Univerza v Ljubljani

Fakulteta za družbene vede

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Mreženje s trgom dela v visokošolstvu

Networking with the Labour Market in Higher Education

Magistrsko delo

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Mentor: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Brückner

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The topic of the master thesis discusses the field of higher education and the appearance of neoliberal ideas in it. Consequences of such reasoning are a gradual withdrawal of the state from public higher education, education marketization and transforming it into payable, thus breaching the basic principle of education within Article 13 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, signed in 1976, that is the principle of free access to education for all. In accordance with the events and reforms that are taking place in today's higher education in Slovenia, which are understood as a result of changes in education outside Slovenia that is the influence from the EU as well as the American higher education system, the research of the issue begins from the perspective of the Slovenian higher education and then expands into a global framework of reforms in higher education and how these have affected higher education in general. In the period of only five years Slovenia has witnessed a wide-spread of numerous private faculties, and what is more, these are entitled to the Bologna education system which many of them have taken advantage of and currently perform. The topic is relevant since it is taking place this moment and affects strongly the labour market, of which the state is reflected in high unemployment rates and increasingly more often migration of highly educated population. At the same time it affects the quality of education due to a gradual but obvious and progressive withdrawal of the state from public education sphere, but not so much in its financing of the private sector of higher education, but rather by enabling new especially private players to enter the already saturated 'market' of higher education institutions. The thesis researches what changes have occured within the EU and the Bologna system in Slovenia, Germany and the UK, and provides a comparison with the US education system, which the European one is either an adapted and/or changed version of. The aim is to ascertain how much today's faculties respect the Bologna reform regarding increasing student employability, what the cooperation between faculties and the labour market is, to what extent each of the researched countries practices the principle of free access to education for all as well as how higher education reforms affect the state withdrawal from this sphere of education thus causing it to lose its quality by being marketed as a product. Here the focus is also on how networking with the labour market in higher education influences the employment rate of all higher education level graduates.

Key words: higher education, education accessibility, employability skills, graduate employment rate, networking with the labour market in higher education.

Mreženje s trgom dela v visokošolstvu

Tema magistrske naloge se navezuje na področje visokošolskega izobraževanja in pojava neoliberalnih idej v njem. Posledice takšnih idej so umik države iz javnega visokošolstva, marketizacija izobraževanja in spreminjanje šolanja v plačljivo, s čimer se krši osnovno načelo izobraževanja znotraj 13. člena Mednarodnega pakta o ekonomskih, socialnih in kulturnih pravicah, ki je stopil v veljavo 1976, in sicer načelo prostega dostopa do postopno brezplačne izobrazbe. Po dogodkih in reformah, ki se dogajajo danes v visokošolstvu v Sloveniji, katere razumem kot rezultat sprememb v izobraževanju izven Slovenije, torej vplivov iz območja EU kot tudi ameriškega sistema izobraževanja, se obravnava problematike začne iz vidika slovenskega visokošolstva in nato iz njega prestopi v globalni okvir sprememb in kako le te vplivajo na visokošolstvo na sploh. V Sloveniji so se v samo zadnjih petih letih razbohotile številne zasebne fakultete, še več, kot takšne so upravičene do uvedbe bolonjskega šolskega sistema, katerega je velika večina tudi izkoristila in ga tudi izvajajo. Tema je relevantna, saj se dogaja v tem trenutku in močno vpliva na trg zaposlovanja, katerega stanje se odraža v visoki stopnji brezposelnosti in vedno bolj pogosto tudi v odhajanju visoko izobraženega prebivalstva v tujino. Hkrati vpliva tudi na kakovost izobraževanja, dogaja se umik iz sfere javnega visokošolstva, postopno vendar očitno in progresivno, vendar ne toliko v državnem financiranju zasebnega sektorja visokošolstva, temveč bolj v omogočanju vstopa novim predvsem zasebnim igralcem na že tako prenasičen 'trg' visokošolskih institucij. Naloga razišče, kakšne spremembe so se zgodile znotraj EU in bolonjskega sistema v Sloveniji, Nemčiji in Združenem Kraljestvu, in hkrati poda primerjavo s sistemom v ZDA, katerega kopija, bodisi prirejena in/ali spremenjena, je evropski. Cilj je ugotoviti, koliko današnje fakultete upoštevajo zahtevo Bolonjske reforme glede višanja zaposljivosti svojih študentov, kakšno je sodelovanje med fakultetami in delom trga, koliko katera država upošteva načelo dostopnosti izobraževanja vsem, ter kako reforma visokošolstva vpliva na umik države iz njega in s tem izgublja svojo kakovost – se prodaja kot izdelek, kjer raziskujem, kako mreženje s trgom dela v visokošolstvu vpliva na stopnjo zaposlenosti diplomantov vseh stopenj.

Ključne besede: visokošolstvo, dostopnost izobraževanja, zaposljiva znanja, stopnja zaposlenosti diplomantov, mreženje s trgom dela v visokošolstvu.

CONTENT

I. THEORETICAL PART

1 INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF THE RESEARCHED ISSUE

The topic of the master thesis concerns the field of higher education and the appearance of neoliberal ideas in it. The consequences of these ideas are the withdrawal of the state from its higher education, marketing or marketization of education by supporting the setting up of private higher education institutions and thus gradually transforming education into payable, consequently breaching the basic principle of education, the principle of free access to education of all levels for all citizens. After the events and changes that are taking place in today's higher education in Slovenia which resemble more as I call it 'the period of higher education stagnation and privatization' and which I understand as a result of the changes occurring in the same education abroad, more specifically in the EU but also as the influence of the American higher education system, I begin the discussed and researched issue from the perspective of the Slovenian higher education and then expand it into a European framework of changes in higher education on the basis of the two included EU member states and how these changes affect this field of higher education field generally. And although »private education (of any level) contributes to a higher diversification of the offer«, the aim of my research is to establish, if private higher education establishments with their way of operation i.e. following up on graduates and the networking with the labour market offered during and after studies also contribute to higher employment rates of higher education graduates. (Šetina 2002) The beginning of the dramatic changes in the Slovenian higher education started at a press conference in 2007 when the Slovenian Ministry of Education presented a number of changes in education that were written down in the 'Material for journalists' (Slovenian *Gradivo za novinarke in novinarje*), which introduced new measures for the »harmonization of the method of financing public and private schools while taking into account the modified financing of public schools«, or in other words for »enabling the setting up and co-financing of private schools in the field of secondary vocational and professional education, which was not possible before that.« (Adam 2005) Since then Slovenia has seen the spread of private not elementary or secondary schools but faculties, which are actually companies that decided to offer their own education services and literally sell education and the degrees connected with it. What

is more, many of these newly-established faculties even reserve the right to implement the Bologna programmes, which many of them have naturally accepted and still offer today in exchange for tuition. Why privatizing higher education is important is argumented in the thesis by a statement, claiming that a continuous opening of new private faculties in Slovenia affects two main issues of the thesis, i.e. the networking offered at private faculties in Slovenia and the general (public and private higher education) graduate employment rates. The thesis looks into the subject by researching in what ways exactly these changes influence both main issues of the thesis and if the introduction of the Bologna reform and the public-private partnership have positively affected the employment rates of the new Bologna programme graduates.

1.1 METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPT

One of the aims of the research is to establish firstly which of the three studied countries, i.e. Slovenia, Germany and the UK, respects most the principle of free access to higher education and the manner in which this principle is practiced, secondly which of them produces highest graduate employment rates, and thirdly the type of networking each of the studied systems uses to increase student employability skills and graduate employment rates, all in order to ascertain whether it would be possible to use the selected, best-practice model in the focused on higher education system in Slovenia.

The topic of the thesis is therefore relevant since it is taking place now and strongly affects the labour market and consequently the high unemployment rates of especially highly-educated graduates who often with finding no job in their own country are forced to move abroad in search of a job that suits their qualifications. In addition, the topic of the thesis concerns the quality of higher education, where the withdrawal of the state from public higher education is taking place obviously, though gradually but still progressively, especially in Slovenia. Besides the enumerated, the thesis investigates exactly what changes have occurred within the EU with the Bologna system as implemented in Slovenia, Germany and the UK, and at the same time provides a comparison with the American higher education system, which the European one seems to be an adapted version of. Within this research comparison the focus furthers on the Bologna system in the EU, that is how it was implemented in each of the selected countries, what changes it has caused, whether higher

education is public or private, including the reasons for which of the two prevails, and what the results or rather achievements in both academic and scientific fields respectively, of such an implementation are. Another focus of the research is on the withdrawal of the state from higher education, that is on investigating whether this withdrawal causes, or not, the decrease in higher education quality, by taking into account the marketing of higher education and whether the privatization of HE increases graduate employment rates. The question I wish to answer here is whether higher education privatization in Slovenia is positive (and if yes, in what way) or negative (again, stating why and in what manner) searching for answers regarding the private faculties' use of networking with the labour market in order to increase graduate employment rates and how it affects the principle of free access to higher education and with it not only higher education accessibility but also higher education networking (with the labour market) accessibility to students (and graduates). I include both positive and negative effects of higher education marketization as it is already present in both the US and Europe, and since the main purpose of the thesis is to help future generations of the Slovenian HE graduates, accordingly the thesis includes Slovenia, where the 'new type' of higher education seems to have been present since its independence in 1991 as is the case with one of the studied cases, i.e. GEA College, while the same trend is much better developed and has been available for a much longer time as shall be seen in the survey not in Germany but the UK.

The thesis that concerns the tertiary or higher area of education is as follows:
The Slovenian educational system is unfair and treats students with weaker social background unequally since the Slovenian government supports private faculties financially where individuals are provided with networking with the labour market and consequently gain better chances of finding a job.

The explanation of the term 'students with weaker social background' refers to the fact that these students are disadvantaged when compared with their private education institution peers, since their parents cannot enrol them in private schools or faculties due to financial problems but instead enrol them in public ones which around 75% of all Slovenian students enrol in. (Svetlik 2013) What is more, public higher education has been dealing with the same or lately even much decreased amount of state funding due to the financial crisis thus

being overburdened on one hand by an increase in higher education enrolment rates and on the other hand supporting the entire education process with the same and often lower number of staff. (Rebolj 2013) Another issue of the Slovenian higher education is that although public education is to be provided for free, in Slovenia full-time students who are above the age of 26 as well as all part-time students are required to pay (high but still lower than in the private HE sphere) tuition, and what is more, in Slovenia students who graduate from academically-oriented courses, which are however provided only by public faculties, in the end do not seem to qualify for any job since their acquired education is general or better theoretical (often perceived as 'useless' in today's labour market), whereas students from vocationally- or professionally-oriented private (but also public) higher education institutions are supplied with more practical knowledge that can be 'used', that is, put to practice immediately after graduation. What is more, private faculties in Slovenia do not need to publish their theses publicly as is done by graduates of public faculties and are in addition supplied with better networking with the labour market since they are basically companies, helping their students to connect with employers faster and better and thus find a job earlier than graduates coming from public faculties.

Peter Mortimore explains the purpose of today´s higher education in his own words: »The purpose of education is increasingly seen in instrumental terms, such as those of providing a service for industry and commerce, the purpose of which in turn is the generation of wealth«.[1] (Mortimore and Stone 1990, 69) It seems as though every aspect of education is becoming subjected to the labour market which can be viewed in a way as positive since more should definitely be done to help not only increase the numbers of higher education graduates (as required by both the EU and OECD respectively) when compared to their enrolment rates but more importantly increase their employment rates. In the last two decades the number of private faculties in Slovenia has almost reached the number of public ones and the trend of providing higher education degree with increased employability chances in exchange for tuition has become the hot issue, resulting in both higher enrolment rates in higher education and higher unemployment rates of higher education graduates.

[1] Mortimore and Stone, 1990. *Measuring Educational Quality*

1.2 RESEARCH METHODS

The topic of my research covers enrolment rates, graduate rates as well as employment strategies used at faculties with the focus on those strategies that provide networking with the labour market. The data on enrolments and graduation are publicly available and are used as such as the basis of my research. Other existing documents of both the EU and OECD respectively are used for the provision of the data on how successful or rather why and on the basis of what strategies exactly the other two studied countries are so successful in fighting their higher education graduate unemployment rates as compared to the rates of the Slovenian graduates of the same level of education. Since the focus is on helping the Slovenian higher education system, especially the public one which is provided for free, data on the graduate employment rates and methods of networking with the labour market in private faculties are needed, however, since these are not publicly available the methods of questionnaire and interview are used to gain these. As regards the issue of the networking provision at Slovenian private faculties that is although networking can be found mentioned explicitly on their website, no direct data concerning the issue are available. Consequently, two case studies are used, which means two private faculties where I have personally taught, and to balance the opinions on the topic, the opinion of an expert of the second largest public university in Slovenia is included as well. Unfortunately, no answers were acquired from the chancellor of the biggest and oldest Slovenian university that is the University of Ljubljana, but arguments for a no-response situation in this case can be explained by the fact that at the time of writing the thesis the university was in the process of changing its chancellor, where Mr Stanovnik's four-year mandate finished and was succeeded by Mr Svetlik, who is as of October 2013 the new chancellor of the University of Ljubljana.

The hypotheses that combine the fields of enrolment rates, graduation rates, employment rates and networking forms with the labour market in higher education are collected and researched by means of the below provided three hypotheses which I try to confirm or refute and these are:

H1: Graduates from private higher education carry higher employment rates than graduates from public higher education.

H2: Networking is better provided at private faculties than at public ones.
H3: Networking with the labour market in higher education increases the employment rate of higher education graduates.

The methods used in my research on the higher education in question are the following:

- secondary analysis of the existing EU and OECD statistics,
- comparison of higher education in the selected EU countries,
- interviews with experts, owners of private faculties but also a representative of the public higher education in Slovenia,
- case study.

