

Quo vadis, University Education? Challenges and Perspectives of Central Europe

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Abstract: My objective is to characterize present status of tertiary education in the Czech Republic, taking in account Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, with a main focus on (1) strategic goals, decisions and policies, and on (2) comparison and confrontation with current discourse in academic community on a broader context of university education in the age of globalization. The goal of my presentation is to answer to what extent the current reforms correspond to the needs of the present and of the future.

In the conclusion I argue that tertiary education in Central Europe is facing nowadays difficult challenges that lay at the intersection of strong national historical traditions, effects of post-communist transition (which brought new trends, mobility and opening to the world, but also some not coherent concepts), and current serious search for a balanced approach toward public and private university sector (including foreign universities), demographic decline and massification of university education and at the same time emphasis on diversity and increase of quality.

Keywords: *Central Europe; Czech Republic; Poland; Hungary; Slovakia; Tertiary Education; University; Challenges; Educational Policies; Accreditation; Diversity; Quality*

I. INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL MILESTONES OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

University education has a very long tradition in Central Europe. In this article, I am focusing on the area considered the heart of Europe, the core of Central Europe, i.e. Czech Republic, and or selected issues on Slovakia, Hungary and Poland.

The Czechs are very proud that Charles University in Prague was established already in 1348 by the famous King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. It is the oldest university north of the Alps. Establishment of other universities in 14th Century in Central Europe continued, in 1354 University in Cracow, Poland (today Jagellonian University), next year University of Vienna, Austria, two years later the oldest university in Hungary in Pécs were established. In the next centuries, the universities created a large and dense educational network. Most of them survived till today and represent main pillar and pride of university education in their countries.

A very significant threshold of the general educational level in Central Europe arrived in the period of Enlightenment in 18th Century. Educational reforms of Empress Maria Theresa, particularly the „General Education Code“ of 1774, established a large network of elementary schools and introduced a compulsory six years school attendance.

This policy upgraded in an unprecedented way the level of education of population in the historical lands of Habsburg monarchy and removed substantially the illiteracy in Central Europe. Seven years later, son of Maria Theresa,

Emperor Joseph II. abolished the serfdom which released the mobility of population living outside of major cities. This resulted in a rapid increase of students at Charles University and other universities in the monarchy and, following that, in a fast development of intelligencia in humanities, social sciences and later in technology [1].

Until the end of the First World War, most of Central Europe (Czech Lands, Hungary which included Slovakia, part of Poland) was part of Austria-Hungary which was a huge multinational, multicultural and multireligious conglomerate. There was a large network of universities with a considerable students and teachers mobility and a distinct Central European character. A part of Poland which was included into the Russian Empire, was in a very different situation and could have been re-incorporated into the Central European area only after the First World War and reestablishment of independent Poland.

After the First World War and establishment of successor states after the break-up of Austria-Hungary, a lot of common spirit and principles survived in the tertiary education in Central Europe, including a sense of belonging to a certain intellectual environment, common cultural and historical heritage including a large knowledge of German language, the scheme of academic ranks and titles survived till today. New very strong phenomena appeared as well – formulation of identities of newly independent states based on freedom from Austro-Hungarian national oppression, and on the other hand, a deep national trauma of Hungary [2].

Including of Central Europe into the sphere of influence of Soviet Union which lasted for four decades, until 1989, had a deep impact on all sections of society, politics, culture and economy of the countries of the Soviet bloc. The tertiary education was affected very significantly. While Austria could follow from 1956 its own path as a neutral country, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary were in the area of tertiary education transformed fully according to the Soviet model. Important however was that the historical memory and institutional experience from the past did not disappear, survived in certain academic circles, and after the collapse of communism in 1989 could as a bridge connect the reviving tertiary education with its traditions.

II. WHERE THE TERTIARY EDUCATION STANDS NOW, AFTER THREE DECADES OF TRANSFORMATIONS AND CHALLENGES?

a. Postcommunist transformation in 1990's

First task of the post communist transformation of the tertiary education was a removal of the communist ideology and its structures. Faculty and administration which held their positions just thanks to their high communist party ranks had to leave the universities. Back were invited those who had been expelled from academia because of their disagreement with communist ideology, and, as for instance in Czechoslovakia, with the occupation of the country by the

Soviet Union in 1968.

