical and they are often repetition of the theory that has been taught. On the other hand, the students' practice is not considered as a separate segment in the programs. Even where the practice is mandatory it is not controlled by the faculty and its implementation often depends on the student's personal responsibility.

The teaching staff at the faculties that were included in this research had different opinions on the presence of the practical teaching in their programs. The majority think that there is a good balance between the theoretical and practical work and that the majority of the students are competitive enough for the labor market. In this sense, the staff from the private faculties was more concrete stressing that the practical work is implemented by cooperation with the companies/institutions from their area and continuous attempts for developing of partnership institutions. As opposed to this, at the state universities the practice is perceived more narrowly, as 'training' activities for the theoretical knowledge within the framework of the faculty by various project activities, problem solving etc.

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<sup>54</sup> The interview was conducted on 16.09.2008

The practices at all the faculties are similar in the sense of inadequate control of the students during the period of the practice and the lack of evaluation of the activities connected to the practice. Even though in some cases the student is required to report his/her practical work, neither the company/organization nor the faculty evaluates the student's work.

The teaching staff at UKIM was very critical to the activities taken by the faculty to connect the theoretical and practical teaching. At FEIT it was concluded that for the improvement of the practical teaching they need specific equipment in the laboratories, bigger classrooms etc. At PFSKO almost all the polled said that there is a lack of conditions for a more efficient practical teaching, such as strengthening the cooperation between certain institutions like BRO and MON. The teachers at PMF (Informatics Institute) were generally satisfied with the conditions offered by the faculty but said that there should be a 'more directed implementation of the professional practice.'

The students on the other hand, were very dissatisfied with the internship that is offered during their studies, even though there are differences depending on the faculty from where they come from. The students at FON showed the biggest confidence concerning their preparedness for the labor market and the reasons for this are the good conditions that are offered by the faculty and the practice-oriented teaching. Still, the dilemmas they face are mainly about the fact that the companies do not trust their faculty.

The opinions of the SEEU students are drastically different depending on the faculty they come from. A lot of them have no idea what is going on in the labor market in their area of expertise. They have been once or twice to visit an organization; a practice they believe should be done more often. The conclusion is that the faculty offers the best opportunities to the Business Administration students while the others are left to themselves to find a company for practice. This often leads to only a formal visit of the company to get a signature, with no real inclusion in the activities of the company/institution.

*We have mandatory practice of 16 hours but this is not connected to our vocation, any practice will do. To tell you the truth, almost everybody gets a signature from a friend or acquaintance; nobody is actually doing the practice.*

*Student at the Faculty of Communication Sciences - SEEU*

The students of Business are happier with the practice situation. They stressed that every student must have at least 30 days of practice (180 hours), 6 hours a day, on basis of which an essay is written and this essay is actually their thesis. They make their own choice of organization where to have the practice and the faculty, with the aid of the Career Center, most often offers them positions in the banks.

Among the UKIM students there are serious differences depending on their faculty (or study group). The results show that the biggest opportunities for practice are offered to the students of economics and informatics, with the difference that the practice is organized by the students themselves. Contrary to them, the students of the Faculty of Law are not even entitled to practice during their undergraduate studies.

The students who have attended the practice generally point out the following problems:

- The period is too short to acquire the necessary skills
- Insufficient involvement of the representatives of the company
- Lack of guidance
- Insufficient involvement of the faculty in the process of finding companies for practice

Still, the possibilities for practice to a large extent depend on the openness and cooperation of the institutions/companies. In principle, the private companies are open to cooperation with the educational institutions while the public sector is less flexible, which reduces the possibilities for practice for a big number of students (mostly from the social sciences). The biggest number of the interviewed representatives of companies stressed that they offer many possibilities for student practice.

The bigger companies usually have a program for internship and cooperate with the faculties and/or student organizations. The most active in this area are the student organizations BEST (FEIT) and AIESEC (Faculty of Economics) as well as the private universities (SEEU, FON, European University, New York). Most often the students apply for internship without an explicit demand from the company. Therefore, the smaller companies are not always in a position to accept the students due to lack of space. Although the companies that have established communication with the educational institutions are generally very satisfied with the cooperation, still there are several problems:

- The practice is not legally regulated in detail and some employers do not know of the possibility to accept interns
- The usual practice is for the students to come to the companies in the summer months when the amount of work is reduced, hence the opportunities to acquire the necessary skills are also reduced
- The companies that work with confidential information do not accept interns due to privacy concerns







LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND THE LABOR MARKET

**V**

**CONCLUSIONS  
AND  
RECOMENDATIONS**

## V. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1. Ministry of Education and Science

The policies for increase of the quota and providing possibilities for free studies in part of the technical faculties are an attempt to deal with the problem of underprovided personnel. Still, if these are not followed by an increase of the teaching staff and the technical conditions, there is a risk that they will lead to an increased number of workers with a less quality education. In order to prevent this, a more general approach is needed so that the extent of students corresponds to the extent of workforce. With better conditions the interest for these vocations will rise and with more personnel and better guidance the brain drain and the time of study will be decreased.

Also, it is essential to make the technical sciences and professions more popular and this should start in the primary and high schools. At the moment the psychological-pedagogical departments in the schools do not pay enough attention to the professional orientation of the students and their direction to certain vocations/professions.

### 5.2. Universities/Faculties

#### 5.2.1. Curriculum

The analysis showed that the majority of the curricula have not set goals of the studies, competencies that the students should acquire nor ways in which to achieve the goals. With lack of clear guidance in the teaching, the opinions and intentions of the teaching staff about the 'equipment' of the students with transferable skills that are required in the labor market remain to be realized by the individual ability, motivation and creativity of the teacher. To overcome these shortcomings we recommend:

- Introduction of the concept 'learning objectives' in the curriculum, with focus on the practical/transferable skills and abilities for critical thinking. A special attention should be paid so that the accent of the teaching shifts from 'what the student knows' to 'what the student can do.'
- Introduction of methods and techniques of teaching and assesment aimed at achieving the set goals and developing transferable skills. These methods include: discussions, simulations, problem-oriented teaching, work in teams etc.
- Stimulation of the students to use contemporary foreign literature.
- Introduction of computer technology and use of the new media (blogs, wiki-pages etc.) in the teaching and learning process.
- Setting standards for the assesment methods of the practical skills with the aim to give more significance to this aspect of student achievement.
- Inclusion of experts from certain areas with the aim to develop the curriculum in accordance with the market needs.

- Establishment of mechanisms for continuous revision of the curriculum by inclusion of the teaching staff, the students and the experts/practitioners.
- Introduction of an optional subject - Employability and Career Management (with ECTS it can be taught at several faculties and the students of related subjects can also attend it and take an exam in it)
- Introduction of the practice of visits to appropriate institutions/companies as part of the tutorials and writing of reports on the visit

Still, having in mind that the change of the curriculum is very rigidly regulated with the Law on Higher Education<sup>55</sup>, more flexible mechanisms for curriculum change are necessary and they should follow the changes in the labor market. This could be regulated on a level of an organ of a higher education institution whose members would also include representatives of certain state institutions and representatives of different areas of the labor market.

### 5.2.2. Teaching Staff

We can conclude that the majority of the teaching staff is aware of the necessity for development of skills in the teaching process that are required by the labor market. They state the acquisition of applicable skills and knowledge as one of the basic goals of the teaching. Still, these opinions are not reflected completely in the practices of teaching and assesment, which most often remain outdated and based on memorization and reproduction of the material. With the aim to overcome this situation, we recommend:

- Training of the university staff with contemporary methods of teaching and assesment, aimed at development of abilities for critical thinking
- Training in modern teaching methods for the practitioners from the area of expertise, who will then enter the teaching process.

Another important problem is the lack of appropriate teaching staff, especially for the modern interdisciplinary areas. At the same time, a lot of the potential staff who go abroad for further professional specialization does not return to the country. Therefore, we recommend:

- To have a register for the personnel educated abroad and provide them with information for available jobs and encourage them to apply
- Motivation for professional specialization abroad in areas that are not present in the system of higher education in Macedonia, but for which there is an interest in the market and there are potential students. The financial capacities of the firms can be used to fund the students' studies in areas that are deficient or insufficiently developed in Macedonia
- Attempt to attract more visiting professors in the areas where there is no appropriate domestic teaching staff instead of employing inadequate staff

<sup>55</sup> See: Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, 35/08, Article 104 and Analysis of the Flexibility of the Curriculum in the Higher Education and Solving the Conflict of Interest in the System of Higher Education in the Republic of Macedonia, Democracy Institute 'Societas Civilis', 2007



### 5.2.3. Student Practice/Internship

All the involved parties agree that the internship is one of the most important aspects for successful transition from the educational system to the labor market. A significant part of the students is worried because of the lack of possibilities for practice or the low quality of the practice. At the same time, the employers are worried because of the insufficient practical and business skills of the graduates - potential job candidates.

Lately there is a positive improvement concerning the importance of the student internship. With the new Law on Higher Education that will be enforced in 2010, the student internship with duration of 1 month is mandatory for the students of every academic year. Although the new legislation is generally positive, attention should be paid to the quality of the internship. If not, the lack of openness of the bigger part of companies/organizations can lead to 'mechanical' implementation of the practice or giving signatures without really doing any work. The recommendations are:

- Instead of having internship every academic year, it would be more appropriate to have it during the last two academic years, but with longer duration and organized on a principle of guidance.
- A Law on Internship should be carried (or more detailed regulation of internship within other/existing laws). The legislation should envisage mandatory internship contracts that should define the obligations of the intern and the employer.
- Higher value for the practical work when assessing the student. This could be realized by obtaining credits for writing a report on the practical work by the student and evaluation of his/her work by the company. The student could make an analysis on what he/she has learned and the differences of the practical work and the theory that is learned in class.
- A mandatory student internship will open a possibility for mandatory Career Centers within all the universities. They should take into account the qualifications and the demands of the students so that an appropriate practice is assigned. The university/faculty should have the obligation to assign the practice and if the student alone finds a company/institution then the university should control the institution and monitor the internship. At the same time the Career Centers should follow the development of the students after graduation and keep evidence of their success in the labor market, the possible problems/challenges they have encountered after graduation etc.
- Introduction of guidance principle for the internship by introduction of the trainee in the company's work, guiding him/her, giving feedback and sharing his/her progress with the faculty.
- Ensuring internship periods during the whole year and not only during the summer months (when there is less work to do in the companies)

### 5.3. Labor Market

The last few years have seen positive trends among the bigger companies concerning their availability to the students and the offer of intern positions. Part of them have signed contracts with the universities/faculties to offer practice to the students or they cooperate individually with the student organizations. Still, this is not a characteristic for the small and medium enterprises that are still closed and do not appreciate the benefits of this kind of cooperation. Besides, there is a lack of communication concerning the needs of both parties. To improve this situation we recommend:

- A continuous communication between the organizations in the labor market and the universities and feedback on their needs
- Sharing of the defined specifications of the working positions and the required competencies with the faculties where the personnel is prepared
- Development of practice among the companies for information of the educational institutions and employment agencies for the potential working positions they will need in the future
- Introduction of a person responsible for the trainees in the companies. With the introduction of trainees certain administrative expenses will be cut down and resources will become available for the persons who will coordinate the activities of the trainees and evaluate their work.
- Regular evaluation of the level of the skills by the companies, definition of the deficient skills and sharing this information with the educational institutions
- Activation of the former students who have private businesses to accept trainees from their faculty
- Introduction of the small and medium enterprises to the benefits of internship.