Regarding the tertiary education field, the interviews are performed with the owners of two existing private faculties in Slovenia, that is, GEA College - Faculty of Entrepreneurship and the Faculty of Business and Commerce Celje, the first situated in Ljubljana and the other in Celje and both faculties with branches Slovenia-wide. Each includes a brief history of the institution in question as well as the number of enrolled students, and any methods that each faculty uses to follow-up on their students after graduation, more specifically on their employment after graduation. The interview specifically focuses on networking with the labour market that is to research whether companies that the faculty provides for internship or work placement are those where students later find employment in. To balance the opinion of the Slovenian private tertiary sphere the same (although adapted) interview is performed with a representative of the Slovenian public higher education, that is with the Maribor University Chancellor, Professor Doctor Danijel Rebolj. The public university is selected due to being second biggest in Slovenia and with one of the oldest traditions in the field of high-quality higher education which has so it seems been seriously affected by the recent expansion of a ‘new’ private higher education sector in Slovenia. However, reasons for the decreased higher education quality can also be looked for in the Bologna reform or better the transfer of vocationally- or professionally-oriented programmes into overall higher education but also in allowing the setting up of new private higher education providers especially in Slovenia.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE ANALYSIS

The analysis structure in the master thesis is based on the study of its two presented parts, i.e. the theoretical and empirical respectively, by means of which I check and research the three hypotheses. Generally speaking, in order to confirm or refute the first hypothesis I research first the enrolment and graduation rates in both public and private higher education of the three selected systems. These data are the basis for the comparison with the employment rates again in both public and private higher education, first for each country separately and then in comparing one country with another. Throughout I am interested in who follows up on graduates and their employment after leaving faculty, and what the factors and processes are that cause the existing differences between the three countries or rather their higher education graduate employment rates. In the end a presentation of networking in practice in all three countries is provided where for Slovenia two case studies are included and for Germany one that is the answers acquired by email from the Head of Alumni Office of the Würzburg University, while the data on the UK are collected from the publicly available data bases and published articles. In short, the issue discussed and researched in the theoretical part is presented that is a search for connections and differences, or better disparities, between higher education in Slovenia, Germany and the UK, including the rates of graduates per country per year and their (un-)employment rates per year as well as their respective types of networking with the labour market.

For the empirical part of the thesis research and the aspects of the phenomena in the field of higher education, I collect and analyse the data on the phenomena in the three selected countries. I begin with the presentation and research of the British higher education system, where it is necessary to mention the American higher education system, since the inclusion of the British system is argued by the fact of being the 'source' of the idea of payable higher education in Europe, the pattern of which otherwise arises from the 'modern' (i.e. since the 80's of the previous century) American higher education system and which seems to have become well established in Europe and is becoming such also in Slovenia. The influence of the American privatised higher education that is accessible only by tuition falls most on island countries, among which also the first analysed country is, that is the UK. (Ferfila 2013) The latter is selected exactly due to its before-mentioned feature or better similiarity with the American system where students are obliged to pay higher education and the tuition

prices are often far from affordable and available only on credit thus putting students in a position of indebting themselves already before they begin working. From this point the research expands its focus and includes the implementation of the public-private partnership in higher education in Europe. For comparison, the American system is used and the differences and similarities between the two discussed. The research then narrows down to the Bologna as introduced in the three selected countries, where the comparison is made by means of analysing the funding, tuitions, networking forms and last but not least, the exact graduate employment rates due to networking with the labour market. Throughout I consider and research the question on which of the systems is closest to the principle of accessibility to all, the equality and efficiency and effectiveness of each system that is which 'produces' the highest rates of employed graduates, as well as what the weaknesses and benefits of each higher education system are. The data are collected from the existing data bases, created from the already carried out surveys in the field of higher education within EU and the USA, meaning this is a secondary research. Since the Bologna system represents a project of the EU, the latter is bound to following up on and measuring the outcomes of the same system and it is exactly these data that are researched. The data are statistical, measured either at the university- (as for example in Slovenia, where the number of universities is much lower than in Germany, the UK and the US) or at the state-level in the form of a percentage of enrolment rates collected on the pattern of all students and graduates of both universities and/or private and public faculties per country. More specifically, Slovenia is analysed at the university level, while Germany and the UK are investigated at the EU-level that is from the EU data on the basis of yearly enrolment rates, and including any deviations between the three countries where necessary. Thus the thesis is a combination of a quantitative research on the basis of collecting data from the existing statistical data bases and at the same time a qualitative research due to the small number of the investigated cases by means of the method of a questionnaire and an interview. Findings thus refer specifically to the three studied countries. More precisely, the data researched are the following: the number of public and private faculties per country, enrolment rates in higher education per year, number of students who finish their studies, forms of networking with the labour market and graduate employment rates. By researching these data the quality of higher education in each of the three countries is ascertained and on the basis of the collected data answers to the question on the accessibility of higher education are

looked for, trying to establish which of the studied systems is most 'student-friendly' by being free and ensuirng employment after graduation. On account of the selected most student-friendly model of higher education the aim is to propose one that could be implemented in those countries where tuitions are being introduced or are already charged and in this manner achieve some of the lost (due to its privatisation) credibility of higher education and its accessibility.

1.4 AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The main aim is to present a model for researching higher education, where I look for any already published material on the topic, or rather investigate to what extent this field has been researched. Throughout the focus is on looking for the connection between networking with the labour market in higher education and employment rates of graduates with the purpose of improving the current situation in the labour market with high and still increasing unemployment rates of graduates from especially the public higher education sector in Slovenia. With reference to this, I try to establish whether graduates from the private higher education sector really do carry higher employment rates, and if yes, whether it is so due to the networking that is offered to students of private faculties in Slovenia, or if there are other reasons, and if yes which, for being so. For the purpose of researching the three theses I also consider the Bologna reform, the introduction of the VET (vocational education and training) programmes, as well as the implementation of the public-private partnership, all of which have been introduced in the European higher education and have caused dramatic changes in it. I look for connections between networking in higher education and employment rates of higher education graduates to see whether these affect each other positively or negatively. In the end I select the model that is most accessible to all and in addition provides highest graduate employment rates due to networking well with the labour market. On the basis of the collected and researched data I in the end propose any recommendations on such a system that could be used as a model in those countries where tuitions are alredy charged or being raised, as is for example happening in Slovenia, and thus try to make tertiary education truly accessible to all where degrees are not bought or diplomas received only in return for payment but are instead studied for, and that without any financial burdening on the part of those who study. In addition, the proposed model could be used in those countries where the government does not take any measures

in controlling the with-graduates-oversaturated labour market where graduates instead fill employment centres. For such countries the selected model can be viewed as an argumented proposal to be implemented in higher education, especially in the study programmes with a surplus in enrolment rates, in a form of an obligatory subject with the purpose of doing something about controlling better firstly the number of graduates by providing exact data on their need in the labour market and secondly, thus decreasing high unemployment rates of HE graduates.

The key words of the research assignment are the following:

1) access to education which in other words means either public or private provision of education by enforcing tuition or contribution payment on higher education students,
2) higher education graduate employment where the differences in employment rates of academically and on the other hand professionally (or career) oriented students are researched, and
3) the networking that is happening in private higher education, where students by paying their tuition or contribution are automatically integrated into the school's network of business contacts, thus making them more employable and ensuring they find a job faster than their peers coming from (respected and with a long history of existence) public faculties where some students, either part- or full-time, too are required to pay tuition but still find themselves unemployed after graduation.

All three areas are first discussed theoretically and then researched empirically with the purpose of confirming or refuting the three hypotheses concerning the three areas.

2 HIGHER EDUCATION IN GENERAL

The topic of my research paper concerns inequality in education, more specifically in tertiary or higher education. The inequality of the research deals with access to education in public and private spheres of higher education respectively, however, I research this field of higher education further by touching on a specific part of the education in question but also the inequality in it, and that is the networking with the labour market or simply *networking* that is offered to students of private higher education institutions in Slovenia in exchange for tuition payment as opposed to students of public higher education in Slovenia who are not provided with the same. The topic is hot due to the fact that both EU and OECD require all member states to modernise their respective education systems, and considering the fact that Europe is facing the challenge of an aging population, the modernisation part dictates that the European population needs to be further educated and acquire higher education levels that are competitive with the non-EU countries world-wide. As shall be seen later, Slovenia represents one of those countries where the rates of higher education graduates are among the highest in the EU, but at the same time the country is facing an ever increasing number of not only general unemployment but unemployment rates of higher education graduates as well. In the continuation the focus falls on each country´s public and private higher education spheres, thus focusing on the access of this field of education and furthers itself into the strategies that today´s universities and faculties use to help their students and graduates not only in increasing their employability skills but more importantly, increasing their employment rates. Since the current Slovenian higher education with a sudden expansion of private faculties seems to be concerned more with attracting higher enrolment rates, often in exchange for charging tuition and despite the increasing unemployment in the country, my research focuses on what employability strategies are used in the other two selected countries where unemployment rates are such as 'desired' by many EU member states since they are lowest. Consequently, the two countries that is Germany and the UK are used as two role-models which the Slovenian higher education could learn from and implement novelties into its own higher education which could then be used in strategies for the all-Slovenian-higher-education-graduate support in finding a job faster and thus helping them fight the issue of high unemployment rates after graduation.

In researching the topic, it could be observed that both tertiary education and higher education terms are used to refer to the field of education of my concern. As regards the definition of the term ´tertiary education´, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, represents the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education, such as a high school, secondary school, university-preparatory school or in German 'gymnasium'. Tertiary education is taken to include undergraduate and postgraduate education, while vocational education and training beyond secondary education is known as further education in the United Kingdom, or continuing education in the United States. The definition of higher education or post-secondary education refers to a level of education that is provided at academies, universities, colleges, seminaries, institutes of technology, and certain other collegiate-level institutions, such as vocational schools, trade schools, and career colleges that award academic degrees or professional certifications. (Wikipedia 2013) Consequently both terms are regarded as equal in meaning and are interchangeable. Nevertheless, in the thesis the term higher or tertiary education refers only to the sphere of undergraduate and postgraduate study courses in accordance with the Bologna reform thus taking into account faculties with this education system only.

2.1 ARTICLE 13 OF THE COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Since 1950, Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights obliges all signatory parties to guarantee the right to education. At the world level, the United Nations *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* of 1966, guarantees this right under its Article 13, which states that »higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education«. (International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1976)[2] All three for the research selected countries respect the before-mentioned Article 2 that is of supplying all citizens with the possibility of further educating themselves by offering them a wide selection of faculties or higher education institutes, no matter whether private or public, to choose from. However, when it

[2] Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entry into force 3 January 1976, in accordance with article 27.

comes to Article 13 there are deviations in each country respectively, for example, many students of even public faculties in Slovenia are required to pay (high) tuition which is contrary to the contents agreed on under the same Article. In the UK with its long history of tuition in higher education the latter article that is Article 13 has been ´breached´ it seems since even before the appearance of the Covenant, but since the research focuses also on Germany which is in its form much closer to the Slovenian higher education system as well as to the Slovenian culture than the British one and where more importantly the entire higher education with some private faculties as exceptions is planned to become free of charge from October 2013 which is exactly the aim of Article 13 that is providing citizens with (higher) education free of charge, also the German higher education is used and acts as a role model to the other two studied systems. Additionally, since both the UK and Germany stand as the two EU member states with lowest unemployment rates of graduates, they are both included and analysed in order to help the Slovenian higher education improve and modernise itself and help its graduates in fighting their high unemployment rates.

2.2 INFLUENCE OF THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

I support the idea of unfairness being introduced in the Slovenian higher education and therefore begin my dissertation from the point of view of Slovenia. Since our country has been a part of the European Union since 2004, many changes have taken place not only in the Slovenian but the EU higher education in general. The changes affecting Slovenia are also due to the fact of Slovenia not only being a part of the EU, but also of the OECD, of which both have been increasingly pressuring all EU and OECD member states to modernise their education by enforcing the so-called public-private partnership in all areas of education. On the basis of these pressures, the Slovenian government had in the past prepared an amendment to the 1996 Slovenian education legislation by which the state would finance both public and private schools equally in order to do away with tuitions. (ZOFVI 2006) The intention was good, but the reality showed that private schools which would receive financial support from the state would in the end still need to require tuition payment in order to 'survive' in today's world financial crisis and increased competition among education providers. The issue has not been properly addressed ever since. What is more, the support of a complete privatisation of the Slovenian higher education is formulating in Slovenia, which is however in opposition to the before-mentioned Article 13 of the Covenant

on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, but valid from 1976. The idea currently present especially in the Slovenian higher education is that of the public-private partnership where the private sector is expected to cooperate with the public one that is in this case in higher education only. Below is the definition of the public-private partnership provided by the European Commission and becoming increasingly important even in the field of higher education.

> *The public-private partnerships (PPPs) (…) have a wide definition and are not limited to a specific definition in law. By PPPs we mean any partnership between a private-sector corporation and a public-sector body, through which the parties contribute different assets to a project and achieve complementary objectives. Some partnerships may involve organisations in the educational sector, such as higher education institutions. These may be public or private, but for the purpose of this report they are assumed to be in the public sector. However, even if such institutions are private, they tend to act in the public interest*. (European Commission 2008, 4–5)[3]

The idea is of incorporating the private economic sector that is companies, job providers, the labour market into higher education in order to equip students with better employability skills and influence positively their employment rates after they leave faculty. This is as shall be seen later completely in accordance with the Bologna reform, perceived as a response to the labour market and intended to provide a better connection of the latter with higher education. Nevertheless, the thesis focuses further on the appearance of the marketing culture in especially private higher education and presents the negative effects of the state withdrawal from this sphere of education.