It was necessary to reconstruct the entire structure of departments and programs of studies. The curricula had to be changed, the required general educational courses of marxism-leninism disappeared. In the area of humanities and social sciences, which were most of all affected by communism, the gap between their level in Central Europe and in the developed world was very noticeable. Some disciplines were closed or very marginalized for four decades - philosophy with the exception of the marxist philosophy, religious studies and theology, political science, international relations, anthropology, sociology, art history, psychology, languages of the western world and oriental languages and cultures. Some modern fields of study were missing, for example intellectual history or gender studies. Even traditional disciplines such as history was manipulated and many areas were a taboo. Knowledge of foreign languages was low, with the exception of Russian and German. Just exceptionally the knowledge of English was good enough and therefore it was set up as a condition that all higher academic ranks holders should be within five years able to teach also in English.

It was very harmful for the tertiary education and for the academic life in general being cut off from academic institutions behind the Iron Curtain, with a non-existent student mobility and extremely limited teachers mobility, particularly in humanities and social sciences, without access to foreign literature and without exchange of thoughts and with more than difficult communication with colleagues from abroad was very harmful for the tertiary education and for the academic life in general [3].

Another new phenomenon which appeared in Central Europe in the beginning of 1990's have been private tertiary education institutions.

There was a large demand and also a large offer of this new type of educational institutions. The founders of the new schools were mostly Americans or other English speaking foreigners who came to Central Europe in the 1990's and settled here. Often, they usually did not have any deeper academic experience than their own studies. The newly established schools offered mostly undergraduate studies of business administration, international relations and liberal arts courses. Also the émigrés who have been returning back to their home countries and locals who were in search for new perspectives, approaches and opportunities became involved in these schools. However, until approximately 2000, there was no legal framework in any Central European country allowing the recognition of a private tertiary education sector. That's why even if constructed according to the American model of undergraduate studies, these schools and their programs were accredited usually just as requalification courses.

In this enthusiastic period of 1990's, there was a big interest for this type of education, despite the diplomas from undergraduate studies at private schools were not recognized for admission for graduate programs at public universities. In general, the employability of the graduates was very good in businesses and they have been also often accepted to the Master's programs at universities abroad, based on evaluation of transcripts.

Another type of private universities that appeared in 1990's in Central Europe were branches of foreign universities. Very specific phenomenon was Central European

University which was established by a philanthropist of Hungarian origin George Soros in early 1990's with campuses in Prague and in Budapest and with a planned campus in Warsaw. Thus, the concept was truly Central European. In the end of 1990's the Prague campus was closed and the departments moved to Budapest where it operates now until today. It is a graduate and post-graduate educational institution with a very strong internalization and academic reputation and in 1990's it represented a picture of a modern university with new methods of teaching and welcoming staff.

b. Tertiary education in the 21st Century

In 1998, the Czech Republic adopted a new Tertiary Education Act which codified establishment and functioning of the private sector in tertiary education. This allowed the private schools to accredit the programs of study, the participation of their students at the Erasmus program, social benefits for their students, recognition of credits and their transferability and also acceptance of representatives of private school to various organs and commission, such as Council of Tertiary Education Institutions of the Czech Republic or the Czech Conference of Rectors. Similar development experienced Poland and Hungary and soon, the private tertiary education institutions became a visible addition to the academic environment. This was connected also with some negative manifestations, for instance, an aggressive marketing, low admission requirements, awarding so called „quick diplomas“ etc., which contributed to the prejudices against private schools.

A basic strategic document on educational policy at that time was the *National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic*, so called White Paper [4], which was after a large discussion adopted in 2001. It remained in power until the adoption of the Strategy of Education Policy till 2020 which replaced it.

