



DYNAMICS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BULGARIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY*

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Abstract: Higher education systems in the European Union at the beginning of the XXI century are characterized by dynamic growth and change due to the globalization and the challenges that the global economy has been facing. Being a candidate for membership at the EU until the 2007 and a full member since 2007 The Republic of Bulgaria has successfully been following these European processes. The current study analyzes the trends in the higher education system in Bulgaria during the first decade of XXI century, focusing on comparisons between different areas of higher education and academic degrees.

Being an individual and society good the higher education is an individual and society responsibility. It is not and should not be a responsibility solely of the state, but also of the individual, as well as of the society as a whole, represented by its different /including private/ organizations and associations. The access to the different degrees and forms of higher education to equal conditions is a right of each citizen but its acquisition is dependent on the personal potential and resources of the individual. Each national system of higher education is a society accepted mechanism for regulation of just social inequalities.

In today's societies higher schools are part of the market of educational services as the main result of their activity gains market realization. They adapt their activity to the market mechanisms as the free concurrency is the main engine of their development. However higher education remains a sphere where the academic values and norms are dominating, upon which the relationships between the participants in the academic society are built.

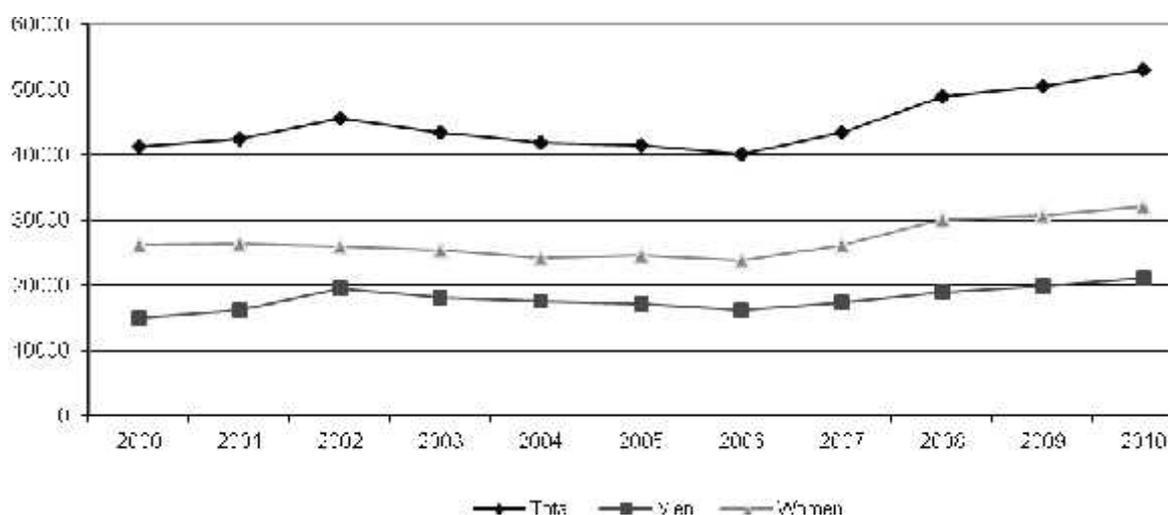
The main challenges in front of the Bulgarian higher education at the beginning of the XXI century are provoked by the development of a common European and World market of educational services, the expansion of the higher education and the thus enlarging the heterogeneity of the education society, the diversification of the institutions, offering educational services and the rise of a non-university educational sector. The inherited system of higher education cannot exist in accordance to the current principles and society conditions. It's institutional and normative structure leads to the decay of the Bulgarian higher education which is connected to the demographic tendencies in the country, provoked by the reproductive and migration processes.