2.3 HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETIZATION – EDUCATION AS A BRAND

In his work *Prenova slovenske šole* (English 'The Renewal of the Slovenian School'), Dr. Bogomir Novak speaks of arguments that support and oppose the marketing culture trend in education and claims that with the current reform what participants in education find important are the various labour markets, while the education system adapts to the needs of the employer and only workers with the exact abilities that the employer finds useful are

[3] Source: European Commission 2008 final report on public private partnerships

employed. The share of population that faces the highest unemployment rates consists of the young due to their inexperience, the elderly, low-profile workers, the disabled and immigrants. All of the enumerated groups, excluding the young, most often have no access to education, especially higher one after their study period that is possible for free (up to the age of 26 in Slovenia) ends and they thus only have the possibility of enrolling at a private faculty, however, in exchange for (an often high) tuition which may stand as a problem for those who need most further education that is for example the adult unemployed. The question here arises on how to bring higher education closer to this population share that lacks additional education most, without which they are pushed to a life on the verge of society. (Novak 2007) However, as shall be seen later under the chapter on graduate (un-)employment rates in Slovenia, it is the graduates of higher education that today carry highest unemployment rates.

In the process of education marketization competences matter however, according to Dr. Novak, instead of requiring the essence of competences, we are focused on the essential, key competences only. This unclear, multi-meaning term is, what is more, set as the ultimate aim of any sphere of education. The so-called marketing culture has appeared especially in higher education. The market of education does not only include the relationship between supply and demand, but is characterized by certain neoliberal values. Looking at the history of this culture, it was already in the 60's of the previous millennium that in the developed world, especially the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, a need to subject education to market conditions and make education more responsive to the needs not only of the labour market but modern times emerged. (Novak 2007) In any case, to be able to determine what more important for the development of education is, it is necessary to define the meaning of the education marketing. It has produced two options; firstly, parents can select the best school for their children, and secondly, schools can now look for the best or better the most appropriate students. Education marketization is according to Laval a crossing of management and marketing and warns that a complete education marketization would mean the end of school as a separate, i.e. an independent, educational institution. And on the basis of the current events it is clear that by decentralising and privatising higher education the state allows education to be controlled by the laws of the labour market. The political goal is to make education an efficient machine in the production of competition, all

for the purpose of producing profit. This means that the so-called *homo educans* and *homo educator* transform into *homo oeconomicus* and *homo consumens*. And the latter two are connected since if education represents only an area of knowledge supply and demand, which is argumented by an ever increasing selection of education providers, then the learner's, that is the receiver of education, role is that of a consumer. (Laval 2005) The privatisation of education is connected with the commercialisation of transferring study programs, staff and resources from the public to the private sector. One of the consequences of privatization is a shift in the organizational culture, or in other words, private education cannot exist without its partnership with the public one but instead depends on it. To summarize, marketization of education is already part of our daily life and is relatively well established in the Slovenian and also European education system. Consequently, its presence can no longer be denied however its effects on social exclusion and on increasing inequality can be criticised.

The answer to the question on why the change of public into private higher education so important is is argued with the work of the author Christian Laval, *School is no enterprise* (Slovenian *Šola ni podjetje*) (2005), which among others provides in my opinion a very educational and critical point of view on the sudden increase in the number of private faculties, also in Slovenia. According to Laval, the encouragement and financing of private schools is a doctrine that was proposed in 1983 by the American President Reagan to be introduced in the American education legislation. This philosophy was continued accordingly by Bush Senior and later also by Bush Junior. (Laval 2005) Inspirations for these changes need to be looked for in the neoliberal theory, where Laval mentions especially Milton Friedman, an American economist, who set himself the goal of withdrawing the state from the field of education. In Milton's own words, »the educational services could be rendered by private enterprises operated for profit, or by non-profit institutions. The role of government would be limited to insuring that the schools met certain minimum standards, such as the inclusion of a minimum common content in their programs, much as it now inspects restaurants.« (Friedman 1962) The consequences of such thinking are especially evident in the Anglophone countries, among which also one of the researched countries is, that is the UK, where private higher education is (well) established and practiced. However, in such a case as is Slovenia where otherwise for decades public higher education has in a

period of only one decade changed its course into opening private higher education institutions, it is important to consider the negative effects such withdrawal of the state from education can cause, among the first most noticeable one is the introduction of tuition of which the idea arises from as has been mentioned the United States higher education.

> *One of the main problems for students today — a huge problem — is sky-rocketing tuitions. Why do we have tuitions that are completely out-of-line with other countries, even with our own history? In the 1950s the United States was a much poorer country than it is today, and yet higher education was … pretty much free or with low fees or no fees for huge numbers of people. There hasn't been an economic change that's made it necessary, now, to have very high tuitions, far more than when we were a poor country.* (Chomsky 2012)[4]

To research these negative effects the country of Slovenia is used and in it two private HE study cases and one public HE faculty representative included, and to provide a comparison by an in-depth research of higher education in other EU member states, two more countries are researched, Germany and the UK. In these countries by means of the research I look for data on how much each of the higher education systems is privatized, to what extent the Bologna reform has affected each system, what the effects of the public-private partnership are and how vocational education and training is gradually entering general higher education, including the consequences it brings in each country but with the main focus remaining on Slovenia.

> *The European strategic framework for cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') calls for coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. Those should include (…) more flexible learning pathways (…) between VET, general education and higher education. It also corresponds to the stronger focus on qualifications. The widespread use of learning outcomes for defining and describing qualifications – promoted by the Bologna and Copenhagen processes – is calling into question the*

[4] Chomsky, Noam. 2012. *Noam Chomsky on student debt.*

traditional distinction between higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET). (CEDEFOP 2011, Foreword)[5]

Thus the involvement of the labour market influence is either directly or indirectly already present in higher education but as shall be seen in the research, different countries despite having introduced the supposedly same higher education, i.e. the Bologna process, their connection and cooperation with the private sector differ. As one of the consequences of such involvement, the patterns of vocational education are transferred into university study programmes, turning education into education for profit that is job career only. Specific education or better specialised knowledge acquired during studies enables easier search for a job, but on the other hand it happens that departments with certain programs are quickly outlived and are cancelled after only a few-year existence or are available only part-time, as for example the master 2nd Bologna level programme of Global Studies. The question also remains with how employability skills are being worked on in academic higher education programmes, since it is most certainly more difficult to increase their employment rates as compared to those of 'newly-introduced (i.e. by means of the Bologna reform) vocationally- or professionally-oriented programmes.

There is also the Lifelong Learning Programme of which the purpose is to enable everybody access to elementary, secondary, higher or any other further education and even training at work, and although the idea of learning and educating yourself all your life might seem attractive at first, realistically looking at it such a vision offers an individual no guarantee for employment, but rather demands mostly the ability to adapt to constantly changing situations and conditions in the labour market. Education which was once regarded a value that helped form an individual's integral personality or rather a critically-thinking individual who is prepared to develop democratic values »is today only a personal commodity which the owner of can do what he or she wants to do with it, gain it the way he or she wants to gain it and in the end sell it in a way he or she wants it to be sold. Speaking more specifically, education as a commodity for personal use is no longer a value, but instead becomes a marketing and/or marketed commodity«. (Adam 2005) Considering the fact that the term *public* in higher education means 'for the public good' and on the other hand the term

[5]CEDEFOP 2011, *Vocational education and traininig at higher qualification levels*, Foreword.

private denotes 'for personal profit', a shift in perceiving education happens where the purpose of education becomes only for one's personal interest or advantage or in other word for the needs of the labour market solely.

2.4 QUALITY EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Evaluation of quality of higher education is a complex issue that is not new. »Systematic procedures for quality assurance and improvement through evaluation have been in place in Western Europe since the mid 1980s«. (Bornmann et al. 2006) And what is more, »to this day there is still no widely acknowledged concept regarding the definition of higher education quality«. (Kai 2009, 39-51)

The higher education of the three countries and their respective quality is presented by means of the paper on the issue as written by Ieva Brence and Baiba Rivza who use the existing quality evaluation criteria to assess the quality of the Latvian higher education. In their paper they try to answer the questions whether institutions of higher education can at all be assessed and whether this assessment truly can reflect the quality of higher education. (Zhentian 2009, 58-62) Although the ultimate target of the education and teaching reform in higher education institutions is to improve the quality of teaching and talent training, the focus of the thesis is more on the effectiveness of the higher education itself or rather of the higher education institutions in increasing not only the employability but employment rates of graduates. (Brence et al. 2012, 788) The Chancellor of the University of Ljubljana agrees that »quality is of the outmost importance in higher education« and he perceives quality in higher education also by means of »curricula without gaps, sensible and reasonable subjects as well as number of hours«, since one of the goals of the Bologna is also to improve the programmes available to students. (Rebolj 2013) He also warns that mass higher education is not possible, since an increase in the number of students with the same capacity of professors and funds for the last eight years only means the acceptance of lower criteria which affects the entire higher education and consequently its quality. (Rebolj 2013) In general, the determinants of the quality of higher education as perceived by students are besides assessing academic staff, administration services, library services, curriculum structure, location, infrastructure but also career prospects. Under the latter the most important to students are perspectives for professional career, opportunities for

postgraduate programs, opportunities to continue studies abroad, availability of exchange programmes with other institutes and the institution's link with business or the labour market. (Tsinidou et al. 2010, 227-244) The research furthers into the field of the effectiveness of today's higher education institutions in increasing graduate employment rates. After this effectiveness is ascertained from the data collected on the actual enrolment and graduate rates per country, the focus falls on the networking with the labour market offered as a means of increasing graduate employment rates.

The networking researched in the thesis regards that with the labour market that is the networking form by means of which students too are included in the process of assessing the quality of higher education. However, when researching the existing data on the issue of researching the quality in the sense of connecting graduate rates with graduate employment rates, the reference is never about student employment specifically but instead 'supporting graduate employability'. (BIS 2011) The statement shows that only employability skills are taken care of in higher education and not so much the actual employment rate after leaving faculty. Nevertheless, despite the fact that »on the technical front, establishing a link between inputs and outputs of higher education processes is one of the hardest problems«, the research creates a division or rather a list of variables that influence first the accessibility of higher education, the enrolment rates, the graduate rates, the employment rates of graduates and the forms of networking available with the purpose of increasing graduate employment rates. (BIS 2011)

2.5 COMPARISON OF THE BRITISH AND THE AMERICAN HE

The chapter begins with a question on whether a well run higher education system that works in one country and ensures high quality education and high employment rates of its graduates can be adopted by and used in other countries that are dealing with the saturation of their labour market with higher education graduates. On the one hand it seems that the implementation and the state funding of private higher education bring healthy competition and what is more that students and their families are provided with greater and more diverse selection, however, as Laval warns, this is achieved by »selling schools to companies and local communities«. (Laval 2005, 111)

In talking about higher education in Europe, its marketization and the appearance of its privatization, it is necessary to include in the research, at least theoretically, the USA and its influence on the European higher education, especially due to the fact of being the state that was the first to initiate the idea of privately funded higher education. From the American perspective the focus of the research then redirects itself on Europe, more specifically on the three selected countries, that is the UK, Germany and Slovenia. As the largest Anglophone representative among the EU member states but also due to its specificity in the field of higher education within the EU as well as its resemblance with the American higher education system, the UK higher education system is provided and represents the result of the American influence from the 1980's that has recently appeared also in the Slovenian higher education. The greatest and most prominent resemblance between the UK and the US is the payment of higher education, for which often extremely high tuitions are required, thus making it inaccessible to those who come from deprived families, the pattern of which has passed the German higher education, but has on the contrary started to develop very well in Slovenia.

2.5.1 PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE US AND THE UK

This chapter begins with the theoretical research of the present private providers, firstly on a global scale followed by a further focus on the US higher education which is then compared with the UK one. »The growth of a private higher education sector in the UK is part of a global trend. Throughout the world, the number of students in private institutions is growing faster than in publicly-owned and funded ones. The reasons are simple; governments simply cannot afford to pay for the higher education that is required; thus, the private sector is expanding to meet the demand«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 3)

As Table 2.1 shows, private provision is highest in those regions where the expansion of higher education is the greatest and governments are more or less powerless in intervening due to the increasing significance (or better lack) of higher education funding. The same can be applied as an explanation of the increasingly growing private higher education sector in Slovenia.

Table 2.1: 'Program for Research on Private Higher Education' data for the period 2001-2009 in 117 countries by region

Region	Private % of total enrolment	Numbers of students in private HEIs	Private HEIs as % of the total	Numbers of private HEIs
Africa	14.6	0.7m	59.2	434
Asia	36.4	18m	57.8	18,206
Latin America	48.6	7.6m	71.3	7,090
Europe	16.0	3.7m	25.7	2,136
USA	26.1	4.7m	61.3	2,667
World totals	**31.3**	**35m**	**55.7**	**30,555**

Note: Figures are amalgams of differently defined data for different years (2001-2009) and are intended to give an approximate feel for the scale of provision. Source: Middlehurst and Fielden (2010, 3).