Between 2000 and 2015, the number of students almost quadruppled and the access to the tertiary education became available to every high school graduate who was interested in it. The number of students reached its peak in 2010 and 2011 (396 thousands).[5]

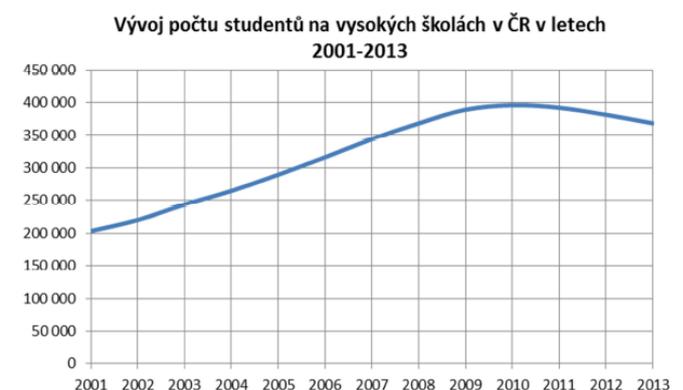


Fig. 1 Number of students at tertiary education institution in the Czech Republic, 2001-2013

Source: Ministry of Education of Czech Republic, quoted in *Framework of Development of Tertiary Education till 2020*, 33.

Foreign students at Czech tertiary education institutions

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2013
Azerbaijan	12	12	14	22	46	83	185	212
Belarus	43	134	197	308	381	517	568	617
Bulgaria	72	81	96	119	126	129	118	121
China	18	18	24	38	67	92	135	169
Cyprus	70	85	106	139	182	193	216	213
France	12	13	15	27	105	123	130	125
Germany	71	111	170	241	324	391	395	436
Greece	395	174	99	131	226	378	381	355
India	38	54	72	100	106	144	179	193
Italy	15	14	20	28	38	46	124	178
Israel	39	79	129	183	143	133	117	134
Kazakhstan	29	44	103	224	478	803	1156	1368
Malaysia	0	1	3	73	212	318	359	306
Moldova	14	27	33	60	95	158	163	159
Norway	48	71	138	236	246	266	331	359
Poland	108	138	198	255	360	357	375	360
Portugal	11	35	99	266	404	480	442	413
Russia	187	327	543	1030	1725	2546	3387	4312
Serbia	0	0	0	101	130	137	158	148
Slovakia	371	6983	1163	1623	1986	2433	2404	2343
	8	4	4	8	6	2	4	4
Sweden	43	36	45	87	127	141	171	167
Ukraine	212	380	534	703	1019	1464	1759	2019
United Kingdom	220	213	299	403	408	420	443	505
United States	62	70	106	171	168	178	194	217
Uzbekistan	9	14	77	110	174	182	171	159
Vietnam	85	149	305	545	631	720	894	1045
Other	148	1801	2002	2023	2331	2519	2983	3085
	4							
Total	701	1106	1706	2386	3011	3725	3957	4080
	5	4	1	1	8	0	8	9

Source: Ministry of Education of Czech Republic, quoted in *Framework of Development of Tertiary Education till 2020*, 39-40.

Character of tertiary education institutions changed substantially and adapted to the high numbers of students which had now much more diverse education, profile and background than it used to be before 1989, when the admission, particularly to humanities, medicine and law, was very limited and there was a restrictive „numerus clausus.“

This quantitative growth had also some negative aspects, particularly a decrease of quality of education in some areas. The university facilities were not adequate to accommodate the students, classrooms were over crowded, there was lack of dormitory space, the lecturers did not have capacity for student centered approach.

The fifteen year period of a very rapid quantitative expansion of tertiary education in the Czech Republic was coming, around the year 2015, to its end. After 2015, a decrease of number of tertiary education students was caused by a demographic development, as in the 2nd half of 1990's, there were very low numbers of the high school students. In the period 2011-2016, the number of nineteen year old generation decreased from 131 thousands to 92 thousands, which was 30%. According to some estimates, the number of high school graduates will again start to grow after 2023.[6]

In the same period, the private tertiary education institutions which from modest beginnings in terms of offer of

programs of study grew in some cases into large and academically sound institutions. Many of them struggled on the other hand with low number of students. The private schools which were considered to be „too many“ started to be perceived as competitors to public universities „stealing“ potential students from them as they represented for the public universities an important source of income based on subsidies for each student.

These fifteen years of existence of a private tertiary education sector were characterized by efforts to gain a reputation and academic recognition – in which some succeeded better, some did not, and by efforts to attract academics of higher ranks for permanent positions which was not easy at all, by effort to compete for scarce grant opportunities.