In the first decade of the XXI century the higher education in Bulgaria is characterized by considerable dynamics, determined by the globalization in European and World plan as well as by the internal problems of the country caused by the difficult economical transition to market economy. The ratio of registration of the society between 19 and 23 years, including the students, is increased from 26% at the beginning of the period to 42.5% at the end of it. At the same time the amount of the

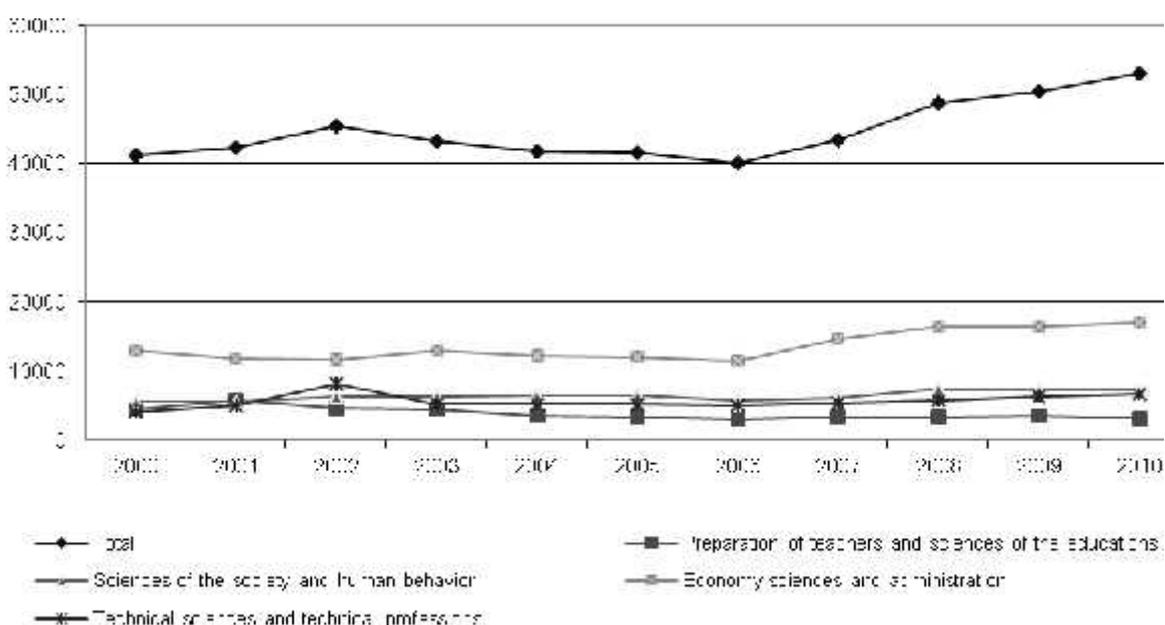
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universities and specialized higher schools is unremarkably increased from 41 to 44. The amount of independent colleges is considerably increased – from 4 to 10. There is a remarkable change in the structure of the Bulgarian higher school education in terms of colleges in the structure of the universities or specialized higher schools. The amount of these colleges is decreased from 43 in 2000 to 22 in 2010. This fact shows a tendency to rationalization of the structures, which leads to increasing efficiency of the system.

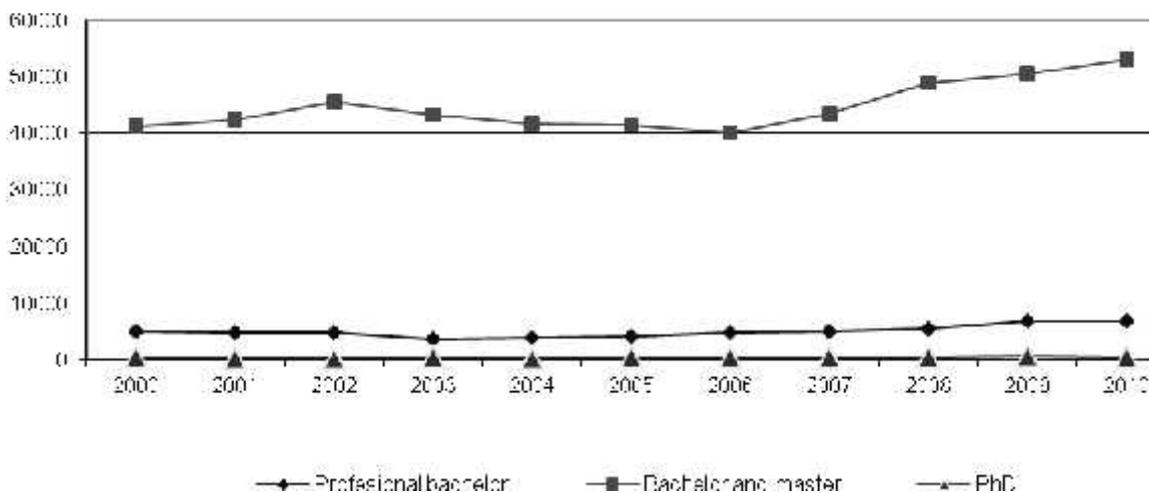
On figure 1 is shown that in Bulgaria more women than men graduate from higher school, which is a permanent tendency. Main reason for that is the major amount of students in economy, society and education studies which as a rule are feminized specialties. On figure 2 the dynamics of the graduating from higher school is shown in the first four particular specialties grouped after amount. It can be seen that major are the graduates in economy sciences and administration, followed by sciences of the society and human behavior. Hardly on the third place are the graduates in technical sciences and technical professions. This can easily be explained with the deep economical crisis and the readjustment of the whole economy. On figure 3 is shown that major is the part of the obtaining degrees bachelor and master which are the backbone of the Bulgarian higher school system.