According to the table 2.1 the higher education private sector is lowest in Africa and Europe, since »in most of Western Europe there has been a long tradition of publicly provided higher education (…). This contrasts with Eastern Europe where the withdrawal of the Soviet Union was met with a dramatic growth in private providers offering courses close to market needs«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 4) Regarding the market share of the existing private higher education institutions and their size, it is evident from the table that private institutions are definitely on the rise especially when considering such a high number of private institutions has been reached in the period of the last thirty years i.e. since 1980's. An easy expansion of the private higher education sector is also (often) due to the size of the newly established private providers, in other words, the majority of them are small institutions (as is also true for the two private higher education institutions studied in the thesis, i.e. GEA College and the Faculty of Business Studies and Commerce or the FKPV) that have existed for a shorter period of time, but even when fully developed, they are usually never as large as public faculties usually are, »with a few exceptions in Japan, India, Indonesia and the USA. In the UK, the profile of private colleges offering degrees is very similar and we believe there are no more than 5 or 6 with more than 2,000 students«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 4)

> *The variety of private providers continues to be dynamic, as new entrants emerge and existing providers change their shape or their owners. Perhaps most significantly (…), the boundary between what is described as a 'public' or 'private' provider has become increasingly blurred as funding streams for both types come from public and private sources, as public-private partnerships increase in scale and scope and as both types of*

provider can lay claim to delivering 'private' and 'public good' outcomes. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 5)

Traditional universities and higher education institutions are often referred to as 'publicly-funded' which in general means they are free of charge for all students with the aim to differentiate them from the private ones which charge tuition. Nevertheless, exceptions exist where public faculties charge tuitions and vice versa where students receive concession for their private higher education degree. What is more, private faculties are further divided into those that operate as not-for-profit and those as for-profit providers respectively, but the fact that they are private basically means they still charge tuition for education. Such is the case of the British public universities which are technically 'private institutions' and have been described by the Treasury as belonging in the 'private sector' exactly due to charging tuition. However, Middlehurst and Fielden predict that the so far state funding of the British higher education is bound to be reduced. »In addition, for-profit higher education and private-public partnerships represent emerging and growing categories; public-private partnerships can also be subdivided into partnerships between publicly-funded HEIs and private colleges (not-for-profit and for-profit non-elite institutions) as well as partnerships involving 'private students' studying in publicly-funded institutions«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 5)

The question on what caused a sudden rise in the number of private higher education providers despite the declining government funding in the US and UK (but also Slovenia) can be answered by the introduction of tuitions and the public-private partnership respectively. And since more and more providers offering education in exchange for tuition are appearing, it becomes a question what the true purpose of the so-called public-private partnership is, or in other words, what is then the purpose of the public factor in this partnership. In Slovenia the majority of students still enrol in public faculties, according to the new chancellor of the University of Ljubljana, in the academic year of 2013/2014 about 75% of all students enrolled in Slovenian public faculties. (Svetlik 2013) This means there is still room for improvement in the Slovenian higher education sphere in protecting its higher education from being marketed and privatised. However, abroad, especially as regards the US and the UK higher education, which nevertheless holds true also for the Slovenian one, »a growing

reliance on tuition fees and other private income sources makes the 'public-private' divide much less clear. In the US private sector, a continuing rise in tuition fees for private colleges (…) has also raised critical questions about whether these higher education institutions are operating for the public good or for their own aggrandisement«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 8)

According to the two authors within the UK and the UK higher education we distinguish 1) publicly-funded universities and colleges (with private enterprise components), 2) private non-profit institutions (making public value contributions) and 3) for-profit-institutions that are in joint ventures with publicly-funded institutions for mutual benefit. Arguments used by the UK and US governments that speak in favour of the presence of private providers in higher education are not commonly about widening access to higher education, but rather base on economic reasons as are: providing additional enrolment places for students, efficiency, value-for-many, competition for publicly-funded higher education providers, all of which »serve to increase efficiency in these institutions as well as driving up quality across the system«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 8) On the other hand, there exists also criticism over private higher education providers and often this critique refers to the narrowness of the private providers' curricula, high tuition fees which make higher education accessible only to the elite i.e. the rich and the absence of teaching linked to research which all together affect negatively the quality of the higher education provided by these same providers. As regards the higher education in the UK, the higher education sector in it that is called 'private' is very small when compared with its public counterpart and the majority of these private providers are located predominantly in London and in England. What is interesting about these private providers is the fact that their enrolments do not include only home students but also overseas ones, »however on these numbers no statistics is routinely collected. In 2011 at a request by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency in the UK) undertook a survey of private providers in the UK but only 65 organisations responded. These reported about 38,000 students on higher education courses«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 11) Another interesting fact that needs further research is the estimated overall number of 50,000 private sector students which seem insignificant as Middlehurst and Fielden state to »the figure of 2 million UK/EU students in the publicly-funded HE sector; however, since most of

them are international students, a better comparison is with the 230,000 international students in publicly-funded HEIs in the UK. Since most of the private colleges provide no statistics to HESA, their students may well need to be added to this figure«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 14) The statement shows that also in the British higher education, as is the case in the Slovenian one, the private sector is not followed up on statistically by the state since the providers are privately funded and thus no state intervention nor statistical follow up requirements can be enforced on them. In Slovenia the situation differs slightly where private providers receive either 85% or 100% state concession depending on the year they were established. In other words, both privately and publicly established faculties in Slovenia are state funded which means the intervention or monitoring of higher education is supposed to fall under the authority of the state. Nevertheless, the existing arguments that speak in favour of the entry of private providers into the UK higher education are presented in the table 2.2 below with pros and cons of general private HE providers. Thus, the pros and cons selected can be applied to any private provider of higher education, also the Slovenian ones.

Table 2.2: Table with pros and cons regarding the appearance of private higher education providers

Private sector PROS	**Private sector CONS**
Private providers widen access to a range of providers, meet unmet demand, add flexibility and bring greater dynamic into the HE system.	Private providers are not as accountable as publicly-funded providers since they are not obliged to publish as much information about their business.
They inject business sense into higher education and could even take over financially-failing institutions.	They rely on staff with part-time contracts.
They fulfil a valuable niche offering qualifications in professional subjects.	They do not engage in research which affects the quality of teaching and learning.
With degree-awarding powers they are more accountable than those providers in the publicly-funded sector as these powers are only granted for six years following inspection.	They are dependant on the research knowledge and intellectual property generated in the publicly-funded universities; the business model is thus 'parasitic' on public resources.
High quality private providers are recognised by both students and employers.	Any academic research and teaching should be public goods.

Source: Middlehurst and Fielden (2010, 17).

In modern times the usual mention of the beginnings of higher education privatisation stops in the 1980's however the true beginnings of the situation in the US regarding today's for-

profit higher education providers can be traced further back, more specifically to »the development of business courses in the 18th century, the emergence of non-degree level private trade, professional and career education colleges in the 19th century and the development of distance education in the International Correspondence Schools founded in 1901«. As regards the appearance of providers that are most similar to today's it is the 19th century private business colleges that show most similarity with the for-profit sector of the twenty-first century and what is more there are more than one hundred such private providers still operating today in the US. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 18)

Why regulation of the private higher education sector is needed is argumented by at least two facts, of which the first is the needed protection of students and the public from fraudulent providers and from institutional failure, as well as the »transparency in the operation of higher education providers so that information is publicly available for potential students to choose the programmes and institutions that serve them best (and information that enables partners and investors in the private sector to be able to exercise choice and judgement)«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 25) The same holds true for the situation in the Slovenian higher education, since these data too are extensively not publicly available for private faculties.

A model of the American higher education in which parallels with the British one and accordingly also the Bologna especially in the private higher education sector in Europe can be established is provided where the same parallels are presented as typical features of the American higher education system. A list of some of the features of the American higher education system is:

- narrow mission (few subject fields, focused on employment and practical skills),
- limited faculty role (academic staff are hired to be teachers, not researchers),
- centrally designed curriculum (managers decide what is to be taught and how programmes are organised),
- standardisation (programme variability is kept to a minimum; the curriculum is mapped to specific outcomes and students have limited choice).

(Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 28)

Some of these features are also evident in the UK as well as in the Slovenian private higher education respectively. For example, for GEA College but also the FKPV study programmes all four enumerated items are valid. In the private sector also the role of lecturers is more limited than in public universities. Lecturers are usually given tasks, as are teaching, exam preparation and student support. In the UK providers are usually a combination of both full- and part-time staff, where those providers which claim themselves to be 'elite' or 'high quality institutions' employ both full-time staff as programme designers and teachers and part-time professionals as teachers. Although in Slovenia it is difficult to speak of elite private providers, at least not in that respect as of the reputation as found in for example the UK, nevertheless the high tuition charged at certain private faculties makes their education inaccessible to those who are worse off thus making such private providers 'elite' but in my opinion only in the sense of excluding those students who cannot afford payable education.

As already stated, the curriculum of private providers is narrower than in public institutions and in most cases tuition fees are higher with private providers than with the public ones. Nevertheless, it is important to add that tuition can also be less in some private colleges than in the public universities and programmes are often shorter, consequently offering quicker routes to employment or to additional qualifications for students. »Private sector providers do offer new routes to qualifications and in many cases are close to their professions and industries. This may offer students good employment prospects, but such prospects may not be very different from the employment success of graduates reported from public universities and colleges; (…) comparative and comparable output data are needed«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 32)

As proposed by the two authors, a greater and closer cooperation of all involved in higher education should be formed in order to improve the general higher education sphere. »If, as we expect, the private sector grows in size and status, it will feel entitled to more formal recognition and this should also bring with it greater co-ordination and information sharing between higher education agencies. Permanent collaboration between the different arms of the higher education sector would also help«. (Middlehurst and Fielden 2010, 42) And if this is evident as possible in for example the UK with its mostly 'privatised' higher education or

Germany with its on the other hand predominantly public higher education that nevertheless include the prospective employer into their education process, in Slovenia the issue is more complex due to its dual higher education system, offering almost an equal number of both private and public providers.

2.6 BOLOGNA REFORM IN THE EU HIGHER EDUCATION

The Bologna process was introduced by means of new study programmes in the market with an incentive to connect higher education with the labour market in order to provide education of higher quality and produce a working force that is highly educated and competitive in the global labour market. However, »by implementing the Bologna system great changes have occurred in higher education not only in Slovenia, but also elsewhere in Europe«. (Gabrovšek 2009) These changes are so dramatic in certain countries that they threat the existence of the traditional higher education system which is consequently currently faced with the dilemma on whether to persist in its traditional forms of education, which in times of the wide-spread of modern technologies and the ever increasing number of private higher education suppliers seems impossible, or adapt to the reforms. The reforms have taken place and have been implemented in all EU member states however there are many deviations between the Bologna system in theory and its implementation in reality, not to mention the consequences that the differences in the process of implementation have caused. Here the question on how to amend the Bologna process implementation or rather its practical part arises due to its first evident results in graduation rates but also (un)employment rates of graduates, especially in Slovenia, and with that in addition stick to the principle of free access to education for everybody, thus preventing the transformation of higher education into a commodity that is accessible only to those who are financially (well) provided for.

In general, the Bologna Process caused the changes in the European higher education with its Declaration of June 1999 which started a process of reforms which were needed in order to »make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents. Reform was needed then and reform is still needed today if Europe is to match the performance of the best performing systems in the world«. (European Commission on

Higher Education 2013)[6] Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 and with its membership it obliged itself to modernise its higher education system by adapting it in line with the Bologna reform. According to Dr. Roland Vermeesch, the President of the EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education), one of the requirements from the Bologna Declaration is that all Bachelor (or undergraduate) studies should be ´relevant for the labour market´ and claims that BA graduates from professional HE are per se ready for the labour market. The reasons why it is so, he claims are the following among which no academic higher education is mentioned:[7]

> *Knowledge for its own sake is not beneficial for civil society: it must serve a purpose, (…) especially in the field of professional higher education, where the link between education and training and employment is inherent, knowledge gained (…) should be applied knowledge. Professional HEIs are a catalyst in this knowledge process, through education and training, applied research and service to the community, which is the three-fold mission of professionally oriented HEIs*. (Vermeesch 2005)[8]

The Bologna reform seems positive at first since it provides students with more freedom in forming their yearly curriculum by choosing from a wide selection of elective subjects, with less hours of lectures and practice per class, but including also the comparability with the existing European study programs and of course the introduction of credit points, the ECTS – European Credit Transfer System, which makes the before-mentioned comparability easier thus allowing graduates to find a job abroad faster since their higher education degree is comparable with the abroad one. In a word, the reform is here and after its implementation and several years of operation, it is possible to investigate and establish its negative effects on the overall higher education. Its negativity is argued by the fact that especially in Slovenia higher education is turning into a type of a company, fighting with a very high competition in a market already saturated with higher education providers where the supply of HE institutions exceeds the demand, i.e. the number of enrolled students and graduates.

[6] European Commision, Education and Training, The Bologna Process – Towards the European Higher Education Area, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/bologna_en.htm

[7] *Vocational Content in Mass Higher Education?* Responses to the Challenges of the Labour Market and the Work-Place. Bonn, Germany. 8−10 Sep 2005

[8] A presentation on ´Employability in the context of the Bologna process´ at the Bologna seminar in Bled, Slovenia, 21-23 October 2004

Without state protection, higher education becomes even more open to direct interests of capital or, if viewed from the perspective of globalization, the interests of big corporations. In other words, the withdrawal of the state from higher education that has already taken place enabled economic interests the freedom of interference in the education policy and the way syllabi are executed, that is, so that they work in direct interest to them. These economic interests of private higher education providers are in practice offered in the form of study programs that are usable and useful for the present labour market. With the present crisis in the labour market, affecting the high general unemployment rates but also that of graduates per country and the fact that high tuitions are required in private higher education, the private sector stands in a better position than the public one exactly due to its additional funds they receive from charging tuitions. The current development of the higher education system in Slovenia that is if its private higher education sector keep growing can be described as one following the principles of Friedman, according to whom the state funding of any education is just as unnecessary as buying a family car or any other commodity. (Friedman 1962) Such thinking means that education is left to the decisions (and interests) of local politics and parents, that is (both groups are) non-professionals in education. Nevertheless, the question that needs to be answered here is whether state withdrawal from higher education can develop and increase the quality of the work of higher education providers, no matter if private or public and whether they actually help increase graduate employment rates.

2.6.1 HIGHER EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA

The thesis on the issue of the Slovenian government treating its citizens unequally since it supports the setting up of numerous new mainly private faculties and at the same time cuts down on its financing of the public faculties, argumenting that it is due to the financial crisis raises two problems, of which the first regards how to find the number of students who graduate from private HE institutions but also how to ascertain how many of them exactly find a job after their graduation from private higher education, and the second on how to research the networking with the labour market that is provided at private education institutions in Slovenia.