The pressure on private schools to have permanent faculty with higher academic ranks is very strong. It is not an easy task to fulfill. The Czech system allows to award habilitations and professorships only to public universities. Therefore those academic who want to achieve these ranks, have to be admitted to this process „as outsiders“ at a public university. This is not easy at all. The Czech public universities are still very suspicious towards the quality of private schools, and to build a trust and reputation needs not only fulfillment of criteria for a habilitation or professorship, but a lot of personal effort. Very difficult condition with professorships to fulfill is, for instance, a condition to have Ph.D. students, even to bring them to a successful Ph.D. graduation. However, the Czech accreditation system does not accredit Ph.D. studies at private schools yet and therefore for those who teach at private universities is almost impossible to have own doctoral students, even if – if such lecturers would work at a public university – this would be not a problem. The only way out of this impact is either to be an external advisor, but this is not easy, or – which to have joint degree, but we so far do not know the results of attempts to habilitate with joint degrees. On the other hand, the accreditation of every programs of study requires a certain percentage of courses to be taught by Docents or Professors (40% for BA and 60% for MA courses). Another solution is to hire a docent or professor who already achieved this rank. However, to bring such expert to a private school is not easy as such high level academics usually have their well established positions at public universities and are directors of institutes, leaders of large teams etc. Here, however, the chances of private school are growing as many young ambitious academic tried to habilitate, and then they do not find enough of space for themselves in the departments where a strong competitions reigns.

Level of competitiveness in the globalized world and success in job market represents a very important criterion indicating also quality of education. How stands the Czech Republic? In 2012, the unemployment of university graduates disregarding their age was 2.9% , at the same time, the EU average was 6.2% . Czech Republic belongs with Austria, Netherlands and Germany to the countries with the lowest numbers of unemployed university graduates. From 2011 however, there was a rapid increase of university graduates in jobs not requiring a tertiary education. In 2010 it was 8.3, in 2012 already 13%.[7] Nevertheless, the situation on the job market for the tertiary education graduates in the Czech Republic is still very good in comparison with other countries of the European Union. In average, in the European Union even twice so many university graduates work at

positions that do not require a university education. Recently, however, the difference between the Czech Republic and the European Union decreases.



Fig. 2: Unemployment of graduates up to two years after graduation, 2002-2012

Source: Ministry of Education of Czech Republic, quoted in *Framework of Development of Tertiary Education till 2020*, 67.

Very basic problem in the Czech Republic and other Central European countries is a continuing underbudgeting which is far behind the resources that are invested in university education by developed countries. This is also one of the motivations of exodus of many young talented academics, and also medical doctors, natural scientists, technicians and others to the West where they are much better paid and have a better conditions for work.

c. Strategy of Tertiary Education to 2020

Currently, there are the following European and national strategic documents that manage the development of tertiary education sector in the Czech Republic:

At the European level, the fundamental strategic document are:

- Europe 2020. A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*[8]
- Strategic Framework of European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)*[9]
- Bologna declaration from 1999 and communiqué on European Higher Education Area*
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQUA)*
- Country specific recommendations*

At national level, the fundamental strategic document which defines the Czech educational policy is *Strategy of Education Policy of Czech Republic till 2020*, which was adopted in 2014.

At the level of tertiary education, the key strategic document is the *Longterm Plan of Educational and Academic, Research, Development and Innovation, Artistic and other Creative activity for the Area of Tertiary Educational Institutions for the Period 2016-2020*, adopted in 2015, and updated every year. [11]

A series of strategic documents adopted in 2015, particularly the Framework should guide the Czech tertiary education to the goal:

In 2020, the tertiary education institutions will offer a

broad spectrum of quality programs of study that will reflect needs and interests of a diverse populace of students and of modern and innovative economics. The socially disadvantaged, applicants with special needs and other non traditional students will be not excluded from studies. The environment at schools will be creative, innovative, open to new initiatives, and enriched by a significant number of international students and academics.[12]

Supporting instruments are the key European and national documents, detailed and objective analysis of the situation, quality assurance and assessment, operational programs Education for Competitiveness and Adaptability and practical experience.