PRIVATE vs. PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES

**DIFFERENCE IN  
QUALITY OR  
JUST FINANCES?**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer System
<b>ECPA</b>	European Film Academy Paris - Skopje - New York
<b>EUA</b>	European University Association
<b>MON</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>UKIM</b>	Sv. Kiril i Metodij University - Skopje
<b>UKLO</b>	Kliment Ohridski University - Bitola
<b>SEEU</b>	South-East European University - Tetovo
<b>UGD</b>	Goce Delchev University - Stip
<b>UCAS</b>	University American College
<b>FIOOM</b>	Foundation Institute Open Society
<b>NYUS</b>	New York University Skopje







PRIVATE vs. PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES



# INTRODUCTION

## *Summary*

The question of quality of the private and public institutions of higher education is asked every academic year and provokes many public discussions that often lead to labeling of certain institutions. Thus, the possibilities to present inappropriate information are ample, especially because of the fact that the problem is still insufficiently analyzed by the Macedonian academic circles.

This research offers a comparative overview of the state in the private and public higher education through an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative indicators on basis of which a comparison is drawn between the two types of institutions of higher education. The analysis does not exhaust the elements of comparison; but opens questions and offers recommendations that should be additionally examined. The aim is to stimulate further continuous evaluation so that the quality of higher education is improved.

## 1. Introduction

*When I was thinking where to enroll, I wasn't even considering the private universities. I've heard that you pay so that you don't study, and I'm not sure the diploma is widely recognized.*

Student of first year at a public university

*Already in high school I knew that I'll study at a private university because they have contemporary programs and conditions and the professors' conduct is very fair.*

Student of first year at a private university

The Macedonian public is divided when it comes to the offer of the private and the public institutions of higher education. The divided opinions have less to do with the differences of the scholarship fees between the two types of universities than the quality of education that is offered. The majority of these opinions is based on suppositions and develops as result of labeling and generalizations of individual cases.

A complete analysis of the differences between the two types of universities based on factual indicators has not been conducted so far. This research aims to give an overview of the similarities and the differences between the private and public institutions of higher education in Macedonia by an analysis of several statistical indicators and subjective experiences of the students and the teaching staff. The idea is to overcome the stereotypical and general views on both types of universities and to obtain a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses. The ultimate goal is an exchange of positive practices between the universities that will aid the further development and improve the quality of education.





PRIVATE vs. PUBLIC  
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**CONTEXT**

## II. Context

### 2.1. Offer of Universities and Student Distribution

There are four public universities in Macedonia - the oldest one, UKIM, was founded in 1949 and the youngest one - UGD, was founded in 2007; and nine accredited private universities, the oldest one - SEEU, was founded in 2001, while the others exist between 2 and 5 years.

Public Universities	Number of students (2007/08)
University Sv. Kiril i Metodij (UKIM)- Skopje	31308
University Sv. Kliment Ohridski (UKLO) - Bitola	11695
State University - Tetovo	3906
University Goce Delchev (UGD) - Stip	1975
Private Universities	Number of students (2007/08)
South-East European University (SEEU), Tetovo <sup>1</sup>	6738
First Private European University - Skopje	1439
First Private University - FON, Skopje	1632
University "New York", Skopje	31
University "American College", Skopje	476
MIT University, Skopje	60
International University in Struga	No Data
University of Audio Visual Arts - European Film Academy ECPA Paris - Skopje - New York, Skopje	No Data
International Balkan University, Skopje	No Data

<sup>1</sup> Although the Law on Higher Education from 21 March 2008 proclaimed UJIE a public-private university, this analysis considers it in the group of private universities because of its foundation and 7-year work as such.

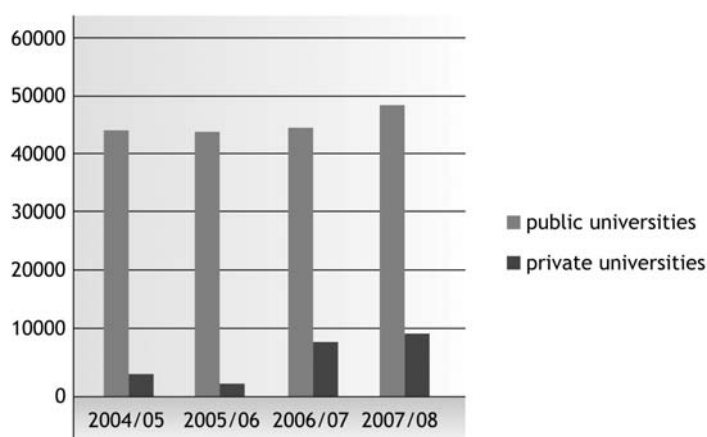
The policies to increase the enrollment in higher education and the trend to found (and accredit) new institutions of higher education (private and public) in the last years result in dramatic increase of the number of enrolled students in first year. The percentage of high school graduates who have continued their education was 42% in the academic 2006/07, 64% in the academic 2007/08 and a whopping 85% in the academic 2008/09<sup>2</sup>. This increase is equally distributed in both the public and private institutions of higher education.

The interest of the students is still greatest for the oldest public universities, especially for UKIM, which offers the biggest number of study programs and has the highest enrollment quotas. From the private universities, the interest is the greatest for SEEU, even though in the last years the others face fewer problems to fill in the vacancies.<sup>4</sup>

The number of students at the private universities has increased rapidly in the last 2-3 years, which shows their rising popularity. Still, this rise is not followed by a decrease of the number of students at the public universities, quite the contrary - the number of students at the public universities is also on the rise.

Graph 1.

Enrolled Students (all study years) 2004-2008



Source:

State Statistical Office:

Enrolled Students at Universities and Faculties, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007

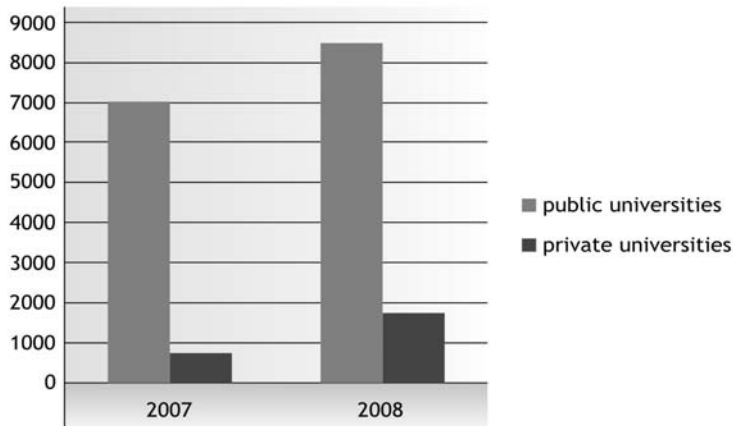
In the academic 2007/08 more than 20% of the total number of students studied at the private universities (Graph 1). While the percentage of graduated students at these universities in 2007 was around 10%, in 2008 this percentage rose to 20% from the total number of graduates (Graph 2). Their number is expected to rise in the next few years not only as a result of the increased interest, but also because of the rather frequent transfer of students from the public to the private faculties (See: Case Study 1).

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.mon.gov.mk/download\\_mk/Prezentacija/Prezentacija.pdf](http://www.mon.gov.mk/download_mk/Prezentacija/Prezentacija.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Today the Enrollment Continues, Queues at the Faculties' Counters, Dnevnik, 26.08.2008



Graph 2.  
Graduated Students 2007 and 2008



Source:  
State Statistical Office: Graduated Students at Universities and Faculties, 2007, 2008<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, in 2-3 years it is realistic to expect that more than 20% of the graduated students will have diplomas from a private university. This is a workforce that cannot be neglected and it leads to re-examination of the labor market. It is no longer possible to ignore the graduates of the private universities like it was done in the past. The employers have an important decision to make on the quality of this personnel and this will affect the formation of the public perception of the quality of the private universities.

### Case Study 1:

#### Disappointed by the Public University, Went to a Private One

After finishing high school, Marko never doubted that he will study economics. He was especially attracted to financial management. He enrolled at UKIM and passed the first two years without bigger problems, but then hit a wall with an exam he took 10 times. He did not doubt his abilities to pass the exam, but he did doubt that his test was checked. Therefore he decided to transfer to the same study program at a private university where all the exams he had passed by then were validated.

He thinks that there are several main aspects that differentiate the two faculties. First of all, during his time at UKIM they were using outdated literature and the majority of the professors did not even show up at the lectures.

*So what if the professors are experts in a field when you don't get to see them. It's better to have someone with less experience, but with regular lectures*

<sup>5</sup> Note: The State Statistical Office does not have data on the graduated students at the private faculties before 2007

Contrary to that, at the private university he was using modern books, the lectures were regular and the grading consisted primarily of writing seminar papers (mandatory for every subject). He thinks that both faculties lack interactive teaching, which is a result of the habits of the teaching staff coming from the same system. Still, since the study groups at the private faculty are smaller, hence the opportunities to communicate and discuss with the teachers are bigger. Also, the teaching staff is available all the time and can be contacted on a daily basis personally, by telephone or email. Still, Marko thinks that there are not major differences between the two faculties concerning the quality of knowledge, what is required is reproduction of the material.

Concerning the opinions that the level of knowledge that is offered at the private faculties is lower, he thinks that the knowledge depends on one's willingness to learn and sees no difference between the private and public universities.

Of course there are lazy people who are not interested in education, but if you want to learn, you have your chance to do it.

Marko thinks that the money he paid for the study at the private university were worth it and adds that the extra expenses for visits of various seminars or workshops were not spent in vain and helped him enrich his knowledge and, of course, his professional resume. The only problem he faced was during the period when he was looking for a job when the employers were suspicious of the quality of his diploma.

When you tell them where you graduated, you always get an 'a-ha.' But if the company tests the candidates then we can show our worth.

## 2.2. Scholarship Fees

The scholarship fees at the private universities are between 900 and 3000 EUR, depending on the university and certain faculties within the university (Table 1). Usually, the scholarship for the technical faculties is higher.