Data can be found on the employment rates in all EU countries, that is, employment rates of academics and professionally- and even vocationally-oriented enrolment rates. Since vocationally-oriented studies fall under the post-secondary education field which is in Europe mainly not (yet) considered as belonging to the higher education field, but is rather understood as the so-called Tertiary Short Cycle or Higher Education Short Cycle Education – HESC or sub-degree programmes[9], the latter type of studies are included in the survey since as shall be seen later these levels are sometimes taken into account in a country's statistics on higher education. Otherwise, the focus of the thesis falls solely on tertiary- or higher-level education. However, the networking with the labour market that I would like to research in Slovenia is made possible at private faculties only, where it seems that students by paying (high) tuition are in return provided with a less demanding or more practically-oriented curriculum, receive better grades and are on top of that incorporated in (a better) networking with the labour market, i.e. potential employers, thus have better access to a job, carry (especially in English) the same titles as students from public faculties and what is more do not publish their bachelor or master or doctor theses publicly as is done by students from public faculties. To sum up, for tuition they get a lot in return, among others a degree and numerous options for employment. Nevertheless, although Slovenian private faculties are basically companies that have implemented the Bologna system and some of them even receive state financial support, they seem to apply in their education system only those rules that suit their needs, that is already by that introducing inequality among their students and students who apply for studying at public faculties. In other words, the majority of their study programmes are available only in exchange for tuition payment. However, looking at their strategies on increasing their graduate employability it can be perceived that public faculties could learn from the private ones in doing the same, especially since it is mainly the public faculties that today´s students still enrol in due to their study programmes being basically for free, that is free of charge up to the age of 26, although exceptions do exist where part-time students are obliged to pay tuition and also full-time students after the age of 26. Examples with part-time students paying tuition before the age of 26 thus also exist.

[9] Source: EURASHE study on Tertiary Short Cycle Education, May 2003

2.6.1.a Public and private higher education institutions

In Slovenia public and private higher education institutions exist, where public denote those education institutions that are governed by public authorities as are the state, regions, local communities or municipalities and are mainly financed from public resources, and on the other hand, private education institutions that are established and governed but also mainly financed by the private sector. (Belfield and Levin 2002, 19)

The distinction between private and public higher education in Slovenia is difficult to determine, however, on the basis of the Organization and Financing of Education Act (hereinafter ZOFVI) of 1996, the main division of the institutions are:

Educational Institutions

Public	and	Private	
		with concession	without concession

Source: ZOFVI (2006).

Under the public sphere of higher education it is believed that the name 'public' automatically means that education is for free and that 'private' is therefore available only in exchange for tuition payment. However, Professor Doctor Janko Prunk informs that » in our higher education a number of exceptions have appeared which deviate from the European practice, and thus at many public faculties at least part-time studies were (and are) needed to be paid but also postgraduate ones, even for several years in a row, and at the same time, at certain private faculties, where concessions were (and are) granted, tuitions did not (and still do not) need to be paid«.[10] (Svetlik 2008) The same holds true still in today's both private and public higher education. This seems to be a discrepancy that the Slovenian government should deal and do away with by for example following the German higher education system model where tuitions paid till September 2013 never exceeded five hundred euros per semester and where in addition from October 2013 tuitions in all the 16 federal countries of Germany are to be abolished.

[10] Source: TV Slovenia 1st program, 15 Nov 2008, Discussion on *Private faculty is better than the public one.*

In the Slovenian higher education a great diversity of institutions offering various post-secondary education programmes are available. Their number is overwhelming and every year more of such institutions are established. There are two basic types of these institutions:

- post-secondary institutions or vocational colleges with usually 2-year programmes,
- university institutes of higher education with 3-, 4- or 5-year professionally-oriented and academic programmes. (Dijaski 2013a)

The number of colleges of the first group has increased dramatically in the last decade and today both private and public vocational colleges, of which 28 are public, and 23 private, together offer 51 vocationally-oriented post-secondary institutions. (Dijaski 2013a) On the same website, a list of higher education institutions is available and according to this list, in Slovenia these institutions are divided into 4 universities and additional public and private independent higher education institutions. The University of Ljubljana offers 26 faculties, the University of Maribor 17 faculties, the University of Primorska 6 faculties, and the University of Nova Gorica 7 faculties. The list is complemented with an additional list of both private and public higher education institutions, which offer academies, education centres and faculties, the sum of which is 34. Altogether calculated, today's Slovenian students can choose from 140 education institutions, and this is only institutions, of which each offers more than one study programme. (Dijaski 2013a) Regarding the sudden wide spread of private faculties in Slovenia I quote Professor Doctor Ivan Svetlik as the 2008 Ljubljana University vice-chancellor: »It was mainly about the public sector students in which demanding jobs were created, for which people who carried such positions did not have the proper degree or education and were trying to make up for that. However, the anticipants predicted the level of required education would increase and saw it as an excellent opportunity for the future. That was a very rational reaction«. (Svetlik 2008)

2.6.1.b Enrolment rates in higher education in 2012/2013

Regarding the enrolment rates for the academic year 2012/13 the Statistical Office of RS has published in March 2013 the following data:

- in vocationally-oriented post-secondary programmes 13,545 students were enrolled, of which 30% have opted for the programmes of engineering, production technology and civil engineering, 26% for social sciences, business, administration and law, and 24% for services.
- in programmes of higher education university studies the enrolment rate for the same academic year were 85,761 students, of which 34.2% were enrolled in the first year, and 81.4% as full-time students. The exact data per study field is not provided for the academic year of 2012/2013, however, information on the type of study programme are available, where the highest enrolment rates at university are found in university programmes of the first Bologna level (29,356), professional higher education first-level Bologna programmes (18,543) and master programmes of the Bologna level (12,453). At independent higher education institutions the highest enrolment rates are present in professional higher education programmes (7,061) and the second highest in master studies of the second Bologna level with 1,983 enrolled students. (SURS 2013b) From the data provided it is obvious that the rates of students in professional or vocational programmes are rising as well as the rates of master-level students (and graduates).

2.6.1.c The reputation of private and public higher education in Slovenia among Slovenian public and education experts

The Delo newspaper published on 7 March 2013[11] a question on the satisfaction of citizens with the higher education institutions that are available in large numbers to Slovenian students. Below are provided some of the characteristic statements on the quality of either of the two existing higher educations, that is, public and private, as given by the Slovenian public:

»According to the level of newly-established private faculties that are financed by the state with the money that should be invested in public ones, the level of knowledge is astonishingly low«. (Slovenian public in Delo 2013)

»The (Slovenian) public private faculties are intended for those who have money to buy themselves a degree«. (Slovenian public in Delo 2013)

»Public ones are of better quality, but at private faculties one must also study since nobody just hands you the degree ... there are less research activities and seminars and these affect

[11] DELO newspaper, 7 Mar 2013, Article *Answers to an afternoon question: private or public universities*

the quality of study. I know this, because I studied at a public faculty and am currently at a private one ...« (Slovenian public in Delo 2013)

»Private faculties host the so-called "flying" professors, who lecture at more institutions at once, but for none permanently. Consequently, such a faculty can have more professors, but only one of them employed«. (Slovenian public in Delo 2013)

»In Slovenia public faculties are definitely better, however, around the world this differs from country to country«. (Slovenian public in Delo 2013)

Regarding the quality and the criteria used in private higher education, Professor Doctor Janko Prunk, as one of the representatives of the public higher education sphere, explained that »private faculty representatives or founders of these have always argued against the academics with some legal arguments, saying that they are, on the basis of human rights, entitled to establishing such institutions and since that debate we have never come to the point of discussing quality, the criteria« and added that »they (i.e. the representatives of the private higher education) are so self-confident that they do not feel the need to exchange professional arguments either between each other nor before the public.«. (Prunk 2008)[12] His argument only points to the readiness and willingness of the private higher education representatives to not only discuss the issue but also cooperate (more seriously) with the representatives of the public higher education in Slovenia.

Mojca Škrajnar from the 2008 Ministry of education and sport said at the time on the topic that »private schooling is supposed to bring something different, a type of fulfilment, something that is not available in the public education sphere«. (Škrajnar 2008)[13] At that time she was talking about elementary, secondary and higher level education, however, looking at the issue from today´s perspective, it is clearly evident that private schooling has taken over the higher field of education only, while Slovenia still lacks secondary and elementary schools that would offer something different from what is already provided by public elementary and secondary schools. Why it is so it is not clear, but if nothing else, more should be done in the field of public higher education to help the universities enhance and improve their graduate employment rates. In 2008 Professor Doctor Ivan Svetlik as the then Ljubljana University vice-chancellor explained the difference between the two education

[12] RTV Slovenia, 15 Nov 2008, *Discussion on Private faculty is of better quality than the public one.*

spheres in his own words: »If the faculty is good, I would not question whether the faculty is private or public. But in reality it is all only about who founded it and who finances it«. (Svetlik 2008) His statement refers to where the Slovenian higher education stood in 2008, and today five years later in 2013 I can confirm that the situation has not changed much or has even worsened, in other words new prospective students have today an even greater selection of faculties to choose from, but the rates of unemployment among them are persistently increasing and are currently highest when compared to the unemployment rates of citizens with other education levels.

2.6.2 COMPARISON OF THE SLOVENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION WITH OTHER EU MEMBER STATES' HIGHER EDUCATION

Under 2.6.1 the Slovenian higher education general overview is presented, where data on the enrolment and graduate rates are provided, including the description of public and private higher education institutions as well as the reputation of both higher education fields respectively. For comparison, two other European Union member states are selected, of which the United Kingdom is chosen due to its mainly as has been ascertained 'privately' provided higher education, and Germany on the contrary for having and managing to keep quite successfully the predominantly public higher education. What is common to all three countries, besides being members of the EU, is the introduction of the Bologna reform and the public-private partnership which concern higher education only. Before the data analysis begins, the comparison focuses on the same characteristics presentation as is provided for Slovenia.

2.6.2.1 Public and private higher education in the UK

All British faculties tend to have a good reputation due to their long existence and research output. Only 4 universities in Britain have never been ranked outside the top 10, where Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick and London School of Economics are regularly ranked at the summit of national ranking tables. The specificities of British universities are that students usually move far away from home to take their courses and that (usually high) tuitions are charged to both private and public faculty students respectively. Although the UK is part of the European Union, its educational system is so unique that the list of its specific features is by no means exhaustive here exactly due to its long history of private education at all levels

that is untypical for the other two studied EU member state. Although some institutions of the continental Europe are older, for example Oxford University, the UK's oldest higher education institution, has existed for about 850 years. Together with Cambridge and in Scotland St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, these faculties have been teaching students for at least five hundred years in a row. In the 19th century the University of London was created, along with the so-called 'red brick' universities, which are city-based institutions mostly in old industrial cities, for example the Universities of Sheffield and Birmingham respectively. In the middle of the 20th century, a government report recommended that more universities be built. These were then called 'new universities' but are today referred to as 'plate glass' universities. Examples of this group are the University of Warwick and the University of East Anglia. The final change in Higher Education was in 1992 when a whole new group of institutions acquired the name 'university'. These post-1992 universities are former polytechnics or colleges of higher education, of which an example would be Oxford University while other post-1992 universities used to be known as HE colleges or now named university colleges. Some colleges offer both higher and further education courses. These are not considered universities and usually offer more vocational type courses rather than the traditional academic subjects. (Studylondon 2013) Regarding who can apply for the British universities, undergraduate applications to almost all United Kingdom universities are managed by UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, while all universities in Scotland use the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). British undergraduate students and students from other European Union countries who qualify as home students have to pay university tuition fees up to a maximum of £3,290 as capped for the academic year 2010/11. Welsh undergraduate students studying in a Welsh university pay a maximum university tuition fee of £1,200. However, if they choose to study outside of Wales they are subject to the same tuition fees as students from that country. »First degree students from Scotland or the rest of the EU studying in Scotland are entitled to have their tuition fees paid by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland«. (British Council 2013) Students living in the UK, who are from non-European countries, have to pay the same (very high) fees as overseas students, even if they have been in the UK for more than 3 years. Postgraduate students are all liable for tuition fees, though a variety of scholarship and assistantship schemes exist which may provide support. The main sources of funding for postgraduate students are research councils such

as the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) and ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council). (British Council 2013)

2.6.2.2 Public and private higher education in Germany

In Germany there are over 380 public officially recognised universities and they offer over 15,000 programmes. Although they are of equal rank, they differ in their focus and strengths. There are three types of universities: 1) universities for research-oriented study, 2) universities of applied sciences for practice-oriented study, 3) colleges of art, film and music for artistic courses. At 109 universities i.e. a good quarter of all universities, the focus is on methodological and theoretical knowledge, where teaching and research are closely connected. These universities offer subjects in law, humanities, cultural studies, natural sciences and economics or business administration and medicine. There are also universities with special subject focuses, which specialise in specific subject areas and call themselves technical universities, universities of technology or universities of teacher training. The 216 i.e. two good quarters of all German universities of applied sciences have a strong vocational orientation and students there are prepared for professions in specific fields of work, as for example technology, business, social work, media, design. These programmes include work experience and practice. In contrast to traditional German universities, a *Fachhochschule* is translated as the University of Applied Sciences, which has a more practical profile. Such universities grant Bachelor degrees and Master degrees. Some Universities of Applied Sciences run doctoral programmes where the degree itself is awarded by a partner institution. The so-called *Berufsakademien* or Universities of Cooperative Education have focus even more on practice and provide courses in business, technology, social sciences, all in combination with professional training however the term vocational university is not used. Furthermore, *Berufsakademie* is a college type strongly inspired by the dual education system. A Berufsakademie is called a university of cooperative education in English and only grants bachelor's degrees. This type of institution was first created in the German state of Baden-Württemberg and now exists in Hamburg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, Saarland, Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, and Thuringia, but not in the other German states. In 2009, Baden-Württemberg transformed its Berufsakademie into a new type of institution, which until now only exists in that state, a "Duale Hochschule". In English, this type of institution is also called university of cooperative education, but a Duale Hochschule also offers Master

degrees. For individuals with an artistic talent, 55 colleges of art, film and music are available, where an entrance exam that proves exceptional artistic talent is required. (DAAD 2013) In recent years a number of private universities have appeared, as stated on the DAAD website, in the last decade, this number has risen from 24 to 100, which reminds of the situation with the Slovenian higher education. The majority of the private universities are of applied sciences and they seem to be attracting more and more new students due to the small groups they offer, close links to industry, and their international orientation. However, they also tend to charge high tuitions, where a course of study can cost up to 30,000 euros. In Germany there are 16 federal states, of which each has its own state government and higher education laws. Therefore, universities in Germany are largely self-regulatory. (DAAD 2103)