The criteria of quality assessment were not codified in the Tertiary Education Act of 1999. Even the students evaluations which are a standard part of the semester were at that time in the very beginning and there was little experience with them. The quality assurance and assessment was taken first in 2003 and 2004 on the agenda by the Commission for the Quality of Education and its Assessment which is a body of the Council of Tertiary Education Institutions of the Czech Republic. It started to be considered a serious criterion by the Accreditation Commission, even if at that time the position prevailed that the control over the quality of education should belong to the university and not to the Accreditation Commission.

The rapid growth of private tertiary education institutions was one of the strongest motivations to strengthen the quality. A series of measures to this end was codified and these requirements were requested from both types of tertiary education institutions, public and private. Accreditation commission incorporated many aspects of quality into the accreditation standards (publications outcomes, qualification criteria, mobility, involvement in international projects and internationalisation including incoming foreign students. It was also an institution of a guarantor of each program of study, and strict conditions on who qualifies as a guarantor, and more.

In respect of practical experience and internships, they are at this time not strictly required by most public universities, but it depends on the academic discipline studied. Most of private schools which are practically oriented require the internship. In general, however, interconnection of study with the real working environment and the concept of life long learning are very strongly encouraged.

In the last decade and particularly in the recent years, the criterion of quality, its assessment and adoption of measures for its improvement became one of the priorities of Czech educational system. It mirrors in many areas, including habilitations and professorships, policies and interventions against plagiarism at all level, and in a new accreditation system.

The fundamental strategic documents emphasize as one of the priorities a building of an inclusive system and making possible to study qualified students from disadvantaged groups, such as handicapped students, socially disadvantaged students, Roma and others. Despite many efforts the system in the Czech republic has been from this point of view defined as still transitional, yet close to the inclusive system.

Representation of men and women studying at tertiary education institutions is a strong indicator of the

social, cultural and political situation in the society.

The women represented 56,2 % of students in 2013. [13] At private tertiary education institutions studied at the same time 15% of all students in the country and 60% out of these were women. The most feminized areas of study at public universities in the Czech Republic are pedagogical disciplines (81,6%), medical and health care disciplines (72,3%) and humanities and social sciences (65,4%). [14] The lowest percentage of women is in technical disciplines and natural sciences.

Retention rate is rather high and indicates that only about one half of students graduates and that a higher rate of those not finishing the studies is among men than among women (at BA level 53.3% men do not finish the studies compared with 35.9 % women). [15] Even if the analytical materials of the Ministry of Education to this topic are still limited, my opinion is, that these data do not reflect well the real situation. Before 1989/1990, the students could not apply for admission at several school, transfers between programs of study or various faculties or interruptions of were very difficult. Therefore the students who wanted to study usually graduated in a straightforward study effort, while the only major drop out ratio was in technical fields. At present time, there is much higher flexibility, students travel, they are returning to study sometimes after a longer period of time and they transfer to another university, and this flexibility seemingly decreases the retention rate, which is without any doubts high.

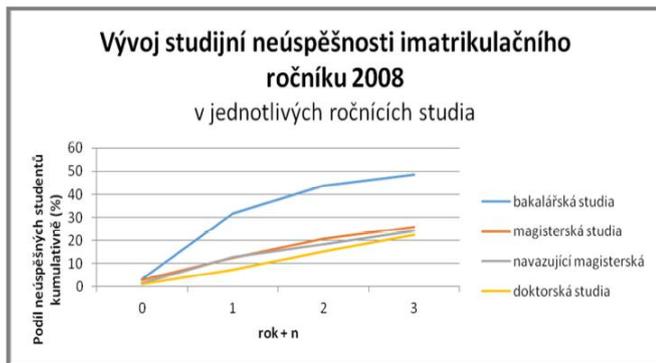


Fig. 3: Retention rate of students of the year 2008

Ratio of drop out students cumulatively Year of study
Blue line: Undergraduate
Orange and grey lines: Graduate
Yellow: Doctoral studies

Source: Ministry of Education of Czech Republic, quoted in *Framework of Development of Tertiary Education till 2020*, 36.

Overall, as key measures to achieve the strategic goal of 2020 have been indicated strategic leadership and management, particularly accreditation and assessment of quality with indicators of quality being reliable, transparent and objective, financing through a state subsidy based on performance and less on the number of students only, which applies only to public educational sector, and resources from operational programs.