Фиг. 1. Higher school graduates after gender

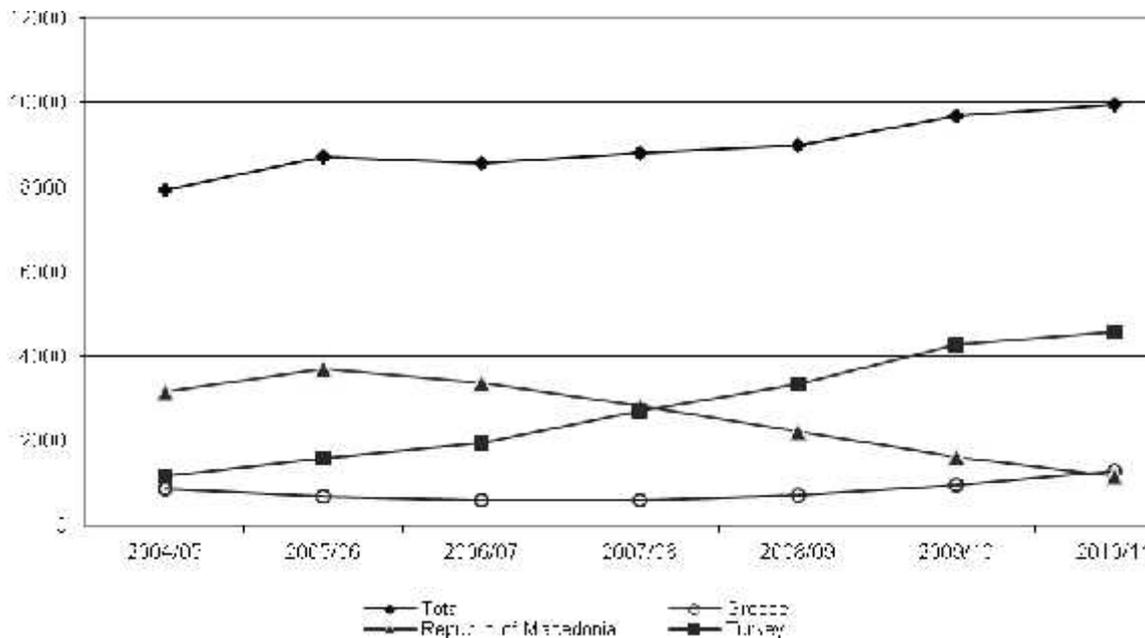


Фиг. 2. Higher school graduates after specialties



Фиг. 3. Higher school graduates after degree

New model of building and management of a system of higher education and the separate higher schools is possible on the principles of considerable state deregulation, constant actualization of the information insurance and analysis of the management information, institution responsibility – internal as well as in front of the society – transparency, public control and open academic concurrency. The fact that deregulation of the system of higher education presupposes a deregulation of the labor market should also be taken into account, which is already taking place in Bulgaria and will continue to expand in the perspectives of a common European labor market.