3 EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

The OECD report *Education at a glance - Highlights* with focus on higher education shows that the group of higher education students are more easily employed since, according to the report, »the lack of an upper secondary qualification is a serious impediment to finding work while having a university-level degree increases the likelihood of having a job, particularly during difficult economic times«. (OECD 2012, 22)[13] This points to the need of education modernisation and includes a requirement for increasing the rates of higher education graduates in all member countries. However, due to the belief that one of many ways of helping graduates in increasing their employability rates is by means of teaching them skills that can be put to practice immediately after their graduation, the vocationally-oriented programmes typical mainly of upper-secondary schools and short-cycle additional trainings are gradually but progressively being transferred into the sphere of overall higher education. In combination with an increasing enrolment rate the quality of the overall higher education is bound to suffer consequences. In addition, such transfer creates differences between academic and professionally- or career-oriented higher education graduates, not so much in their acquired knowledge as in the differences between or better the inequality in their levels of employment and unemployment rates respectively. And since the best route to teach students these skills is the cooperation with the actual labour market, many of newly established not only private faculties but study courses at public faculties as well include an 'obligatory' practice or internship in a company which is also in accordance with the Bologna reform. Generally, private faculties are smaller and thus also have lower enrolment rates and considering the fact that they are at least in Slovenia but also the UK financed from a double source when compared to public faculties, that is from state concession and tuition, not to mention that their professors are mainly part-time and predominantly already from the labour market, often representing also the so-called potential employer, thus allowing the student of a private faculty better networking with the potential employer since the small number of students ensures that all get a place in a company, the benefits of the private higher education are much higher when compared to those of its public counterpart. On the other hand, at a public faculty where enrolment rates are much higher, the vacancy is usually available for a very limited number of applicants if

[13] Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance: Highlights*.

not only to one. Consequently, it can be presumed that the student from a private faculty in Slovenia as a higher education graduate carries higher employment rates since, as stated in the OECD report, vocational education and training (VET) is generally geared towards giving students relevant labour market skills for a particular occupation or industry which student of private faculties in Slovenia are provided with and what is more, since their skills and experience are acquired within a company, their networking with the labour market is in my opinion better than of that offered to students coming from public faculty programmes with focus on humanistics and similar non-vocationally or non-professionally that is academically-oriented programmes. In Slovenia there is a problem with excessive enrolment rates in especially humanistic and social studies and also with in general too high enrolments in higher education which means almost all secondary school graduates automatically decide to continue with their education however the (scarcely) available labour market that is the vacancies on the website of the employment centre most often require a worker with secondary vocational education, for example hairdresser, cleaning staff, locksmith, construction worker, electrician, cook etc.[14]

> *Research has shown that investing in VET can yield good economic returns and countries with strong VET, like Germany, have been relatively successful in tackling youth unemployment. The report also states that the average employment rate of these individuals is 75.5% which is 4.8 percentage points higher than those with general upper secondary education. This may be due to the fact that throughout the course of vocational education, individuals typically learn specific skills that are immediately needed in the labour market*. (OECD 2012, 78)

The statement points to the discussed issue of the Slovenian higher education. In German and both the UK higher education the VET was implemented in their already existent public or private higher education respectively while in Slovenia although public faculties are putting in an extra effort to deal with the issue they could do better in ensuring a better contact with the labour market since the VET is most often provided by the new private faculties however these also charge tuition in exchange for practical knowledge but in return

[14] Employment Service of Slovenia, 2013, *Information for Jobseekers: Vacancies.*

provide their students and graduates with better chances of finding employment after graduation.

3.1 DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

The definition of the term vocational education, which is education based on occupation or employment is also known as vocational education and training or VET and represents education that prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels. Craft vocations are usually based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. Vocational education can be at the secondary, post-secondary level, further education level and can interact with the apprenticeship system. Increasingly, vocational education can be recognised in terms of recognition of prior learning and partial academic credit towards higher education (e.g., at a university) as credit. However, as the labour market becomes more specialized and economies demand higher levels of skill, governments and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of vocational education through publicly funded training organizations and subsidized apprenticeship or traineeship initiatives for businesses. (Wikipedia 2013) Although VET is not considered as belonging under the umbrella term 'higher education', this type or rather form of education is nevertheless being increasingly used in higher education with focus on the practicality of education and bringing into education cooperation with companies and business.

The definition of the term that also concerns and is used in my field of research is the term ´professionally-oriented education´ which, however, is not as easy to determine as the definition on VET and higher or tertiary education. Research brings us to an organisation named the European Association of Higher Education Institutions (abbreviated EURASHE) that offer professionally-oriented programmes and are engaged in applied and profession-related research within the Bologna cycles. Currently, more than 1,400 higher education institutions in 40 countries within and outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are affiliated to EURASHE. The Association is present mostly through National Associations of Higher Education Institutions and individual institutions, such as Universities, (University) Colleges and Universities of Applied Sciences, as well as through other professional associations and stakeholder organisations active in the field of higher education. (EURASHE

2011)[15] While Slovenia has been a member of EURASHE since 2009 with currently 48 member faculties or colleges of higher education (29 public and 19 private), and the UK as well with their National Association of Higher Education in the EHEA and currently 34 members, no membership of Germany can be found. However, from the comparison of the ratio between the number of private and public faculties in each country respectively it is evident that Germany is the only of the three countries with lowest number of private institutions offering higher education. This could also explain its absence from the list of otherwise the majority of EU member states. As regards the definition of the professionally-oriented education as found on the State Portal of the Republic of Slovenia, it specifies this field of education as post-secondary vocational education. According to their definition, the establishment of professional (technical) colleges and implementation of education in such colleges is enabled by the new Organization and Financing of Education Act and the Vocational and Technical Education Act. The most important factor in the area of their establishment is the principle of partnership, i.e. actual interest and needs respectively of the economy and local communities for the graduates of higher-education technical (professional) programmes. Professionally-oriented higher education ends with the completion of studies and obtaining of a diploma. Foreign citizens can pursue vocational and technical respectively studies in the Republic of Slovenia under the same conditions that apply to the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia provided that they pursue their studies in accordance with the principle of reciprocity; otherwise, they are obliged to pay the education costs. In accordance with intergovernmental agreements, the Minister annually determines the number of enrolment places for foreign citizens pursuing vocational and technical respectively education under the principle of reciprocity.[16] (E-uprava 2012) The research focuses on whether the vocationally- and/or professionally-educated students or rather graduates come from private or public schools, or in other words, whether paying education at private faculties in Slovenia actually ensures higher chances of finding a job in today's financial and high unemployment crisis exactly by means of networking with the labour market as offered by the private faculty. The focus is on private faculties specifically since it is them that offer practically- and professionally- or vocationally-oriented studies only.

[15] Source: EURASHE. *What is EURASHE?*

[16] E-uprava State Portal of Slovenia 2012, *Professionally-oriented higher education* (Post-secondary vocational education).

3.2 FACTORS OF EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The OECD 2004 Growth Study has concluded that governments need to be more responsive to the rapid transformation of innovation processes and related business needs and strategies and that greater use of public-private partnership can increase this responsiveness and enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of technology and innovation policy. In other words, this means building cooperation between the state and private businesses, bringing private sector into the public one, but in my opinion by this there exists also the danger of privatising public faculties, introducing tuitions in the latter and connecting business with education. Nevertheless, the idea of business in education can certainly represent an opportunity for (a better and wider) networking with the labour market outside faculty premises. »The benefits of education on employability are indisputable. (…) This is (…) relevant in times of economic hardships as the impact of economic conditions on individuals' chances of being employed or unemployed varies significantly. Data on the relationship between educational attainment on employment and unemployment provide valuable information to policy makers seeking to understand and respond to challenging economic circumstances«. (OECD 2012, 78)

It is clear that in the recent decade especially with the increasing number of newly established universities and faculties and consequently higher rates of enrolled students but also higher education graduates of all levels have put the question of their employability on a world map. Although EU and OECD demand that these rates increase by the year 2020, I would like to stress that it is not important only to increase these rates, but to focus as well on the employment rates of higher education graduates, no matter whether they are of under- or post-graduate levels. According to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills Research of June 2011 »graduate employability has become an increasingly important element of curriculum development processes. This trend may have been partially influenced by current economic conditions, but is also due to an increasing realisation that graduates should be equipped with skills needed for the workplace«. (BIS 2011, 92)

There exist several ways of increasing higher education graduates´ employability rates, some of which are already practiced in many not only European countries but also worldwide and these differ from country to country but also from university to university and sometimes

even from faculty to faculty. Before any further discussion on the issue, it is important to first define the meaning of the term employability. Again, in accordance with the findings of the BIS Research Paper on supporting graduate employability, »there is an underlying consensus as to what employability comprises – a range of specific, employment-related skills or attributes (hard and soft skills) relevant to acquiring and succeeding in employment«. (BIS 2011, 93)

> *It is critical that the way institutions define and approach ´employability´ is clear and understood by students, employers and staff alike. (…) A universal understanding of employability is required across institutions. In a rapidly changing job market, the meaning of employability is subject to change; therefore it is important that HEIs ensure their approach is aligned with that of the global marketplace. Employers should therefore have a direct input there*. (BIS 2011, 93)

As regards the definition of the term 'employability' and the division of higher education into the 'academic' and 'professionally-oriented' respectively, on the basis of the conclusion on the definition of these terms as agreed on in Bled seminar, Vermeesch instead provides the distinction between *research based* (= using existing knowledge) and *research driven* (= advancing knowledge) types of higher education as he finds these two more useful than the traditional distinction as provided by the before-mentioned 'academic' and 'professionally-oriented' higher education which are, as he states, 'mutually exclusive'. (Vermeesch 2005)

3.3 BOLOGNA EFFECT ON HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

To be able to explain the changes that have occurred in higher education in Europe, a presentation of the so-called responses to the challenges of the modern labour market and the modern workplace as provided in Bonn in 2005 by Dr. Roland Vermeesch, the president of EURASHE, is necessary to include. In his presentation he first specifies the definition of the term *employability* as its definition was agreed on at the Bologna seminar in Bled in October 2004, and defines the term as: "a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their

chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy".[17]

In his opinion, »the Bologna process itself is also about employability«, and the introduction of the Bologna in higher education has positively affected the preparation of graduates for the labour market. »I am claiming (…) that BA graduates from professional HE are per se ready for the labour market, and it may be useful for other graduates to know why it is so«. (Vermeesch 2005) »The EURASHE (European Association of Institutions of Higher Education) predominantly offer professionally-oriented study programmes with the aim that all Bachelor (or undergraduate) studies be 'relevant for the labour market', which created a fear in traditional university circles that all Bachelor programmes would be expected to be purely vocational and geared to specific short term needs of the labour market«. (Vermeesch 2005)

> *The Bologna Process has a positive effect on the issue of employability, through (…) an integrated two-cycle system in all participating countries. (…) On the whole HE in Europe is evolving into a greater diversification, if not of educational systems, but certainly of types of degrees and programmes offered. One illustration of this is the proliferation of the (…) 'professional bachelor' degrees, with many countries, e.g. Denmark, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, also adopting the name 'professional' in the degree title (the qualification), (…).* (Vermeesch 2005)

3.3.1 ENHANCING STUDENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

In Slovenia, as shall be seen under the chapter on networking forms in higher education many as I call them ´typical´ employment strategies are being used in higher education, of which the most common are alumni clubs, career centres and internships. These strategies are common in all three for the research selected countries, that is, Slovenia, Germany and the UK. Nevertheless, the focus in the future higher education should definitely fall on

[17] The Bologna seminar in Bled (Slovenia, 21-23 October 2004) on 'Employability in the context of the Bologna process' accepted the interpretation of the term from the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (UK).

greater involvement of not only institutions in providing this type of networking, but also of employers and last but not least, students themselves.

> *The (BIS) report concludes positively on the interactions between universities and businesses in relation to enhancing graduate career prospects but suggests a ´gap´ still exists between the levels of skills sought by employers and the extent to which graduates meet those expectations. (…) By gathering examples of what other countries do well, recommendations have been made for how (…) graduates can be better equipped by their institutions with the skills and knowledge to join the global workforce in the current competitive professional environment.* (BIS 2011, 10)

There are a number of ways of enhancing student employability, of which some are for example employment strategies that institutions can use in that direction, thus making possible for all students and not just those who are interested in these to learn of and acquire the necessary employability skills, perhaps requiring all students to take subjects on this topic and providing them in exchange with accreditation points, »to ensure all students have the opportunity to access a common level of employability skills«. (BIS 2011, 7) Another way of enhancing student employability is via alumni portals and networks, the first of which are offered at almost all Slovenian higher education institutions and most often include career centres, where the alumni portal serves as a type of connecting platforms where students, both current, former and even prospective can meet and share experience between each other, while the latter that is career centres provide students with more employment type of data, as are CV writing, workshops on future employment, seminars where students meet future employers, and more. »Enhancing employer engagement could provide careers services with a number of benefits, including providing employers with the opportunity to outline the skills they require from graduates and likewise a greater sharing of responsibility. Employers can (…) take on activities such as interview practice and careers guidance«. (BIS Report 2011, 97) If these services were in the past offered only by employment centres, today practically all universities offer these to their students, but it is one thing to be offering these services and another how much this service provision is actually effective in firstly acquiring students' and graduates' interest in participation and secondly in helping enhance graduates´ employability after they leave faculty.