An emphasis on strengthening and intensifying a strategic governance in educational policy resulted in the adoption of the new Tertiary Education Act in September 2016. Adoption of the Act, which is actually just an amendment of the original Act of 1998, was on the agenda for more than ten years. A substantial change happened in the system of accreditations. The Accreditation Commission was abolished

and a new National Accreditation Bureau was established with an enlarged staff and a large network of reviewers. A decision was taken that all universities and other tertiary education institutions have to accredit anew all their programs of study which must be finished by 2024 (meaning that by that time all students of that program must graduate or finish studying that program). There were many other changes including introduction of institutional accreditations (until then, only program accreditation existed) and a detailed supervision of how much the lecturers teach externally. This is the result of a long effort to prevent the academics to teach extensively externally at various schools beyond their permanent job. The fact is that particularly in the early 2000's this went in many cases to the extremes as many lecturers benefited from the demand and became so called turboprofessors. Mostly, the motivation behind this was search for opportunities and a chance to earn more money as the salaries in academia were low, and even today they are behind for example Germany. Particularly private school offered these opportunities as the adjunct faculty was cheaper for them than permanent faculty, and at the same time they were able to offer the adjunct faculty better salaries than the public universities.

III. METHODOLOGY

This article is based on strategic documents of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, and on an expertise of the author as professor of history and as member of Presidium of Council of Tertiary Education Institutions of the Czech Republic (since 2004), member of the Committee for the Quality of Tertiary Education and its Assessment, Assessor of the National Accreditation Bureau, International Member of Hungarian Accreditation Commission, and as a Provost of Anglo-American University (2009-2019). The article is mostly descriptive offering in the end several discursive thoughts.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Vision formulated in the Strategy of Education Policy of the Czech Republic to 2020 formulated the meaning of education in following four main goals:

1. Personality development which contributes to the increase of the quality of human life;
2. Preservation and development of culture as of a system of shared values;
3. Development of active citizenship building preconditions for a solidarity society, sustainable development and democratic governance;
4. Preparation for the employment.

A foundation for this vision should be a Life Long Learning as a permanent proces of fulfillment of the four goals mentioned above. The vision could be achieved only if the educational policy would actively contribute to a flexible combination of various educational paths and a bigger integration of the educational system.[17]

Discourse on the orientation of Czech and in larger context Central European tertiary education was conceived very largely. There was an obvious enthusiasm of the teams that worked on strategic materials [18] and demonstrated excellent leadership and managerial skills. At the same time, this discourse and also other platforms revealed some critical tones, such as that one of the main weaknesses of our education policy nowadays is that the long term strategic priorities have been defined not sufficiently understandably,

that there are too many documents of conceptual and strategic character, not linked together, lacking a clear hierarchy and connection with priorities of development of the education systém. [19]

Within the academic community, particularly in humanities and social science, doubts appear as some academics see the current strategic activities going to the extremes. For example ideas were expressed by some strategists in one of the round tables to the *Strategic Framework for the Czech Republic 2030*, that in near future people will be able to pursue even twenty careers in a working life, based on life long learning. [20] There are debates about possibility of predictions saying that their main problem is that their authors want to be too precise. Economist Tomas Havranek paraphrased the economic historian Deirdre McCloskey and said that according to her we are too focused on one virtue and this is reason, in Latin Prudentia. We concentrate only on it and we develop complicated models in which people can maximalize their benefit. But Prudentia is just one out of seven other basic virtues which are today neglected. Historian Zdenek Benes said that a perception of issues within a larger context supported by a general philosophical education and awareness disappeared from the Czech education with a „technocratic“ justification that an encyclopedic education is a historically outdated stage and that nowadays just a specialised expert approach prevails.

The requirement of a universal and unified secondary education and of a massification of education creates a pressure of „all must study“ which is in fact a „postponed unemployment,“ said Zdenek Benes. The efforts to eliminate a selectivity results in a fact that we are losing future elites. According to Beneš, Bologna proces is a controversial path and as a universal model is problematic. When it was implemented in the Czech Republic, the B.A. level did not have any tradition in the country and was not considered, and even today is not considered, as a full-fledged education. [21] Nowadays, not many students finish their studies at the B.A. level, most of them continue at M.A. Level which also the employers require. The five year programs of study leading directly to the MA degree were traditional in Central Europe. This was also one of the reasons why the OECD criticized the Czech Republic for low numbers of B. A. students, in reality the students were in five years programs.