The scholarship at the public universities varies a lot, depending on the type of study (within the state quota or co-financing) and the type of the faculty. The lowest scholarship in the state quota at the public universities is 100 EUR, and highest one is 400 EUR. Studying with co-financing is cheapest at the Faculty of Philosophy (the group of classical studies) - 250 EUR and the most expensive at the Faculty of Medicine (1200 EUR at UKIM and 1000 EUR at the University of Tetovo), the Security Studies, Financial Control, the Faculty of Tourism in Ohrid and the Police Academy in Skopje (1000 EUR).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Education and Career Fair Opened: EU-Faculties Want Our Students, Dnevnik, 9.04.2009

Table 1: Scholarship Fees per Year (in EUR)

Public Universities	SEEU	FON	European	UCAS	NYUS	Balkan University	MIT	ECPA
100-400 (state quota) 250-1200 (co-financing)	900 -2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000- 2.600	2.000- 2.700	1.800 - 2.500 (co-financing)	2.000	3.000

The highest scholarships at the public universities are in the areas that are not covered by the private universities (such as medicine, electro-technology, mechanical engineering etc.) and this keeps them high. Concerning the areas that are covered by both types of universities (for example, economics, law, informatics etc.) the scholarships are at least two times higher at the private institutions.

Apart from these 'official' expenses, a lot of faculties have a list of mandatory 'hidden' expenses (for example, student information services, student unions, sport and cultural activities, index, uniform etc.) that raise the total amount for about 2000 denars at the public universities to 30 000 denars at some of the private ones.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.3. Dominant Study Areas

The scientific areas that are covered are quite different at the private and public universities. The former generally develop programs for narrowly specialized areas from a given scientific area and are focused on preparation of personnel in areas that are currently being required by the students and/or labor market. The areas that are most covered are those from the field of economics (business administration, management etc.) and information and communication sciences that are covered by 8 from the total of 9 accredited private universities. There follow: the legal sciences (covered by 6 universities) and the political and philological sciences (covered by 5 universities). The design and communication sciences are also popular and are covered by 4 universities. The offer of study areas is similar to the majority of the private institutions of higher education in Europe because of the high demand for these areas and the low costs of the implementation of the teaching. However, the private education barely covers the areas that require significant investments in technical equipment and infrastructure for research.<sup>8</sup>

The biggest part of the programs at the private universities, depending on the faculty, are either taken or adapted from foreign universities, or are very similar (though reduced) to the ones at the public faculties, with greater focus on the practical work. The innovation is reflected in the offer of certain contemporary interdisciplinary areas (for example, communication and public relations, international relations, sport management, management of ecologic resources etc.) that are not covered with the undergraduate programs at the public universities (see Case Study 2).

<sup>7</sup> Take More Money for Studies, the Fee is Extra!, Nova Makedonija, no. 21750, 29.07.2009

<sup>8</sup> A. Amaral, M. Joao Rosa, D. Amado Tavares, Portugal; and D. Supitsin, The Russian Federation; in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*; P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds); UNESCO-CEPES, 2007

Still, there are a big number of areas, especially from the technological and natural sciences (technical, technological, agricultural, civil engineering, medical) that are not offered as programs by the private universities.

On the other hand, the public universities also offer programs that are not very popular among the students, but are important for the balanced development of the science and the industry. Still, the biggest shortcoming of the public universities is the inflexibility to innovate the existing curricula and create new program areas that would follow the needs of the labor market and the contemporary science.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, the private universities failed to overcome this gap. In spite of the few initiatives to develop a bigger number of interdisciplinary programs that are not covered by the public universities, they generally continue to offer study programs from the areas that are the most covered at the public universities (for example, economics, law) and which have a big number of graduates that cannot fit in the labor market.<sup>10</sup> This, followed by 'borrowing of' and taking over teaching staff from the public universities,<sup>11</sup> reduces their innovation potential in many aspects and makes them 'clones' to the public universities. Still, differences do exist and some of them will be noted later on in the analysis.

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<sup>9</sup>Analysis of the Flexibility of the Curriculum in the Higher Education and Solving the Conflict of Interest in the System of Higher Education in the Republic of Macedonia, Democracy Institute 'Societas Civilis', 2007

<sup>10</sup>2.250 Lawyers are Unemployed while New Faculties are Opened, Utrinski Vesnik, no. 2459, 14.08.2007

<sup>11</sup>According to the poll within the Skopje University (that has not been published yet) that polled 2.000 employees, including professors, assistants and collaborators, whopping 150 said that they teach at other institutions of higher education. But, the same number of them did not reply to the question whether they teach somewhere else.' Threes Control Professors' Salaries, Globus, no. 91, 13.01.2009

*Case Study 2:***Chose the Private Faculty Because the Public Ones Did Not Offer What He Wanted to Study**

Ivan decided to study Communications at one of the private universities due to several reasons. First, none of the public universities offered the programs he was interested in and he did not plan to study abroad. Then, he noticed that the program at the faculty was up-to-date and not one of the subjects seemed superfluous concerning his future needs in practice. It seemed that there is a good ratio between theory and practice and the professors that were shown on the webpage looked experienced and well educated (the majority has been educated abroad).

He thinks that the education he is receiving is worth the money he is paying. At his faculty, there are no extra fees apart from the scholarship (except the ones for photocopying that do not depend on the faculty). He mainly likes the fact that the work mostly consists of independent research projects that introduce him to the practical aspects and simultaneously teach him to think critically. The teaching methods are such so that the student must learn to apply the theory by solving different practical tasks/problems.

Ivan is completely satisfied with the teaching staff and their relations with the students, which represents a good balance between professionalism and openness.

|| *They don't look down on you and you can connect with them, but aren't too friendly so that you stop taking them seriously.*

Maybe this is owed to the small number of students, but this is not the main factor. The faculty has quality standards and at the end of every year evaluations are made and the students can clearly state if they are not satisfied with a given professor.

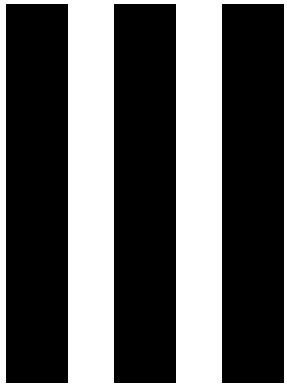
Concerning the opinions that the private universities have a policy to let the students pass their exams without sufficient knowledge, he says that this mostly depends on the teachers - if they have integrity and criteria they will not succumb to the 'unwritten rules of the faculty'. He knows of several students that have failed exams, which according to him means that not everybody is allowed to pass the exam at any cost.







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**METHODOLOGY**



### III. Methodology

When it comes to estimating the quality of education, it is expected to encounter problems that come from the subjective factors because of the reliance on the statements of participants and creators of the educational process. The subjectivity comes from the differences of the level of openness of the interviewees when giving their opinions, the inability to compare objectively the other educational institutions with the one they belong to etc. On the other hand, although there are numerous indicators that are used as 'objective' measurement of quality<sup>12</sup>, reliance only on them results in raw data that can be doubted due to the fact that they are not relevant if analyzed separately from the context. Therefore, this analysis is based on a combination of the objective and subjective indicators, aiming to give a complete picture of the different aspects that constitute the private and public higher education.

We used the following objective indicators:

- The library holdings
- High school GPA of the enrolled students
- GPA of the graduated students
- Student-teacher ratio
- Number of subjects in the curricula
- Average duration of study

Statistical data were demanded from all public universities (UKIM, UKLO, UGD and Tetovo University) and from two private ones (FON and SEEU). However, because of the differences in database processing among the universities and separate faculties we were not able to get all the data in the same format, especially from the public universities.<sup>13</sup> The data were also obtained through analysis of national statistics, analysis of the official documentation of the universities/faculties and by direct communication with the relevant institutions to obtain the data that are still not publicly available.

The following were considered as subjective indicators:

- Dominant teaching methods
- Student relations with the teaching staff
- Flexibility of the curriculum
- Success criteria
- Possibilities of professional development of the teaching staff
- Possibilities of corruption
- Preparedness for labor market
- Level of professionalization/expertise of the teaching staff
- Quality control
- Autonomy
- Acceptance of the students by the labor market

<sup>12</sup> So-called bibliometrical indicators

<sup>13</sup> For example, the two biggest public universities - UKIM and UKLO this year (2009) transform into integrated universities, but do not have their databases transferred on a central level.

These indicators were analyzed by conducting **interviews** and organizing **focus groups with students and teaching staff** (professors and teaching assistants) from same faculties within the framework of two private (FON and SEEU) and one public university (UKIM). As an indicator of the perceptions in the labor market, **interviews were conducted with representatives of human resource sectors** in 15 companies (from different sectors) as well as with representatives of employment agencies. To illustrate and obtain a better picture of the state in the private and public higher education we developed four **case studies** of students with different experiences in the one or other type of university.<sup>14</sup>

The indicators that were used are only partial and were used as guidance for future research. It is important to stress that the concrete indicators for evaluation of the quality of higher education were set precisely<sup>15</sup> and future evaluations should be done on a level of all the universities/faculties by using a complete and unified methodology.

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<sup>14</sup>In the case studies the names of the students have been changed to protect their privacy, but are known to CRPM

<sup>15</sup>See: [http://gg.org.mk/pdf/prilozi\\_obrazovanie/indikatori\\_za\\_visoko\\_obrazovanie.pdf](http://gg.org.mk/pdf/prilozi_obrazovanie/indikatori_za_visoko_obrazovanie.pdf)



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**IV**

**ANALYSIS**

## IV. Analysis

### 4.1. Objective/Quantitative Indicators

#### 4.1.1. Library Holdings

The library holdings are often used as one of the indicators of quality because of the presupposition that the literature that is available is linked to the quality of the academic work.

Table 2.  
Library holdings

	UKIM	SEEU	FON	New York	UKLO	Tetovo	UGD
Total (books, magazines) <sup>16</sup>	Around 600.000	33.000	10.000	2.000 (titles)	500.000 <sup>17</sup>	49.812 <sup>18</sup>	18.000

We can conclude from Table 2 that the oldest public universities have the biggest library holdings. This was expected, especially due to the fact that they have a bigger number of faculties and study groups within their framework and they exist for some time during which they accumulated materials in the libraries.