4 NETWORKING WITH THE LABOUR MARKET IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Not even ten years ago the situation was such that after graduation there was a labour market awaiting graduates with a secure and possibly well-paid job especially for graduates with a degree in higher education. However, due to globalisation, the internet and the global crisis, things have changed and today the same higher education level graduates are struggling to find a job. This is also because the number of students and graduates is higher and the selection of faculties not only larger but with that consequently more diverse in its supply. Thus, it can be confirmed that where the Bologna Process has been introduced, a great diversification of higher education institutions has occurred. (Vermeesch 2005) It then logically comes to one's mind what exactly universities and faculties are doing in this direction, and whether universities and faculties should do more to help their graduates find a job. As will be shown, private faculties in Slovenia are working on this, but also public ones, however, each in a different manner. There exist the so-called career centres, alumni clubs, both offering networking, but these differ from faculty to faculty and also from country to country, and additionally, internships can be useful in making connections with possible future employers that is by means of networking. What is common to all these is that they »help boost the confidence of graduates, looking at skills like teamwork, communication, CV writing and interview experience«. (International Graduate Centre 2013) A general description of an alumni club which exemplifies its basic aim can be found on the website provided by the Slovenian Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana in which it calls on its members, students and staff to take part in both formal and informal types of meetings. An alumni club as offered by them is there to join colleagues, students, professors of the faculty to meet together and share and exchange their experiences and knowledge, thus helping their alumni club in a better organisation of events, round table discussions, writing and publishing articles, helping in search of previous students and graduates but also sponsors. (FDV 2012) The same definition applies to more or less all faculties offering the option of participating in alumni.

4.1 DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORKING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Networking represents in today's high unemployment rates a very efficient method if not one of the most successful methods of finding employment. When used in combination with other methods, as is following-up on employment advertisements, the way to finding a job is

supposed to be much easier. Networking is based on acquaintances and helps us get in touch with potential employers via friends, relatives, colleagues, professors, former schoolmates, former suppliers and customers and any other people that we know or will get to know in the future. In networking we do not ask for employment but rather create contacts with people in order to get information, advice, the names of further people that can one day become our employers or help us meet the person that will provide us with or help us find a job.

> *The purpose of good networking is expanding the list of acquaintances who can supply us with the information that could be helpful in finding employment, it is informing others that we are looking for a job and that maybe they can recommend us for a position, it is being informed about unpublished vacancies, organizations and employers, novelties in our field of work, it is getting a better overview of the labour market and last but not least, meeting important people from various fields of work or companies*. (Mojazaposlitev 2013)

Dunja Turk, an assistant at the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana, who sees networking as the solution for the young, states: »One of the opportunities for networking and finding employment lies in the cooperation with employment clubs, i.e. clubs that connect unemployed individuals and help them find a job«. (Turk 2013) According to a research on networking by doctor Danijela Brečko, networking is mainly informal and creates ties between people not on the basis of their education or profession, but rather on personal interests and hobbies (the most important factor), and only then on the basis of age and hierarchy in an organization. »In informal groups people satisfy lack of direct communication. It is easier for people to belong to smaller groups … therefore they will always form informal groups«. (Brečko 2013)

As discussed under Chapter 4, the networking that is most commonly evidenced in universities is the one provided by means of career centres and alumni clubs. According to the BIS Report, alumni networks should be enhanced by making more relations with employers. This type of social networking is in my opinion an excellent idea since it supplies graduates with exactly those employability skills as sought by employers themselves, that is,

both the so-called ´soft´ and ´hard´ skills in the form of first-hand information on employment requirements. More and more internships are provided at faculties, both public and private, and these internships are either paid or not. More frequently they are not paid, but how are those who come from socially disadvantaged families to afford this? In such case we can talk about the exclusion of those who are socially disadvantaged, since internship networking is consequently available or better, accessible to only those who are wealthy or come from a wealthy background. The question then arises on whether these internships are at all useful and as Bennett Resnik, a consultant on social capital and networks, an expert in networking strategy and social capital retention, advises: »Profiting from an unpaid internship is exactly by means of networking that students are provided with during their internships«. He does not suggest that we should network, but rather how we should network, since it is, in his words, not difficult to do it.

> *The main mistake we often make the first day of internship orientation is to focus on our boss and superiors (…), making strong connections with them in order to obtain a referral, a recommendation, (…). This is certainly a valid effort, but not the main priority. (…) Networking takes place outside the office and the office time, that is, through coffees and lunches, even summer sports and activities. Networking is a far more important component of your internship. And making connections is in your blood, it's an innate skill that all humans possess*. (Resnik 2012)

Another expert on networking, Claire Churchard, an award winning business journalist who has more than 10-year experience with working in print and online media and is currently the digital editor at People Management with responsibility for online and magazine content, claims that one in four graduate jobs are gained through networking and internships since work experience and networking are in her words the most effective routes for students to secure themselves a job. »A quarter of students set to graduate in 2011 have already been offered employment after taking part in work experience or internship. (…) One in seven graduates that have already secured employment after leaving university this year used a network of family and friends to secure a position« and what is more, according to her, »universities are increasingly sourcing positions for students, often via alumni networks, as 13 per cent of graduates gained their job via this route«. (Churchard 2011) Such

are the results of making use of alumni networks, work placements and internships in the British higher education, where it is clear that such a manner of helping students clearly provides positive results as regards increasing their employment chances after leaving university. Nevertheless, what happens with the remaining percent or share of students and graduates is not provided, especially those who have no family relatives in the country they are studying in. Consequently, the question that I wish to research is what exactly HEIs in general are doing to develop and improve the employability of their graduates. I also claim that private Slovenian faculties are putting in an extra effort by creating networking with the labour market that is reserved specifically for their students in exchange for tuition, besides providing them with career centres and alumni clubs, both of which are however provided also by the Slovenian public faculties. Since such data cannot be found in publicly available data, to examine if the situation is truly such, the method of an interview is used to be able to come to any conclusions on the issue discussed where the interview statements are included mainly in the empirical part of the thesis. The data analysis in the continuation focuses firstly on the types of employability enhancement strategies that each of the three selected countries offer to their graduates, and then focus on the networking with the labour market as one of the ways of improving the employability of graduates. I wish to check to what extent HEIs support the future employability of graduates by engaging employers in the networking with the labour market as provided by each HEI respectively.

4.1.1 NETWORKING IN THE BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION

> *It is not surprising that ´employability´ is high on the agenda in HEIs in the UK as two out of the top three reasons for applying to study are employment related. What may be surprising is that there is no statutory entitlement to employability support or careers information, advice and guidance for students in higher education in the UK. Nonetheless, many HEIs have well-developed strategies for employability and in the summer of 2010, The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) encouraged institutions to publish statements on the outcomes of their strategies for prospective students via public outlets (…)*. (BIS 2011, 18)

In the UK the most common and most frequently published networking method is the internships that are often referred to as 'sandwich placements'. They are validated work

experience opportunities provided as part of degree programmes. University personnel supply students with access to vacancies, thus making it possible for students to apply directly to employers. Some British universities hold fairs and exhibitions to encourage their students to consider the option and to enable them to meet their potential future employers. In the modern labour market graduates with work experience in the form of sandwich placements are not only regarded as more desirable to employers, but have demonstrated in a research that they attain higher level degree classifications than those graduates without such experience. In the UK the internships are either unpaid or paid and the purpose of these internships is most often to get the understanding about how work is conducted in the English-speaking world. (Internship Network 2009b) James Brockett, a news editor of People Management writes in his article on employment of graduates in Britain that it is exactly their internships that help graduates find a job faster. According to his article on the research titled *The High Fliers report – The Graduate Market 2011*, which looks at the graduate programmes of 100 of the biggest UK recruiters, he informs us that the survey carried out shows that »the biggest UK firms are set to increase their graduate intake this year, with more positions than ever going to people who have already worked for the company as interns«. (Brockett 2011) What is more, one third of all positions are to be given to those graduates who have worked for one of these companies in some form before, most commonly in an internship. In the same article Brockett warns that two-thirds of recruiters claimed that graduates with no work experience would have very little chance or even no chance of finding a job in these same companies since the study also showed that future recruiters are not so much interested in the grades of graduates as they are in their prior working experience of any type. »The report includes the stark warning that in this highly competitive graduate job market, new graduates who've not had any work experience during their time at university have little or no chance of landing a (well-paid) job with a leading employer, irrespective of the university they've attended or the academic results they achieve«. (Brockett 2011)

The British universities are working on helping students by offering them various training schemes which would help students boost their confidence and help them develop skills as are teamwork, communication, CV writing, interview experience. In addition, they offer numerous graduate recruitment events to acquaint students and graduates with the skills as

required by employers. Some of the skills employers are looking for today are communication, leadership, numeracy, budgeting, creativity, research and networking skills. However, the increasing importance of internships for the employability of British graduates is the one that stands out the most. »The Graduate Talent Pool initiative is a partnership between government and employers to help match graduates with internship opportunities. This is an illustration of how work experience/internships are an increasingly important way for graduates to enhance their employability«. (BIS Report 2011, 20)

4.1.2 NETWORKING IN THE GERMAN HIGHER EDUCATION

> *In line with the Bologna Process, a two-fold structure comprising Bachelor and Master Degrees has been introduced with a key aim to increase the employability of graduates. Research by the Centre for Higher Education Development in Germany into the impact of the reform has looked at methodological competences, social competences, practical relevance and internationalisation. The general conclusion is that many universities and universities of applied sciences lack experience in enhancing their students´ employability skills. (…) There is no standard practice in enhancing graduate employability, due in part to the federal structure of the education sector and the fundamental principle of freedom of teaching and research*. (BIS 2011, 31-32)

In Germany any discussion on networking in higher education leads to internships, where there are various types available. The majority of students take their internship during the third or fourth year of their study where they most commonly write their thesis in the selected company, while the other type of it is the postgraduate internship. Since finding a job for those graduates who lack working experience is extremely difficult, many students decide to do their internship in the company they would like to work for after graduation, and they do so for little payment in hope they get a job there in the future. (Internship Network 2013a) This resembles the Slovenian type of graduating, especially at private faculties, where students do their obligatory practice or rather internship in order to successfully finish their higher education. However, as shall be seen later in the analysis of the empirical part, it is also important to consider which companies are selected by students to do their obligatory internship or practice as well as the status or the type of student that most typically enrols in the Slovenian private higher education.

To investigate further the German higher education which is known for being extensively provided for free, for example the networking as provided at the Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences is included, where networking with the labour market is realised by means of projects, practical work and final theses with local, national and international business enterprises in various fields of study, as are chemistry, energy, material sciences, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, information technology, logistics, biotechnology, and more. These cooperative projects are arranged and developed by the University Centre for Research. (Rhine-Waal University 2013) The university offers not only networking for accommodation and student exchange programmes, but a network of universities and companies, networking with other professors at the university or in the business world, which means their university in my opinion does much more than only offering a career centre and alumni portals, but instead does the best to keep their students and their staff as well actively involved in the process of education and everything connected with it. »The project-driven approach, high level of teamwork and integrated consideration of economic and social aspects create network competence and provide the skills required on the international job market«. (Schramm-Wölk 2012) Nevertheless, again here too no exact data are provided on what the response and interest of students and graduates themselves in this type of student help in finding a job after graduation is.

Another German higher education institution example is the International Graduate Centre (IGC) which offers a rich network of partners in business and science and was founded by the University of Applied Sciences Bremen as an interdisciplinary Graduate School for Management and Leadership. All courses are taught in English, lectures and seminars are team oriented and take place in small groups with a maximum of 25 students to facilitate a constructive dialogue between the members. The international network is strengthened by visiting lecturers from many international partner universities who offer courses, lectures and contribute to the intercultural competence of students. Many lecturers come from the management of top companies in Europe and provide students with an insight into different companies and fields of business. (Hochschule Bremen 2013) The IGC is a part of the International Business School Alliance (IBSA) which also takes their efforts further in helping their students learn of and put to practice their knowledge acquired in time of their study years at the Centre. According to the IGC, »the curriculum provides sound preparation for

careers in European and international businesses, institutions and administrations, or for further research. Graduates have a broad field of opportunity to choose from, including economic and legal adviser activities, positions in private and public management, lobbying activities, political offices and functions, and in the diplomatic service«. (International Graduate Centre 2013) In addition, students are provided with the so-called Career Planning class that helps students identify their own skills and establish future careers, learn how to write CVs and master job interviews. »The Career Planning Forum brings together students and EU practitioners. Students can profit tremendously from the experience and advice of EU practitioners and experts working in the field«. (International Graduate Centre 2013)

At the University of Würzburg with its ten faculties the networking as presented by the Head of the university Alumni Office is that of »building our own international Alumni network to facilitate knowledge exchange between people who are spending or have spent a certain time of their life at our University. Our vision is to link all living Alumni worldwide and to create a platform for exchanging as well as receiving information from their (former) University. Programmes, projects and events are created as possibilities for personal meetings. (Thiel 2013)[18] The types of social networking offered at their university, besides Career Centre and Alumni Club, are for example the “Pressestelle”, the “Studienberatung”, the International Office, etc. As regards their career centre and alumni club, the two are separated in their operations and while Alumni club takes care of connecting students, professors, it is the career service that is in charge of the student and graduate employability. The two offices nevertheless cooperate with each other, according to Ms Thiel, »we offer – in cooperation with the Career Service – a Mentoring-Programme, a Newsletter, Porträts, different events, International Book, etc«. (Thiel 2013) Since the focus of the thesis is also the issue of if and if yes, in what ways a university follows up on where their graduates find employment, Ms Thiel states that »as our Alumni Office is responsible for all faculties fo the University I could say that we invite them several times before, at and after the graduation ceremony to stay in touch«. (Thiel 2013) However, such information does not suffice to make any conclusions on either networking or employment, but although no specific data are provided, in general the impression is that students and graduates are

[18] From the questionnaire interview performed via email with Ms Michaela Thiel, the Head of the University of Würzburg Alumni Office

contacted many times by their Alumni and invited to participate in their network, i.e. the networking between students. When asked about networking or helping in a better or rather more efficient social networking between students, graduates of all levels, professors and employers, Ms Thiel replied that she does not have this information, but instead the "Studiendekanate" of their ten faculties is responsible for questions and answers regarding the issue. The main task of their Alumni is to offer »to the faculties to make use of our Alumni-Network, what they do from time to time, for example for traineeships«. (Thiel 2013) Her statement confirms that students use their Alumni network mainly for finding information on internships, but as stated by Ms Thiel, they only do it occasionally. This enables contacts between students, but only if they themselves decide for it and what is more, it is not with the purpose of finding new employment opportunities, but rather informing themselves about internships.