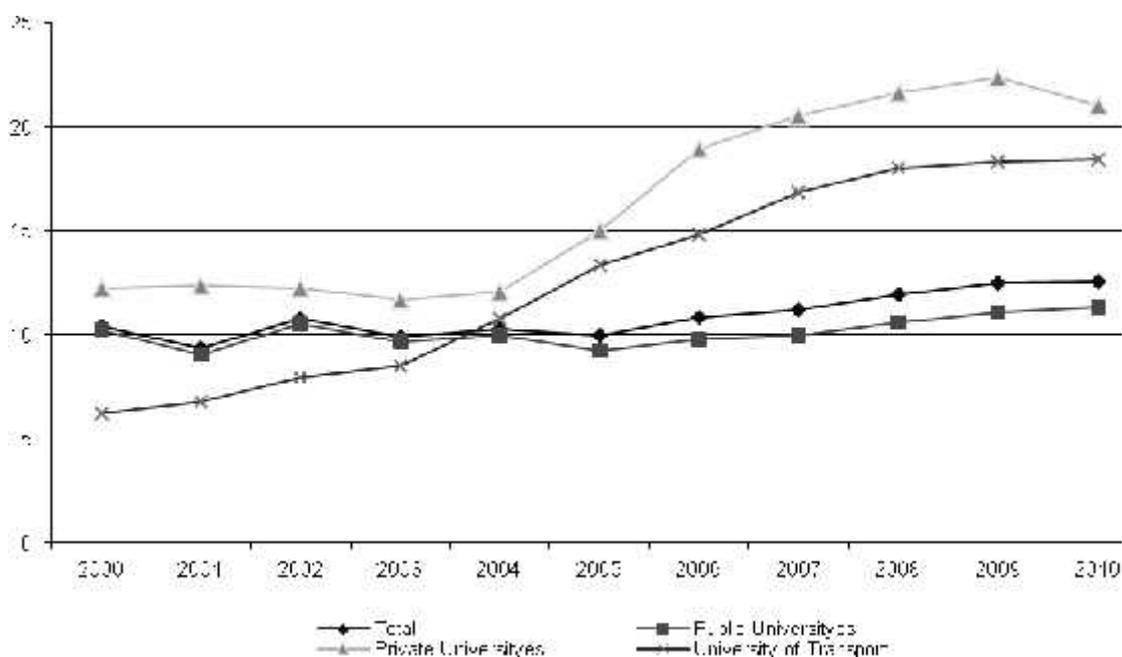


Фиг. 4. Foreign students studying in Bulgarian higher schools

The first universities arise in Middle-aged Western Europe as international communities. The rising of the national countries establishes the model of the national universities and the direct and dominating binding of the purposes of the higher education with the development of the separate nations. During the last decades there is an expanding process of internationalization of the higher

education, realized through growing mobility of the students and lectors, the establishment of foreign higher schools as well as through the striving to accomplishment of coordination and comparison between the different qualifications, offered in the different countries. Up to now the praxis of the mobility of the students was at the degree of Master and Doctor. Today the internationalization of the higher education starts with its first degree – Bachelor. On figure 4 is shown the tendency to constant expansion of the foreign students, educated at the Bulgarian higher schools, even though their amount is still minor. Mostly the students are from our neighbor countries – Turkey, Greece, and Macedonia. Typical is that while the amount of students from Turkey is constantly increasing, those from Macedonia is decreasing.

The processes of economical and cultural globalization as well as the rash development of the current information and communication technologies are a precondition for the expansion of the internationalization of the higher education. It is not possible, nor is it desirable that our country undertakes measures to closure towards external influences trough restrictive legislative orders. The only way to avoiding the negative consequences of the internationalization of the higher education, connected with the mass reorientation of Bulgarian students to studying abroad or in foreign higher schools is the increasing of the concurrency of the Bulgarian higher schools.



Фиг. 5. Number of students educated by one lecturer

Even though the formal quality data shows that in our country the approximate for the system of the higher education proportion between the number of students and the number of lectors is basically under the same one in the most of the European countries, this is a false indicator. Basically the presumption is that the low rate of the proportion indicates intensity of academic communication between students and lectors and this is reckoned to be an indicator for the quality of academic life. In Bulgaria this is not the case and this proportion is only a symptom of an ineffective institutional organization of the system for higher education. On figure 5 is shown the constant increase of this indicator but it is clear that this tendency is particularly strong after 2004 and mainly in the private higher schools. The change in the state higher schools is basically more difficult because of the conservatism and the bondage to stereotypes. From here the disproportions in the Bulgarian higher school education system become obvious. On the figure is shown also the tendency of the rash growth of this indicator for the Todor Kableshev University of Transport as a special case for the gradual setting up of a more effective institutional organization.

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