What should be analyzed further is whether the library holdings are up-to-date and also the subscription to and availability of the electronical databases of magazines from different areas. Also, the availability of the materials in the libraries is a very important aspect due to the fact that the interviews with the students showed that the students, apart from the textbooks, practically do not use the other materials that are available in the libraries. This is primarily owed to the functioning problems of the libraries. In the words of a student at the Faculty of Law at UKIM:

|| *The library holdings can be used for only 2 hours a day. And why should I take a book when I have to return it the same day? It's funny we pay for the library holdings and we don't use it.*

<sup>16</sup>The electronic resources (e-magazines, e-books) of the universities are not included

<sup>17</sup>Library holdings of the University Library (<http://www.nuubbt.uklo.edu.mk/Istorijat.htm>)

<sup>18</sup>[http://www.mon.gov.mk/download\\_mk/Obrazovanie/Visoko/ResenieDUT.pdf](http://www.mon.gov.mk/download_mk/Obrazovanie/Visoko/ResenieDUT.pdf)

### 4.1.2. Students to Teaching Staff Ratio

The existence of an appropriate ratio between the number of students and teaching staff is one of the key conditions for realization of the modern teaching process that is based on interaction and giving opportunities to each student. What is considered an optimal ratio is 1 teacher on every 20-40 students. To illustrate this, in Germany the ratio in the private and public universities is identical (15:1), in Italy and Poland the private institutions have worse ratio (44:1 and 31:1) compared to the public universities (29:1 and 17:1), while in Estonia and Turkey the ratio favors the private universities (11:1 as opposed to 15:1 in Estonia and 14:1 as opposed to 31:1 in Turkey).<sup>19</sup>

The analysis of the state in the universities was based on the data from the State Statistical Office and showed some rather surprising results (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Ratio Teaching Staff - Students, 2007/08

Public Universities				Private Universities			
UKIM	UKLO	Tetovo	UGD	SEEU	FON	European	American College
1:20	1:32	1:17	1:20	1:39	1:20	1:16	1:6
1:22				1:20			

Source:

State Statistical Office: Enrolled Students in Higher Education, 2008

The data show that differences exist with the separate faculties/departments at the universities rather than on a general level as differences between the private and public universities. According to the data of enrolled students (in all study years) and the number of teaching staff (including teaching assistants), the ratio, calculated on a university level, is rather favorable in all universities.

What is important is that the ratio varies considerably on a level of different faculties/departments within a university. If we analyze the ratio by faculties, the most unfavorable ratio is at the faculties of economics at UKLO (1:50) and UKIM (1:79); the faculties of law at SEEU (1:64) and UKIM (1:64) and the Faculty of Public Administration at SEEU (1:69). Of course, this ratio concerns the total number of students and teachers, which differs considerably from the ratio for every study year (from the first to the last).

We can conclude that although numerically speaking the ratio looks favorable for all the universities, in reality the students at the public universities face problems because certain professors miss their lectures.<sup>20</sup> So the problem does not lie in the insufficiency of the teaching staff, but in their lack of professionalism to give the lectures on a regular basis and establish mentor relations with the students.

<sup>19</sup>Fried, J, Glass, A, Baumgartl, B. Shades of Privateness: Non-Public Higher Education in Europe, in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*, P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds), UNESCO-CEPES, 2007

<sup>20</sup>Data from UKIM student focus groups

### 4.1.3. Subject Availability in the Curriculum

The analysis of the curricula<sup>21</sup> shows that the private and public universities differ significantly when it comes to the variety of the subjects they offer. While the basic subjects are usually the same the difference arises with the offer of the optional subjects.

The comparison of the subjects in the curricula shows that the biggest variety is offered by UKIM and UKIM also offers the widest range of possibilities for choice of expertise. The private universities that were analyzed offer more specialized areas of study, making the subject choice more limited.<sup>22</sup>

More specifically, if we look at the law studies, all the analyzed universities had an offer of around 20 common (mostly basic) subjects, while UKIM offers the biggest number of study areas and, consequently, the biggest number of additional subjects. For illustration, UKIM offers more than 40 subjects that are not offered by FON or SEEU. Next is SEEU with 18 subjects different from FON and 16 different from UKIM. FON comes last with regard to the variety of subjects with 8 different subjects from UKIM and 9 from SEEU.

Concerning the studies of economics, the situation is even more drastic, with 53 different subjects at UKIM as compared to FON and SEEU and 43 as compared to UKLO. There follow UKLO and SEEU, which have more variety compared to FON. In this context we must stress that the offered optional subjects are not always realized because sometimes it happens that there are no students interested in a given subject and then the big variety remains only on paper.<sup>23</sup>

It is apparent that the older faculties have developed a more varied offer of subjects as well as teaching personnel. The data of participation in the international programs for institutional development show that until 2006 the biggest user of the TEMPUS program of the European Commission was UKIM, whose representatives/members in the period 2004-2008 participated in 23 programs for development of curricula. From the other public universities, UKLO participated in 5 programs and the Tetovo University in 7 (5 of which in 2008). From the private universities, until 2006 only SEEU participated in 2 programs for development of curricula. What is encouraging is the fact that the situation of approved projects in 2008 has improved concerning the private universities, from which SEEU is a partner in 4, FON in 2 and the European and New York Universities in 1 program for curricular development.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Only the results of the analysis of the curricula at the economic and law faculties at UKIM, UKLO, FON and SEEU are presented here.

<sup>22</sup>The offer of subjects is affected to some extent by the duration of the undergraduate studies, being 3 years at the vast majority of the private universities, while the most faculties in the frames of public universities, in spite of the transformation of the curricula according to ECTS, still maintain the duration of 4 years.

<sup>23</sup>Data from the student focus groups

<sup>24</sup>For more detailed information see: [http://www.tempus.gov.mk/EN/tempus3\\_JEP\\_CD.html](http://www.tempus.gov.mk/EN/tempus3_JEP_CD.html) and [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating\\_countries/selection08/macedonia.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/selection08/macedonia.pdf)

Nevertheless, the students who have chosen to study at the older public universities often think that the range of scientific areas is wider, which to them is an indicator of quality (see Case Study 3). The new faculties should be expected to follow this trend of development and in the near future to focus on enrichment of their content and recruitment of teaching staff capable of teaching the new subjects.

### Case Study 3:

#### Trusts the Proven Quality of the Public Universities, Wouldn't Change His Choice

*I decided to enroll at the Faculty of Law at UKIM because when I was asking around where to study I heard all sorts of rumors that the private universities are too soft, they don't help you and everyone gets a diploma at the end. And plus the talks that you'll never get a job with a private university diploma.*

Following these opinions, Petar decided to enroll at the already proven Faculty of Law at UKIM, even though he heard that there they 'torture you, you beg for a 6,' but still the conclusion was that it is a more solid faculty and all the good professors teach there. Still, he did not come to his decision only based on various rumors, he also investigated the curriculum and the financial conditions. The curricula at some private universities looked too specialized in one area and the difference in the scholarships was pretty big.

*I was considering the curricula and even though I didn't know much about law to see the difference, I discussed them with people who are more experienced and they told me that at UKIM the material is more solid, thorough and I'd get the best preparation for the judicial examination. Although there are weaknesses, the professors are proven and what is studied is solid material, it has the best offer of knowledge*

The major problem he encounters at UKIM is the administration problem, i.e. the crowds at the Student Information Office, which is still not adapted to ECTS (no appropriate personnel that is capable to handle the credits, the electronic Student Report Cards). Even though he is generally satisfied with the expertise of the teaching staff 'We have some of the leading experts in the country who have written many laws and had high functions,' the problem is that the professors often do not want to lecture and leave it to the assistants and are hardly ever seen at the university.



*This problem is further aggravated due to the fact that there is no pressure on the professors, no matter what their performance is. Furthermore, another problem is the subtle possibility for corruption, by selling their books and giving points for attendance and activity.*

*At the end of his first year he had a problem with an exam that he took several times, says he was thinking whether to lose a year or go to a private faculty. He was considering which differential subjects he will have to take an exam in, but he was not impressed. He knows students who have gone to private faculties for the same reasons, but he still thinks he made the right choice and that 'the Faculty of Law cannot be substituted by the private faculties.'*

#### 4.1.4. High School GPA of the Enrolled Students

Although the high school GPA is not always a guarantee for success at university, it nevertheless represents a starting point for the estimation for the students' potential. In Table 4 we can see that the students who enroll at UKIM have the highest high school GPA, which is particularly true for the Faculties of Philology, Law, Economics and Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies. The obvious conclusion is that UKIM has the highest student potential and is followed by SEEU, UGD and FON where the high school achievements of the enrolled students are relatively lower.

Table 4.  
GPA of the Enrolled Students (2007/08)

	Total	Law	Eco- nomics	FEIT	PMF	Peda- gogical	Philo- logical	Public Admin.
UKIM	4.25 <sup>25</sup>	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.2	3.5	4.8	/
SEEU	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.04 (informatics)		4.1 (teacher training)		3.4
FON	3.5	3.47	3.62	3.40				
UGD	3.8							

Part of the private universities attempt to change this situation by offering scholarships to high school graduates with high GPA. Still, to increase the student potential it is crucial to improve the offer of teaching programs and academic staff. If this is not done the high school graduates with high GPA would be skeptical concerning the quality of education they would get.

<sup>25</sup> The GPA is calculated from the GPAs of all the faculties of UKIM, including the ones that are not included in the Table

Also, it is necessary to have a more synchronized activity of the universities when using the results of the state matura. At the moment, even though one of the aims of its implementation is to 'avoid double examinations at the end of high school',<sup>26</sup> for part of the private universities the state matura is not even part of the enrollment criteria.<sup>27</sup> Although this is permitted by the Law on Higher Education, it may lead to the risk of admitting students who may have difficulties in their studies and would affect the general lowering of the faculty's criteria.

#### 4.1.5. GPA of the Graduates

General conclusions cannot be drawn due to the inadequate data on the GPA of the graduates. Still, it is evident that UKIM and SEEU are more or less equal concerning the general success of the students, with the law students having the best results within UKIM and the students of communication sciences having the best results within SEEU. The FON and UGD graduates have lower GPA.

Table 5.  
GPA of the Graduated Students 2007/08

	Total	Law	Economics	Informatics/ Technical sciences
UKIM	8.04 <sup>28</sup>	8.22*	/	7,81 (ФЕИТ) 8.11 (ПМФ)
SEEU	7.9	7.85	7.73	8.34
FON	7.6	7.6	/	/
UGD	7.4			

\*Data for 2006

We must take into consideration that these data should be analyzed in relative terms because the grades depend on the criteria of every faculty and professor. Still, the data can serve to challenge the prejudice that at the private faculties the students only get high grades.