European Union in its Strategy Europe 2020 set up a goal to reach in 2020 approx. 40% of persons with higher education in the age between 30-34 years. National goal of the Czech Republic was 32 %. Even if in the end of 1990's the ratio of university graduates was much lower than in the EU, fast development of the higher education in the Czech Republic made the situation almost even. One of major debates today in the Czech Republic is about the inflation of university degrees and related negative aspects.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Public opinion in academia in Central Europe was very disturbed by a recent decision of Hungarian Government on removal of accreditation from the Central European University. There was a lot of protests among the students and faculty of Central European University and expressions of sympathies from academia in Central Europe and in the European Union. The critics of Viktor Orbán's steps saw it as a move away from liberalism, multiculturalism and democracy that characterized the 1990's when the CEU has been established, and even as a turning away from the values

of European Union.

The official position of Hungary was that on the territory of Hungary (and the same applies to the Czech Republic) should not operate any foreign universities which would not be accredited in that country and which would not be a branch of a foreign university that is accredited in its home countries and have its campus there.

In the Czech Republic there are few campuses of foreign universities, such as New York University, all other schools, which have an international character, have Czech accreditation and sometimes in addition also a foreign accreditation, but the Czech accreditation is a condition.

In respect of the Central European University, there is a single academic identity operating under a dual legal and academic accreditation provided by U.S. and Hungarian authorities. This identity consists of Central European University and Közép-európai Egyetem.

CONCLUSIONS

The essence of education policy is to answer the question on how the education system should be organized and developed in order to contribute to the development of society, democratic governance, to the succeeding of people in the changing world and to the competitiveness of the state. This is a premise formulated in the strategic materials of the Czech Ministry of Education. Vision formulated in the Strategy of Education Policy of the Czech Republic to 2020 formulated the meaning of education in following four main goals:

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A foundation for this vision should be a Life Long Learning as a permanent proces of fulfillment of the four goals mentioned above. The vision could be achieved only if the educational policy would actively contribute to a flexible combination of various educational paths and a bigger integration of the educational system. [16]

The tertiary education in the Czech Republic and in Central Europe is facing nowadays difficult challenges that lay at the intersection of strong national historical traditions, effects of post-communist transition which led to a fast development of particularly private educational sector with many positives and negatives, and current serious search for a balanced approach toward public and private university sector, demographic decline and massification of university education and at the same time emphasis on diversity and increase of quality.

The goal of my article was to answer the question to what extent the current reforms correspond to the needs of the present and of the future. The long term strategy of education interlinked with other strategic concepts of other governmental bodies and the European Union is highly important. Priorities have been well defined and there is a hope that the tertiary education is entering a stage of good management, leadership and governance. So from this point of view, the answer is „yes“, the current reforms correspond to the needs of the present and of the future.

Question remains, whether under the heavy load of reports, outcome evaluations, surveys of quality, effectivity and productivity, many forms and documents and other paperwork, a shiny ideal of a wise professor and scholar to whom the students travelled across mountains and rivers would not disappear.

[21] Development of the Government of the Czech Republic in December 2016 in Prague, Hrzansky Palace, personal notes of the author.
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- [6] Ibid.
- [7] Ibid., 7, 8.
- [8] European Commission, Brussels, March 3, 2010, COM(2010) 2020.
- [9] Adopted in 2009 following ET 2010 adopted in 2002 based on the Lisbon strategy of 2000.
- [10] *Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020* <http://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020>.
- [11] *Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávací a vědecké, výzkumné, vývojové a inovační, umělecké a další tvůrčí činnosti pro oblast vysokých škol na období 2016-2020*. <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/vysoke-skolstvi/dlouhodoby-zamer>
- [12] Ibid, translated by Milada Polisenska
- [13] Framework, 11.
- [14] Ibid.
- [15] Ibid., 14-15.
- [16] <http://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020>, 8-12.
- [17] <http://www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020>, 8-12.
- [18] Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and also Council of Sustainable Development of the Government of the Czech Republic which produced a fundamental material *Strategic Framework for the Czech Republic 2030*. For this topic is relevant the chapter Education.
- [19] Ibid, 12.
- [20] Round table organized by a Committee of Sustainable