<sup>26</sup> It is a Long Way to a Knowledge-Based Society: Macedonian Education in the Light of the Indicators of 'Education and Training 2010' Program for Work of the European Commission, S.Pecakovska and S.Lazarevska, FIOOM, Skopje 2009

<sup>27</sup> European University: [http://www.eurm.edu.mk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=8&lang=mk](http://www.eurm.edu.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=8&lang=mk) (only school matura is taken); American University-Skopje: <http://www.uacs.edu.mk/applynow.htm>; International Balcan University: <http://www.ibu.edu.mk/sol/admission.htm>; International University in Struga, [http://www.eust.edu.mk/MK/mk\\_tuition.html](http://www.eust.edu.mk/MK/mk_tuition.html); New York University-Skopje: <http://www.nyus.edu.mk/undergraduate.aspx?id=24>, (all websites visited on 29.07.2009)

<sup>28</sup> GPA based only on data from the Faculty of Law, FEIT and PMF

#### 4.1.6. Duration of Study

The duration of study is often an indicator of the complexity of the studies and the requirements the students should meet. But the system of studies also plays a role. In the period before the introduction of ECTS only about 20% of the students finished their studies in the due time, while in the last years this percentage is rising. For example, in 2007 29% of the students graduated on time and in 2008 this was the case with 36.6% of the students. It is evident that the ECTS system leads to reducing and balancing of the time of study. After its introduction there is a significant decrease of the percentage of students who repeat a year, from 20-50% (depending on the faculty) in 2002 to 10-30% in 2006.<sup>29</sup>

Table 6.  
Average Duration of Study

	Total	Law	Economics	FEIT	PMF	Mechanical Engineering	Technological	Architecture
UKIM	5.9**		4.9 <sup>30**</sup>	4.2** 6.5***	6-7**	6.5**	6**	7.5**
SEEU	/							
FON	4.5*	4.5*						
UGD	5.2**							

\* 6 semesters / \*\* 8 semesters / \*\*\* 9 semesters

Because of the fact that the private universities introduced the ECTS system since their foundation, it is expected to have a shorter period of study and a lower percentage of students repeating years. Still, the data shown in Table 6 show that at almost all the faculties the average duration of studies is about 1-1.5 years longer than the regular duration. Generally, the duration is longest at UKIM even though the differences are more striking at faculty level, with the technical and natural and mathematical sciences as a rule needing more time to finish.

<sup>29</sup> Self-evaluation Report of the of University Sv. Kiril i Metodij in Skopje (for the period 2002/03-2005/06), UKIM, 2008

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.fileden.com/files/2007/5/29/1123754/My%20Documents/Ekonomski/prasanje28.gif> (visited on 30.02.2009)

## 4.2. Subjective/Qualitative Indicators

### 4.2.1. Dominant Teaching Methods

The contemporary approach to education envisages a student-centered teaching where the student is in the center of the teaching process and instead of a simple 'receiver' of the teaching material; actively participates in its development and presentation and learns with understanding. This means gradual abandonment of the traditional methods of teaching where the teacher creates and delivers the material while the students passively follow and then reproduce what they learned. Following the principles of the Bologna Declaration the practice of interaction in the classroom is promoted in all the universities. Still, its implementation is more frequent in the private universities even though the understanding of its basic principles is still developing.

In the public universities the interactive teaching started its more intensive implementation after the introduction of ECTS, 4-5 years ago. The realization is still slow because of the long-standing practices of classical teaching practiced by the teaching staff.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the work in accordance with the ECTS principles is more common at the private universities since it has been practiced from the very foundation of the university. It has served as basis for creation of the curricula and that partly shows in the implementation of the teaching process.

Still, in spite of the efforts to modernize the teaching methods, the opinions of the students show that at both types of universities the classical methods are still dominant, with theoretical ex-cathedra lectures. Even in the cases when interactive teaching is implemented, according to the students (at both private and public universities), it is still not adequately understood. The interaction is often simplified by forms of presentation: presentation of a seminar paper, lecturing part of a lesson by a student etc. while the most important aspects such as development of critical thinking (by discussions, debates, analyses of problems/topics, research projects), practical implementation of the theoretical knowledge by simulations, solving real-life problems, are frequently neglected. This is also noted in the assessment, which is primarily based on written assignments and examinations that test the knowledge on a level of reproduction.

In spite of everything, it is encouraging that at both types of universities there are some professors (usually younger professors and assistants) who apply the interactive methods in appropriate ways. The majority of the interviewed students identified the younger professors/assistants, who have been educated abroad and have had personal experience with interactive teaching as students, as better prepared in dealing with the contemporary teaching methods.

<sup>31</sup>Ss. Cyril and Methodius University EUA follow-up report, UKIM, 2008

## 4.2.2. Student Relations with the Teaching Staff

### ■ Availability

One of the major differences between the two types of universities is the student relations with the teaching staff. The students at the private universities are particularly satisfied with the professors' and assistants' attitude. This is mainly valid for the universities where the teaching staff has the obligation to be at the university during the working hours and be available to the students. The students are not satisfied only because of the teaching staff's availability, but even more so because of the openness and readiness to help before and even during the exams.

|| *Here the professor can help you, remind you, clarify something, during the exam*

Student of Informatics at FON

At the oldest private university - SEEU, the students are generally satisfied with the teaching staff's availability, although some professors cannot be found at all the times at the university, so the communication is most often by email.

The students at the private universities are also very satisfied with the possibility to evaluate the professors and state their opinions concerning their work. Still, part of them (Business Administration and Faculty of Law at SEEU) said that they did not expect their evaluation would have more significant impact.

The students at UKIM are partly satisfied with the teaching staff's availability, but this to a large extent depends on the faculty they belong to. For example, the students at FEIT were very satisfied with the availability of the teaching staff, while the students at the Faculties of Pedagogy, Law and PMF are the most dissatisfied. All of the students agree that there are certain professors who are never there and they could not complain about this with a higher institution at the faculty/university. The general opinion is that the traditional attitude is still dominant, especially at the faculties with big groups; however, part of the teaching staff was said to be quite approachable.

### ■ Responsibilities for the Successes and Failures of the Students

There are major differences among the teaching staff of various universities/faculties concerning their attitude towards the responsibility for the successes and failures of the students. The professors at FON said that they claim big responsibility if a given student is unsuccessful in his studies. They think that they are there for the students and the failures of the student means a failure for the professor.

*Every student's failure is like my own. We motivate them to study more and never give up. Even the student is only a little bit interested, he can learn the material.*

Professor at the Faculty of Economics at FON

As opposed to them, the interviewed professors at SEEU think that the failures of a small number of students cannot be an indicator for the work of the professor; still, if this happens to a bigger number of students then it can serve as an indication that the professor is unsuccessful. Part of them thinks that due to the fact that a significant part of the students had rather low grades in high school, the teaching staff cannot be responsible for their failure to learn the material.

The biggest part of the interviewed teachers at UKIM consider the failures of the students in their subject a responsibility of the students, especially in cases where the student did not attend the lectures and/or did not ask for consultations.

*The student is responsible because he wasn't interested to overcome the obstacles to learning the material (to come to consultations).*

Professor at the Faculty of Law - UKIM

From the polled professors at UKIM, only the ones at PFSKO think that the responsibility is mutual, equally distributed between the professor/assistant and the student.

It can be noted that the attitude is more authoritarian at UKIM where the student's personal responsibility is emphasized, while the professor's role is more distant. On the other hand, at the private universities the students pay higher scholarships and it is expected to receive guidance and support in the teaching process.

### 4.2.3. Flexibility of the Curriculum

The majority of the students at the private universities believe that they are given freedom to state their opinions concerning the curriculum and suggest possible changes. It has happened several times when the curriculum was slightly modified. Still, some of the students stressed that although their suggestions are generally welcomed, they are rarely implemented.

As opposed to them, the students at the public universities are more reserved when it comes to their opportunities to initiate any changes in the curriculum. It is interesting to note that the vast majority has not even thought of suggesting changes because they think they would be rejected apriori.

*There is no willingness, and also nobody has the right to tell that to the professors. Someone has taught the Constitution of SFRJ (Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) and you cannot just say to him - change your opinion and way of work*

Student at the Faculty of Law - UKIM

*I wouldn't dare to object to the material they have chosen, because they are so vain and that would mean that the student is smarter than the professor.*

Student at the Faculty of Economics - UKIM

Although there is a possibility to intervene in the teaching process by students' presence at the teachers' board, their presence is often used to discuss other, more urgent topics (for example, the standard of the students, working conditions, dissatisfaction with the personnel). In this context, the UKIM Report also stresses that 'the students were not sufficiently involved in the development of new curricula.'

<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ss. Cyril and Methodius University EUA Follow-up report, UKIM, 2008, p. 7

#### 4.2.4. Success Criteria

One of the main reasons for the opinion that the quality of education at the private universities is lower is the alleged lower criteria that the students have to meet in order to pass an exam. This indicator, even though very important, was not independently analyzed because of its complexity and difficulty to obtain valid results with the method of interviews.

Taking into account that the majority of curricula do not have specified success standards and criteria for a given grade, the most appropriate method would be to analyze the exam questions and answers. Still, since the exam tests are not publicly available, their analysis was excluded from this research.

The data that was gathered on basis of the subjective opinions show that one part of the professors who teach at both the private and public universities, modify their criteria depending on the university (faculty) where they teach. This is sometimes owed to the informal (i.e. 'unwritten') criteria of the university and sometimes to the personal estimate that different universities have students with different knowledge, thus needing different criteria for evaluation of their achievement. This differentiation is valid not only for the private and public universities, but also for different public and different private universities.

*A professor who teaches here and at FON and UKIM told us that she demands the most from the students at UKIM, then from us and then from the students at FON.*

Student at SEEU

The possible problem here, as identified by some professors, is the potential general lowering of the criteria in higher education as a result of the struggle to attract and keep a bigger number of students.

The standards are very low. Instead of offering more competition the private faculties turned it the other way round in Macedonia. The competition lowered the standards way below the European level.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>A statement of Professor Ilija Acevski (Sociology Institute - UKIM) for Radio Free Europe, 20.06.2009; available on: <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/1758440.html>



#### 4.2.5. Possibilities for Professional Development of the Teaching Staff

Taking into consideration that the teaching staff that is continually learning is a human capital that is especially important for the quality of education in a given institution, the possibilities for professional development were taken as one of the criteria for quality. This aspect showed differences among the universities, especially concerning the time available for professional development (particularly the time for seminars, conferences, conducting research etc.).

The teaching staff at FON think that at the moment the possibilities for professional development at the university are limited because of the fact that they are required to be present at the faculty all the time. Also, although the university verbally supports the professional development, usually the expenses are paid by the professors themselves.

The teaching staff at the other universities was rather content with the possibilities for professional development. The biggest problem they see is the inadequate financial support by the university/faculty although they do not feel limited concerning their absences.

Still, even the universities that have the possibility for professional development do not use it always. Thus, the projects within the frames of the sixth and seventh framework program (FP6 and FP7) are dominated by the UKIM faculties (with 7 research projects in FP7 and 22 in FP6, mostly in the areas of natural and technical sciences), followed by 1 project by UKLO while the other universities do not participate in the program.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that the newly formed faculties/universities (both private and public) in the period of the last few years were focused on attracting teaching personnel and developing their curricula, so the research activities had a secondary role.<sup>34</sup> Still, the status of a high quality scientific institution should include dedication to research and development and investment in the professional development of the staff.

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<sup>34</sup> For more information see: [www.cordis.europa.eu/fp7](http://www.cordis.europa.eu/fp7)

<sup>35</sup> This does not apply for SEEU, which has a Research Center and continuous funds designed for research

#### 4.2.6. Possibilities of Corruption

The problem of corruption in the higher education, even though very important, is the most difficult to research. The last research was conducted in 2008 and it showed that Macedonia ranks fourth in East Europe as indicated by the corruption index in higher education. Around 30% of the polled students said that they were asked for bribe and half of the polled students at UKIM said that they were forced to buy a textbook.<sup>36</sup>

The general opinion of the students from various universities is that corruption is dominant at the public universities because at the private ones it is self-regulated due to the high salaries of the professors.

*At the private one I'll pay once or twice and that's it, and at the public one if a professor asks for money I'll end up paying more.*

Student transferred from a public university to a private university

If we take into consideration that the salaries of the teaching staff at the public universities are at least two times lower than the salaries at the private ones<sup>37</sup>, it is logical to conclude that the environment there is more 'fertile' for development of corruptive practices. On the other hand, according to the students, the time spent on lectures is much shorter for the staff at the public universities, so they are free to teach at other universities.<sup>38</sup> These 'perks' should serve as security measures to limit the corruption although they are insufficient to prevent it. From the information in the media, for now there are only four cases of professors at public universities who have been suspended and/or legally persecuted for corruption.<sup>39</sup>

Still, without a comparative research on a level of different faculties/universities, the statements of a higher level of corruption at the public universities can only be taken as assumptions.

<sup>36</sup><http://www.vlada.mk/?q=node/3260> (visited on 19.06.2009)

<sup>37</sup>Are the Public Universities Losing the Battle with the Private Institutions Due to the High Salaries and Modern Programs? The Salaries at the Private Universities Hard to Resist for the Professors, Utrinski Vesnik, 10.27.2005; Threes Control Professors' Salaries, Globus, no. 91, 13.01.2009

<sup>38</sup>Professors Without Side Jobs at the Private Universities, Utrinski Vesnik, no. 3048, 29.07.2009

<sup>39</sup>Empty-Handed Faculties?!, Dnevnik, 29.09.2006;

The Problems in Prilep Need Answers, Dnevnik, 24.10.2006;

In Stip Professor and a False Assistant Taken in Custody for Corruption: 200 Dollars for a 9 in Civil Protection, Vest, no.1311, 11.11.2004;

Professor at the Technical Faculty in Bitola Accused for Corruption, MIA, 28.06.2007; Professor at the Faculty of Pedagogy Accused for Corruption, A1 news, 20.04.2005

#### 4.2.7. Preparedness for Labor Market

The feeling of preparedness for the labor market is connected to the type of university, but even more so with the study group. Thus, since the faculties of business/economics and technical sciences are more practice oriented in their work, their students feel more capable to enter the labor market.

Still, we can conclude that generally the students at the public universities are more reserved concerning the quick and successful adaptation to the labor market. This is primarily owed to the focus on theoretical knowledge during their studies, lack of visits to companies/institutions, lectures by experts and practical teaching.

On the other hand, while the majority of the students at the newer private faculties feel ready to quickly enter the labor market, part of them fears the prejudices concerning their diplomas and level of knowledge. The universities strive to overcome this situation by establishing partnerships with various organizations/institutions that get acquainted with the quality of the students while they are still studying, which opens more opportunities for future employment (see Case Study 4).

Also, part of the private universities with their career centers follow the professional development of their students after graduation<sup>40</sup>; while the public universities cannot provide official information on the labor market success of the students after graduation. They still have not developed a system of following their students after graduation and using the data to adapt the teaching process with the aim to increase the employment opportunities for their future students.

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<sup>40</sup> Долг е патот до општество базирано на знаење: Македонското образование во светло на реперите и индикаторите за „Образование и обука 2010“ -Програма за работа на Европската комисија, ФИОМ, 2009, стр. 50; Приветните универзитети без соодветен кадар: Средношколци предаваат како професори, Време, бр. 1429, 24.07.2008

*Case Study 4:*

## To Private University because of Need for a Diploma

Safet studies informatics at one of the newer private universities in the country. Although before enrollment he worked in an IT company, he decided to study because his boss advised him that it would be better if he had a diploma, something which is easier to get at a private university. He did not consider the public universities because he heard from friends that the professors there are authoritarian, that they do not care whether the students learn, pass the exams etc. He thinks that at his university the curriculum is good and modern, the computers are new, the groups are small and, most important of all, the professors are always available. He admits that it is probably easier to pass an exam there than at the public universities. This is partly because of the lower expectations from the students, but even more so because of the fact that the professors motivate you to study and it is important to them that you pass the exam.

He is very satisfied with the expertise of the teaching staff and the practice offered by the faculty (a lot of projects, every year a 15-day mandatory practice in a company etc.). The continuous contacts with the firms enable the students to present themselves to the employers during their studies.

The initial worry concerning the acceptance of his diploma disappeared with time because the informatics companies are already acquainted with the students from the faculty and also they test the candidates before employing them, so the diploma is not that important compared to the concrete knowledge and skills of the student.

#### 4.2.8. Level of Professionalization/Expertise of Teaching Staff

The quality of the teaching staff is a prerequisite for a quality education and every university is trying to attract appropriate personnel that will increase or at least maintain the level of quality. The transfer of staff from the public to the private universities was quite common in the previous years, when the latter were still in their initial phases.

With the introduction of new curricula the private universities faced the problem of insufficient teaching staff, mostly because of the practice to found a faculty and develop a curriculum without prior employment of appropriate teaching staff.<sup>41</sup> These shortcomings are not regulated nor overcome so a lot of students at the private faculties (especially those who study more contemporary areas) think that part of the staff is inadequately trained.

*If you look at the curriculum, it's great, but there's no appropriate staff to teach it. I have a journalist teaching marketing communication, where's the connection here?*

Student at SEEU

The criticism concerning the expertise of part of the teaching staff is also present at the public universities. The students' dissatisfaction is owed to the fact that the majority of the teaching staff started teaching without any prior practical knowledge. This means that they cannot link the theory with the practice and that also affects their confidence as teachers and the realization of the teaching process.

*I have a feeling that I am taught by swots, they have theoretical knowledge, but no practice whatsoever. After graduation they immediately started teaching.*

Student at UKIM

The opinions differ, so a student (from the first Case Study) with experience from the both types of universities thinks that the expertise of the professors is important but the experts are useless if they do not give lectures. In this case, in his opinion, it is better to have lectures by a less experienced professor who gives them regularly, as is the case at the private universities.

Although the students stress that a significant part of the staff is well prepared and efficiently manages their academic and teaching duties, it is apparent that there is criticism of part of the staff at the both types of universities.

<sup>41</sup> It is a Long Way to a Knowledge-Based Society: Macedonian Education in the Light of the Indicators of 'Education and Training 2010' Program for Work of the European Commission, FLOOM, 2009, p. 50;  
Private Universities Without an Appropriate Staff: High School Students Work as Professors, Vreme, no. 1429, 24.07.2008

The major shortcomings are: inadequate education, insufficient practical knowledge and irregular lectures. It is obvious that the bigger number of universities leads to deficit of the teaching staff and this affects the quality of the education. Both types of universities are affected by this.

The practice to develop high criteria concerning the qualifications of the teaching staff is insufficiently developed. At the moment three of the five Excellence Centers<sup>42</sup>(depending on their scientific achievements) are part of UKIM, two are under MANU and all of them are from the area of natural and technical sciences.

#### 4.2.9. Quality Control

Continuous evaluation and control is necessary if the educational institutions of higher education want to meet the quality standards they are aspiring to. Apart from the continuous internal evaluations, it is essential to have external evaluations of quality by independent foreign institutions (most often EUA).

While the public universities (especially UKIM) regularly demand external evaluation<sup>43</sup>; the internal evaluation is not continuous and its effects are hardly felt. What is missing in particular is a continuous internal evaluation that would include all the students and would serve as guidance for the work of the teaching staff. Another important shortcoming is the non-existence of a central system for data processing<sup>44</sup>; which limits the possibility for strategic planning of the activities based on an analysis of the factual situation.

Contrary to this, the private educational institutions have practiced the system of integrated university since their foundations where all the relevant data are processed by a single system, which allows for easier analysis and planning. They are also quite active in the implementation of the quality control of their teaching staff. These kinds of evaluation, where the students have the final say, are conducted every year and affect the future work of the teachers. Still, an outside view by independent experts is crucial for an impartial opinion on the quality of education. So far, only SEEU has requested and received two external evaluations by EUA.

<sup>42</sup>Institute of Chemistry at PMF, Research Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology at MANU, Nephrology Clinic at the Faculty of Medicine, Research Center for Energy, Informatics and Materials at MANU and the Institute for Earthquake Engineering at UKIM

<sup>43</sup>UKIM demanded and received two external evaluations by EUA, while UKLO received one (information by Violeta Atansova - representative of EUA, 22.04.2009)

<sup>44</sup>At some universities it is in a phase of formation

## 4.2.10. Autonomy

The autonomy of a university, although guaranteed by law, is not equally observed when it comes to the public and private universities. The FIOOM Analysis of the Potential for Good Management in Education shows that there is a big difference in the attitudes of the employees in the public and private universities towards the autonomy from the state. While the former think that the level of autonomy is high (4.23-4.58, on a scale 1-5), the latter think it is rather low (2.44-3.08).

These opinions are mostly concerned with the level of observation of the financial autonomy. The dynamics of planning and managing resources by the institutions and its implementation often do not correspond to the dynamics of approval and fund transfers from the ministries, not only for public resources, but also for private ones.<sup>45</sup> In this context, the former Rector of UKIM, Gjorgji Martinovski concludes that:

*...in practice we do not have complete autonomy of spending even our own resources. Since there is a treasury system and even your own resources are treated like budget resources, we are forced to plan them. (...) If we receive funds for a project it is compulsory to spend them within a period of time. If we haven't planned that in advance, since we can never be sure whether an application will be approved or not, we cannot use them or we are in for a long procedure for approval, with a devastating damage to efficiency. (...) So the private universities have an advantage and this is one of the reasons why the foreign investors are avoiding us in the last few years.<sup>46</sup>*

This is not the case with the private institutions of higher education that have complete autonomy in managing their resources.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Analysis of the Potential for Good Management of Education, FIOOM, 2008, p. 69

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Gjorgji Martinovski, former Rector of UKIM, for Kapital, Investments in Science and Education are an Investment for the Future, no. 384, 28.03.2007

<sup>47</sup>Analysis of the Potential for Good Management of Education, FIOOM, 2008, p. 69

#### 4.2.11. Private and State University Students in the Labor Market

Even since their foundation, the private universities have faced doubts by the public universities, the public and especially the business community, concerning the quality of their education. With the first graduates from the private universities, job ads appeared that strictly demanded a diploma from a public university. This was an interesting paradox, especially due to the fact that one of the basic characteristics of the private universities/faculties was the emphasis on practical teaching and curricula flexibilities in relation to the demands of the labor market.

In the last period part of them managed to avoid the negation and mistrust mainly by establishing cooperation with the businesses. Nevertheless, even though the perception of the public is changing gradually, the private universities still are not considered as equal to the older public universities.

Although in the last 1-2 years there is no open discrimination towards the students concerning their university<sup>48</sup>; part of the employers still maintain these stereotypical opinions. This is particularly true for the owners of the big companies, since they do not have direct experiences with the employers and come to their conclusions on basis of inadequate information. They still think that the graduates from the public universities are a safer choice.<sup>49</sup>

The representatives of the human resource sectors that were interviewed have different opinions and experiences concerning the adaptability and suitability of the graduates from the public and private universities. Although the majority does not make a difference concerning the faculty/university of the potential candidate, there is still a smaller part of them who have preferences for students from certain universities. The preference to a large extent depends on the type of industry and working position. Thus, the representatives of the financial institutions think that the students from the private universities have more practical experience and would adapt quickly to the job, while the representatives of the IT industry prefer the graduates from the public universities because of their solid theoretical knowledge.

Nevertheless, most of them agree that the type of university is secondary to the criteria that the potential candidate should meet, these mainly concerning the personal characteristics. For that purpose, more and more companies test their potential candidates, thus decreasing the influence of the diploma.

<sup>48</sup> Job ads stating that students from certain universities should not apply are not published.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with a HR officer at a telecommunication company, 17.09.2008 and interview with a HR officer at a pharmaceutical company, 21.01.2009





PRIVATE vs. PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES

**V**

**WHAT IS THE  
DIFFERENCE?**

## *V. Public vs. Private Universities: What is the Difference?*

Generally, the analysis showed that even though there is a discrepancy concerning certain indicators between the different types of universities, some aspects show more differences among different faculties/departments within one university than between different universities. The differences are especially apparent at UKIM where in spite of the recently begun integration, the individual faculties are still independent to a large extent when it comes to the implementation of the teaching process and the other activities.

Also, taking into consideration that SEEU is a public-private non-profitable university since 2008, at the moment its characteristics concerning the scholarship fees and the other indicators are somewhere in between of the private and public universities.

The research did not cover all the universities, so the conclusions should not be generalized as they are valid only for the universities and faculties that were included. The aim of the conclusions is to start an initiative for future continuous following of the topic - the quality in higher education. Basically, the positive and negative aspects can be observed at both the types of universities (see SWOT analysis), which is a good starting point for exchange of successful practices.

The public universities have more developed curricula and more numerous teaching staff. The bureaucratic procedures and difficulties when trying to contact a professor are quite frustrating for the students. The relation student-teacher is more authoritarian and the responsibility for academic success is almost always with the student, partly because of the fact that the majority of the professors believe that students have a solid learning potential (taking into account their high school achievements).

The general conclusion is that the public universities offer solid theoretical knowledge, while the development of the practical part is largely neglected and this makes the students feel that they are not ready to enter the labor market. Also, there is a lack of flexibility concerning the development of new teaching groups and programs, partly because of the insufficient autonomy and partly because of the ineffectiveness of the universities and the difficulties in the integration of separate faculties/departments. Therefore, the policies for dispersion of studies with the aim to transform them into contemporary university centers can lead to even further bureaucratic difficulties.

The private universities, on the other hand, offer better technical conditions, but have reduced offer of curricula and subjects. The problem at part of them is the development of new curricula without prior preparation of the teaching staff and study materials. They are more focused on development of business skills and have a tendency to break the academic boundaries and enter the 'real world.'

They are relatively quick to modify their curricula, but this does not always result in a quality program, often because of a lack of appropriate staff and reduced professional development of the current staff. The students feel more loyal to the university, but at the same time more restricted in expressing their criticism.

At the private universities there is a tendency to motivate the students to learn by establishment of a guidance system, which means that the teacher is accessible at any time and guides the student in his studies. Although there are views that the academic criteria are lower compared to the public universities, the general opinion is that if the student is motivated, he/she has better chances to acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies. Nevertheless, additional work is required to change the practices (or only perceptions) that the criteria are lowered so that the weaker students could pass (for example, at certain faculties attendance and writing seminar papers are a guarantee to pass an exam).

Unfortunately, both types of universities still have not implemented the concept of Student-Centered Learning completely. Although there have been some instances of this kind of teaching, the traditional methods are still largely dominant when it comes to teaching and especially assessment.

The employers pay less and less attention to the university of the candidates. The large companies regularly test their potential candidates and, according to them, there are no major differences in the achievements of the students from different universities. Even though a lot of the companies never had experiences with students from private universities, depending on the area of expertise, the students from the one or the other type of university are considered better. Specifically, the graduates of business/economics from the private universities are considered to have better developed practical skills, while the graduates of informatics from the public universities are considered more 'useful' by the IT companies.

## 5.1. SWOT Analysis

Strengths		Weaknesses	
Private	Public	Private	Public
<p>Offer of interdisciplinary areas that are new and lacking in the market</p> <p>Tendency to employ staff that has graduated abroad</p> <p>Contacts with the market (Career Centers etc.)</p> <p>Modern conditions for study</p> <p>Orientation to practical teaching (visits of institutions, helping the students find companies for practice)</p> <p>Organization of a number of extra-curricular activities (forums, conferences, seminars) within the framework of the university</p> <p>Accessibility of the teaching staff and collaboration with the students</p> <p>Reduced corruption possibilities</p> <p>Less bureaucracy</p> <p>Solid implementation of ECTS</p>	<p>Long-standing tradition of higher education</p> <p>Offer of departments/faculties that are not to be found at the private universities (especially from natural and technical sciences)</p> <p>Offer of bigger number of (optional) subjects</p> <p>Developed cooperation with foreign institutions of higher education</p> <p>Long-standing research activity</p> <p>Enrolled students with solid prior knowledge</p> <p>Big interest for study</p> <p>Acceptable scholarships for the students in the state quota</p> <p>Developed postgraduate MA and (especially) PhD studies</p> <p>Existence of so-called Excellence Centers (established on basis of academic and scientific achievements)</p>	<p>Lack of appropriate teaching staff – part of the lecturers are inadequate for the subject</p> <p>Over-emphasis on technical and spatial conditions as opposed to academic</p> <p>Curricula taken from other institutions, undeveloped or ill-adjusted</p> <p>Narrow focus of the curricula (too specialistic)</p> <p>Sometimes are seen as private companies by the public</p> <p>Insufficient offer of optional subjects</p> <p>Insufficiently developed system of ‘Student-Centered Learning’</p> <p>Small number of curricula of natural and technical sciences</p> <p>Insufficient focus on scientific research</p>	<p>Insufficient flexibility of curricula</p> <p>Still dominant authoritarian attitude of the teaching staff</p> <p>Relatively high scholarship fees for the students outside the state quota</p> <p>Insufficient involvement of the students in scientific research</p> <p>Unbalanced interest of the students for various study programs</p> <p>Inadequate accessibility of the teaching and administrative staff</p> <p>Insufficient involvement of the students in the decision making process</p> <p>Focus on knowledge and not on competencies</p> <p>Inexistence or insufficient control of the student practice</p> <p>Lack of data for the students’ success in the labor market</p>

Opportunities		Threats	
Private	Public	Private	Public
Further development of cooperation with the labor market	Maintenance of the good image in the labor market	Doubts concerning the quality of education by the public	Slow adaptability to the conditions in the labor market
Flexibility and adaptability of the curricula	Maintenance of the solid image among the foreign institutions of higher education	Enrollment of students with lower high school GPA (potentially weaker prior knowledge)	Migration of students and staff to the private faculties
Possibility for obtaining foreign universities' licenses	Providing opportunities for study to students in unfavorable socio-economic situation	Relatively high scholarships, sometimes with additional expenses	Insufficient use of the teachers' potentials
Sufficient resources for contemporary conditions for study (increase of library holdings, ICT equipment, foreign lecturers)	Activation of the research potential of the staff	Doubts by part of the labor market concerning the qualifications of the graduates	Insufficient autonomy -> financial instability and ineffective planning
Increasing elite of citizens who are prepared to pay for higher education	Opening of positions for new and young teaching staff	Suspensions of lower criteria for the students' knowledge	Overburdening of the students
Potential overflow of students who leave the public universities to enroll at the private ones	Verification and strengthening of research capacities by opening research centers	Lack of selection of the enrollment candidates	Insufficient cooperation between the teaching staff and the students
		Sometimes are seen as private companies and not as educational institutions	Suspensions of corruption
			Dispersed studies -> threat to the quality



PRIVATE vs. PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES

**VI**

The Way to  
Better  
Higher  
Education



## *VI. The Way to Better Higher Education*

### Recommendations for the Public Universities

Taking into consideration that one of the main shortcomings of the public universities is the insufficient care for the students, it is essential **to pay more attention to the relations to the students**, specifically:

- Availability during the consultation periods
- Providing the emails of the professors and encouraging email communication
- Establishment of a guidance principle and taking more responsibility for the students' progress. For this purpose it is necessary to employ additional staff where the ratio teacher to student is inadequate
- Bigger involvement of the students in the decision making process for important aspects, such as: teaching methods, topics in the curriculum, textbooks etc.

Concerning the staff availability, the policy of **dispersed studies** can be very dangerous if insufficient attention is paid to the employment of additional staff and providing appropriate conditions for the dispersed studies (libraries, classrooms etc.) Hence, for a successful implementation of this policy it is crucial to provide **teaching staff that will always be available in the institution** and not only once a week. Reducing the costs of study must not come at the cost of reducing the quality.

The general impression is that these universities are slow to adapt to the needs of the labor market. This means that it is necessary **to follow the needs of the local and global market continually and to react to them in a more flexible way** by:

- Strengthening of the contacts with the market, for example by introduction of experts as lecturers, providing and following the student practice, involvement of the experts in the creation of the curriculum etc.
- Following of the success of the graduates in the labor market continually
- Introducing more flexible mechanisms for changing the curricula

The inefficient administration is another factor that pushes away the students from the public universities. The recently introduced systems of electronical data processing do not function everywhere and at some faculties they function with great difficulties. It is essential to conduct an **appropriate training of the administration for work with the new systems** and, if necessary, **to employ additional administrative and technical staff**.

Although some of the faculties perform evaluation that includes the teaching staff and the curriculum, it is often performed formally and without real use of the data for analysis of the situation and appropriate action to overcome the problems.

A continuous evaluation that would include the students, the teaching staff and the administration can be an invaluable source of information for further improvement. The implementation does not cost much and to reduce the expenses the students can act as researchers.

## Recommendations for the Private Universities

The associations in the public about the private universities are that they place income ahead of education. Therefore these institutions are criticized for the **quality of knowledge and competencies** of their students. With the aim to overcome these suspicions it is necessary to:

- Undergo an **external evaluation** (by an external independent institution) to obtain and/or confirm the credibility as an educational institution
- **Invest in scientific research** (especially internationally) with the aim to strengthen the academic positions of the university
- Invest in **professional development** of the current teaching staff
- **Improve the teaching staff** (for example, with staff that has migrated abroad, experts etc.)
- Increase the offer of **optional subjects**
- Introduce regular activities to **attract students with better high school achievements** (for example, by offering scholarships) and prove the competencies of the students (by participation in competitions, debates etc.)
- **Employ the staff on a permanent basis** so that they identify with the institution and dedicate themselves to the students
- **Plan the growth of the institution carefully**, with maintenance of the quality

## Recommendations for the Institutions of Evaluation and Accreditation

- Introduction of **unified system for data processing** (i.e. the indicators that are used in the quality evaluation) in the institutions of higher education for more efficient implementation of the evaluation
- **Setting standards for knowledge and skills for various vocations** for more precise definition of the competencies of the graduates
- **Bigger accent on the 'output' evaluation indicators** (acquired competencies of the graduated students, success in the labor market etc.)
- **Foundation of a regional agency for ranking of institutions of higher education** (on a level of Western Balkans, South Eastern Europe etc.) that would set clear quality standards and would stimulate competition on a wider regional level.

## Annex 1

### Legal Framework for Opening a Public and Private Institution of Higher Education

According to the Law on Higher Education<sup>50</sup>, the institutions of higher education can be public, private-public non-profit institutions or private (profit or non-profit) institutions. The project for **foundation** of a public institution of higher education is implemented by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia while the project for foundation of a private institution is implemented by the founder (domestic or foreign legal entity or physical person). The private educational institution should provide financial guarantees for foundation as well as a sustainable financial plan for financing in the following four years.

The decision on the **number of students** at the public institutions of higher education is brought by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on a suggestion by the institution of higher education and prior opinion of the Council of Development and Financing of Higher Education. Nevertheless, the number of students cannot be higher than the number established with resolution for accreditation and according to the capacity of the institution.

After meeting the criteria for employment of at least half of the total **number of teachers** for every study program and if all the other conditions envisaged with the accreditation resolution are fulfilled, the Minister of Education brings a decision for commencement of the work of the institution of higher education.

**The accreditation** of the universities is done by the Accreditation Board.<sup>50</sup> The Board has the following rights and responsibilities: to establish whether a project for foundation of an institution of higher education and the attached documentation meet the criteria for practicing higher education activities (for example, established study and scientific and research area, providing appropriate quarters and equipment for practicing higher education activities, providing sufficient number of persons who meet the criteria for work in the institution of higher education etc.); to establish whether the institution of higher education meets the criteria for organization of studies for new study programs and the capacity for study in the institution; to give accreditation to the study programs; to keep data on the institutions of higher education that have already received accreditation etc.

<sup>50</sup>Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no. 35/08, Article 16

<sup>51</sup>For more information on the Accreditation Board follow this link: <http://www.board.edu.mk>

The control mechanism of the Board is the **Evaluation Agency**, which began its work in a reformed format on 1 January 2009. The function of the Agency is to control the work of the institutions of higher education on basis of the reports of the self-evaluation and external evaluation commissions on the quality of the higher education activity, the academic staff and the curricula. If the results of the evaluation are not satisfactory, it is possible to withdraw the accreditation of the institution, something which has not happened so far. The Agency uses accepted procedures and standards and the guidelines that are used by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education<sup>52</sup> and other institutions, organizations and associations that implement the European standards and instructions for performing external evaluation.

Concerning the **finances**, the public universities are primarily financed by the state, although they have an option to finance themselves. The private universities are exclusively self-financed (mainly by the scholarships), although they have the legal option of state financing if it is established that 'there is an interest for meeting the public needs in the practice of higher education by the private institutions of higher education' (Article 79). Also, a certain number of students from the private universities (established on a state level) have an opportunity to apply for scholarships or grants by MON.

At the end, we can conclude that although the private institutions in principle have the status of independent institutions, there is still an element of 'state' influence on their work.

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<sup>52</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki, 2005 <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-QA.pdf> (visited on 19.06.2009)

## Annex 2

### Private vs. Public Education: Comparative Experiences

The private education has a diametrically opposite status in different countries. While in the countries of the Anglo-American tradition the private education is considered prestigious and of a higher quality than the public education, in the countries of the post-socialist East European bloc it is still viewed with suspicion and the doubts concerning the quality are quite common. The private higher education in these countries started to develop in the 1990s and the last few years have seen a boom especially in the post-socialist countries (Table 2.1, Table 2.2).

Table 2.1.  
Students Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe  
(percentage of the total number of enrolled students)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Albania	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,2	0,7
Belorussia	14,9	13,0	14,0	17,3	/
Bulgaria	11,5	11,5	12,6	13,4	14,3
Croatia	1,4	1,4	2,3	2,7	/
Czech Republic	0,3	1,0	1,5	3,2	/
Estonia	25,2	25,2	22,0	20,3	21,5
Hungary	14,1	14,3	14,0	14,2	/
Latvia	12,7	12,7	18,8	22,9	/
Lithuania	1,4	...	2,4	4,5	/
Macedonia	0,0	2,3	0,0	3,5	/
Moldova	13,1	22,6	25,0	20,0	/
Poland	28,4	29,9	29,4	29,4	29,4
Romania	29,6	28,9	25,2	23,3	23,2
Russia	7,0	10,0	14,5	12,1	13,3
Slovakia	...	0,7	0,7	0,4	/

Source:

UNESCO-CEPES webpage and 'The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe' UNESCO-CEPES, 2007

From the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the biggest number of private institutions of higher education is to be found in Armenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia, Romania and the Russian Federation, while the smallest number in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovakia (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2.  
Number of Institutions of Higher Education in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (academic year 2004-2005)

Country	Number of institutions of higher education				
	Public	%	Private	%	Total
Albania	11	85.0	4	15.0	15
Armenia	18	20.0	72	80.0	90
Belorussia	43	78.0	12	22.0	55
Bosnia and Herzegovina	103	91.9	9	8.1	112
Bulgaria	37	69.8	16	30.2	53
Croatia	82	83.7	16	16.3	98
Czech Republic	27	40.3	40	59.7	67
Estonia	13	36.0	23	64.0	36
Hungary	31	45.0	38	55.0	69
Latvia	36	64.3	20	35.7	56
Lithuania	31	64.6	17	35.4	48
Moldova	18	51.4	17	48.6	35
Poland	126	29.5	301	70.5	427
Romania	55	47.0	62	53.0	117
Russian Federation	662	61.8	409	38.2	1,071
Slovakia	23	85.2	4	14.8	27
Slovenia	63	67.0	31	33.0	94
Ukraine	749	78.8	202	21.2	951

Source:  
[http://www.cepes.ro/information\\_services/statistics.htm](http://www.cepes.ro/information_services/statistics.htm)

From the overview that follows it can be noted that there are qualitative differences among the European countries concerning the policies that regulate the higher education. They partly stem from the perceptions of the public about the quality of the private and public institutions of higher education, the balance between the private and public education, the preference of the former in certain aspects (practical work, business skills, flexibility to the market demands).

The political changes in **Bulgaria** in 1989 brought favorable conditions for foundation of institutions of private education as a response for the rising demand for higher education. Since then the perception of the public has changed significantly for the better. Beginning with the perceptions that the private sector is inferior to the public, with weak regulation, accreditation and low quality, in time the Bulgarian society has become more open and gives more chances to the private institutions.

This is partly aided by the system of accreditation, which evaluates an institution and grades it on a scale of 4 levels and according to this evaluation the length of the accreditation is determined (for example, very good or good grade - accreditation for 6 years; satisfactory grade - 3 years). This stimulates the institutions to improve continually.<sup>53</sup>

In Germany the private institutions of higher education cover the majority of their expenses from their own resources, but a big number of them (that have a status of non-profit organizations) are at the same time supported by the state. The level of marketization of the sector of higher education is limited by their obligation to employ staff and use quarters provided by the public sector (for example, public officials with part-time contracts at the private universities)<sup>54</sup>.

The private higher education in Austria is rather new (from 1999), so the analysts do not make general conclusions concerning its quality. The most evident difference is the relation to the students. The opinion at the public universities is that the students are individuals who do not need guidance or monitoring by the professors, while the private universities are more oriented toward the Anglo-American culture of study, which is more sensitive to the needs of the student and involves responsibility for their progress. The policies for accreditation of a private university include strict criteria for staff recruitment, which apart from academic qualifications also demand research capacities. Taking these criteria into consideration, it is a common practice for the professors at the public universities to lecture at the private ones, a situation that is expected to change with the legislative changes from 2002 that state that the newly employed staff cannot be state officials, but must be employed exclusively on a base of a private contract.<sup>55</sup>

In Italy the number of institutions of higher education has not changed in the last several decades. The law from 2000 provides the private institutions of higher education that meet the criteria of the public ones with an equal status as well as with public funds. Therefore the private universities, concerning the format (the curricula, teaching staff), are very similar to the public ones. The differences from the public institutions are: better organization of the teaching, better technical conditions, more options for international cooperation etc.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup>S. Slantcheva, Bulgaria, in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*; P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds); UNESCO-CEPES, 2007, p. 53-100

<sup>54</sup>A. Stannek, F. Ziegel, Germany, in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*; P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds); UNESCO-CEPES, 2007, p. 131-212

<sup>55</sup>H. Pechar, E. Firioli, J. Thomas, Austria, in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*; P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds); UNESCO-CEPES, 2007, p. 33-62

<sup>56</sup>P. Trivellato, Italy, in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*; P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds); UNESCO-CEPES, 2007, p. 213-256

The quality of higher education in **Romania** varies considerably and this results in a high level of suspicion toward these institutions. Even though the process of accreditation has led to closures of a big number of private institutions of higher education, more than half of the existing private institutions are still working without accreditations. The private higher education is still perceived as profit-oriented, with lower quality and attractive only to students with weaker abilities, leading to loss of image in the labor market<sup>57</sup>

In **Russia**, the biggest part of the institutions of higher education is entrepreneurship and market oriented. Still, the few institutions that are recognized by the international foundations and foreign universities have taken the role of elite academic centers (mostly in the area of economics) by employing foreign professors, teaching in English and western style of teaching. The institutions that distinguish themselves with innovative work and excellent results of their students are eligible for financial support from the state. Although there are no serious researches concerning the acceptance of the graduates from the private universities by the market, the general opinion is that 80-90% gets employed and they are also helped by the Career Centers<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Lumina Nicolescu, Private versus Public in Romania: Consequences for the market (available at: [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News39/text007.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News39/text007.htm))

<sup>58</sup> D. Supstin, The Russian Federation, in *The Rising Role and Relevance of Private Higher Education in Europe*; P. J. Wells, J. Sadlak and L. Vlăsceanu (Eds); UNESCO-CEPES, 2007, p. 399-428