4.1.3 NETWORKING IN THE SLOVENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

At public Slovenian faculties the networking that is available to students is in certain aspects very similar to that described in the networking provided in the British and German higher education. It seems all three countries provide career centres where students are not so much taught but more informed of the soft skills as required by their future employers and of free positions that are available usually for that one selected-in-the-end student only. In common are their respective alumni clubs, which are developed and followed by students differently from country to country, but also from university to university. However, looking generally at all three countries and their universities regarding the effort that is invested in helping students and graduates find employment seems greater in the UK and Germany than in Slovenia. In the latter it seems, especially in the public sector, not much is offered to its students in the direction where they could make business connections or contacts with possible future employers which can be explained by the much higher enrolment rate in its public higher education when compared to its private one. »Institutions do not generally facilitate networking with employers though most universities hold career fairs«. (BIS 2011, 32) An interesting and important reason for such an attitude of academia to introducing the teaching of employability skills at universities could be »that many academics feel uncomfortable explicitly advocating the learning of employability skills whilst passionately promoting lifelong learning through higher education study«. (BIS 2011, 35) However,

considering the specificity of the Slovenian student work available to Slovenian students via student services and the benefits a student receives by working via this route that is by having a student status, it becomes soon clear that the cause to an increase in graduate unemployment rates could be ascribed to exactly these same student services. While student services do provide a type of networking, since students do work for companies during their studies, however, it is usually about companies that take in only students with the student status and never consider employing the same student after his or her status expires. In the Slovenian higher education the so-called 'chase' for student status is very much present among students. (Vadnjal 2013) What is more, many students prolong intentionally their studies without actually participating in them or, on the other hand, acquire a job already during studies and due to working via student services, their graduation is often delayed and education cosequently prolonged. (Rebolj 2013) In my opinion, the Slovenian government should definitely reconsider doing something about this type of employment during studies. In other words, is it possible to do away with student services in order to increase graduate employment rates? By eliminating student services, Slovenia could then implement the system of student work as used in both Germany and the UK, where the cooperation with the labour market is provided as required by the Bologna reform that is providing direct contact with the labour market via internships and work placements thus increasing student networking with the actual labour market. This way, also in Slovenia the companies would be forced to take in only those students that are not accepted due to their connections with somebody they know in the company, but rather on the basis of their skills and study course.

4.1.3.1 CASE STUDIES FOR THE NETWORKING IN THE SLOVENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The number of newly established private higher education institutions in Slovenia is very high when considering the size of the country as compared to the size of the UK and Germany respectively and since the inclusion of all in the research would produce statistical data only, my research redirects its focus on two private faculties where I have personally worked and observed the presence of student networking with the labour market producing higher employment rates among their graduates. The two faculties are the GEA College - Faculty of Entrepreneurship (in Slovenian *Fakulteta za podjetništvo*) and the Faculty of

Commerce and Business Studies (in Slovenian *Fakulteta za komercialne in poslovne vede*). On the websites of both faculties networking is either mentioned or written about explicitly however no in-depth details about the issue are publicly available. In order to acquire such data the research method of an interview is used. The interview is sent to the representatives of the two private faculties in question and at the same time to a representative of the second biggest and oldest Slovenian university, that is the University of Maribor. The answers gained from the three Slovenian HE representatives provide us with detailed (but far from exact) data on the issue of networking with the purpose of helping the future generations of bachelors, masters and doctors in their not only successful graduation from the selected faculty, be it private or public, but also in them being successful in finding employment after their graduation. The research begins with a general presentation of the two private faculties, investigating from their websites and the faculties´ publicly available data the enrolment and graduate rates of their students which cannot be deducted from the national higher education statistics, including any information on the networking provided at each respectively.

a) GEA COLLEGE

GEA College - the Faculty of Entrepreneurship is the first presented private faculty that in my opinion offers better networking to its students than its public counterpart. This faculty has a longer history of existence than the second included private faculty and is more diverse in its operations, since it offers not only the faculty (or rather college as they themselves name it) of entrepreneurship, but also a centre of higher professional schools, and a business and executive training centre. Thus, their services are numerous and much more diverse than those of the FKPV faculty, but the focus is on business, entrepreneurship and management i.e. vocationally- and professionally-oriented programmes. In the framework of the College of Entrepreneurship future and current students can choose between first- (Bachelor) and second-level (Postgraduate Master) studies in accordance with the Bologna reform. The former of the two levels includes studies in Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship in English, and Entrepreneurship in tourism, while in postgraduate studies programmes of Entrepreneurship, but also Entrepreneurship in tourism are provided, including an MBA study programme in social entrepreneurship and Management study programme in corporate security. Programmes of bachelor level last three academic years, and those of the

postgraduate last two years, which is in accordance with the Bologna 3+2 system. At the faculty´s centre of higher professional school programmes, students can opt for study programmes of Commercialist, Business Accounting and an additional programme for the title of Business Secretary. The college was established in 1990 by 43 associates and professors of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Ljubljana and has been successful ever since. Its headquarters is in Piran, but there are also three subsidiary branches in Ljubljana, Maribor and Ptuj. On their presentation website reasons for why to select their faculty are listed, of which one states that »because of modern work methods and practical orientation of programmes, our graduates are also statistically above-average employable and successful«. (GEA College 2013b) Nevertheless, no exact data on the number of their enrolled students and graduates can be found on the faculty´s website, where instead further research of the data on the internet has led to a statistical research on these rates in all Slovenian, both public and private faculties. The data in the statistics however follow the enrolment and graduation rates only from the year 2004 up to 2008 and are provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia. The table 4.1 below provides us with the enrolment rates of students in the period from academic years of 2004/2005 to 2008/2009 as collected by the before-mentioned ministry.

Table 4.1: **Enrolment rates at GEA College of Entrepreneurship in Nova Gorica in the period from 2004 to 2008 per academic year in the number of enrolled students**

Year of Enrolment	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
GEA College of Entrepreneurship	630	786	710	761	677

Source: MVZT, Statistical Data on Higher Education (2010, 131)[19]

As can be seen from the table 4.1 and its statistics, the number of graduates at one of this private faculty branches is not at all as high as the rates of graduates of public higher education institutions in Slovenia however to get a clearer picture of what happens with their graduates after leaving faculty it is still needed to check by means of the questionnaire how many of these graduates find employment after their graduation, where exactly and more importantly if this was in any way enhanced by explicitly using the networking technique as provided by their faculty to their students. The principal mission of the faculty is the development of a business network and business in the region by means of

[19] Source: MVZT, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of the RS, 2010

establishing and maintaining personal and business connections, also by promoting the achievements of the members of the GEA College Alumni club. Their main networking partners as enumerated in their presentation material are the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, the Slovenian Chamber of Craft, the Association of entrepreneurs of Slovenia, the Association of managers, various Business clubs (however, it is not specified which exactly these are), local and regional business centre networks (not specified), the National agency for promotion of entrepreneurship and business investments (JAPTI), business clusters, business incubator, technological parks, Slovene diaspora, member of the International Project, and last but not least, the Management Association. (GEA College 2013a) All enumerated broaden the faculty's access to and connection with the labour market. The faculty also has publicly published sponsors and donators, among which some of the biggest, both private and public, companies and institutions can be found. In order to obtain further information on where exactly these students do their required internships and how many exactly, and where, find a job after their graduation cannot be concluded from the publicly available data of the faculty and are instead provided by means of the method of a direct interview with the representative of the faculty in question.

b) FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS STUDIES

This faculty was established in 2004 as a higher vocational college offering the study of commerce and was later in 2008 reformed into a higher education institution offering both under- and post-graduate studies in the field of commerce, tourism, business informatics, with an additional PhD programme in business sciences. The faculty is private and has a seat in Celje, with additional subsidiaries in Ljubljana, Maribor, Nova Gorica, Murska Sobota, Kranj, Slovenj Gradec and Rogaška Slatina. Up until today the faculty has produced 2400 undergraduates and over 230 master degree graduates, and in 2012 it received also the first doctor degree student in the field of business sciences. On the presentation website of the faculty an interview is found with the dean of the faculty and a part-time professor at the faculty, Doctor Marjana Merkač Skok. The interview also touches on the topic of satisfied students where the dean speaks about their alumni club and also networking. Below is the translation of her statement on the topic.

Today every better school offers its own alumni club as an informal form of cooperation with graduates. We too have our FKPV Alumni club (…), in which all who have ever graduated in any of our faculty programmes. (…) However, such a club by itself does not mean anything. (…) Graduates who have already shown and those who are yet to show their interest in cooperation with us are those who can for example help by lecturing to our students, or by offering our students internships in their companies, where students can produce their seminar assignments and theses. The networking in the background of this cooperation is very active (…) We attract and motivate the members of our Alumni club (…) by inviting them to lectures, round tables and workshops which are for them free of charge, while other arrangements are made available for the general public as well. (FKPV 2013a)

What students of the FKPV faculty are provided with in the framework of their membership in the FKPV Alumni club are discounts in tuition payment, benefits with sponsors of the Alumni club (although it is not stated explicitly which these are), discounts in participating at international science conferences of the faculty, connecting graduates by means of networking (explicitly stated), help in career, professional and consultations on personal and business growth (that is, registering students into the register of job seekers, following-up on vacancies, advice on finding a job, developing career, and more), education workshops, seminars, round tables, lectures, etc. and active cooperation with the club and faculty on various projects. All these are offered to students since the vision of the faculty is to become an indispensable organization for keeping contacts, communication and business cooperation between graduates of different enrolment generations and the faculty staff. (FKPV 2013c) The faculty also has a Career centre where students are offered help in their studies, in the selection of their study programme, in helping to prepare for and in finding a job, in international mobility, gaining practical experience, and more. On the website of the faculty, another interview with Ms Nada Jurko, a professor and an employer (since she works for the Celje bank as stated on the FKPV website) of some of the graduates of the faculty is published.

I have been cooperating successfully with the faculty since 2003 as a (part-time) *professor in the undergraduate programme of commerce in the field of banking*

business. (….) As regards the level of knowledge of the faculty graduates it is suitable for working in a bank. In times of today's crisis the chances of finding a job are very limited. A few hundred candidates apply for every published tender for work in a bank and thus banks look for and select only the best. (…) In our bank we have currently three FKPV graduates employed and all have benefited from their acquired degree by being promoted to a higher position and/or full-time employment for unlimited period. (FKPV 2013b)

As is already the case with the GEA College faculty, also for the FKPV faculty a more precise study of the enrolment and employment rates of both faculties as well as their forms of networking with the labour market are provided in the empirical part of the research by means of the inclusion of the answers collected by means of the method of interview.

II. EMPIRICAL PART

5 ANALYSIS OF GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RATES DUE TO NETWORKING WITH THE LABOUR MARKET IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The thesis research focuses not only on the networking with the labour market in higher education in Slovenia, but also on what happens with these graduates after graduation that is on how many of them exactly find employment, trying to determine their numbers on the basis of the division into public versus private HE graduates. The first hypothesis of the research states that students from private faculties find employment faster than those coming from public ones and carry higher employment rates than graduates of again public higher education. This does not mean that the number of the former is higher, but rather that their practically oriented studies and more importantly the networking with prospective employers that is offered directly to students makes them more employable. The greater employability is also due to the vocational or professional orientation of their either bachelor, master and even doctor studies and the greater directness of the contact of these same students with their professors (due to small-size classes) and potential employers which students are provided with during their studies. The idea itself of offering such networking to students is completely acceptable and in accordance with the Bologna reform, however when talking about private and public HE in Slovenia, the first evident peculiarity of it is the orientation of the private HE programmes, in other words these programmes are all vocationally- and professionally-oriented only which affects positively the employment rates of their graduates after leaving faculty.

> *As regards the introduction of the Bologna system with the purpose of improving higher education, the aim was also to improve study programmes. By means of such improvement a renewal of programmes was an opportunity which some faculties made use of for the good of their programmes and students while others did not. It depends on what their motives were and in what way they decided to deal with the issue. If they dealt with it only with the purpose to fill their working hours, then it is very likely that nothing much changed after the programme renewal. On the contrary, if the desired output was looked for or better needed, that is what kind of knoweldge is necessary*

and how it is to be achieved … this is where programmes have definitely improved. (Rebolj 2013)

Before any research can be conducted, the target population needs to be specified, both in space and time. The target population of my research is that part of the population in Slovenia, Germany and the UK that studies or graduates from a higher education institution as well as their employment and/or unemployment rates after their graduation. The thesis is logically limited to this population since the topic of the thesis is higher education and networking that is offered by faculties, the result of which despite the increased teaching of students of the employability skills as required by the labour market are the unexpected decreased employment rates of these same graduates. The empirical part of the thesis researches whether the same unemployment rates hold true for both the public and private higher education sector in Slovenia. At the same time this share of population included in the research reflects the situation as it is in this sphere of higher education in the selected three countries, that is the share shows the number of graduates and their employment rates after graduation. In other words, we look for the information on how many graduates actually work and where to confirm or refute the first hypothesis. By researching the question on how many of them use networking for employment and when as well as where, I try to confirm or refute the second hypothesis on the networking in private higher education in comparison with the networking in the public one in Slovenia. Finally, I try to ascertain whether networking with the labour market in general affects employment rates of higher education graduates negatively or positively and thus confirm or refute the third hypothesis.

The selection of students and graduates for the target group makes sense as it is exactly the students or graduates who represent an important part of the so-called chain of the networking with the labour market in which they have or at least should have the role of the networking performer (or doer) with the purpose of increasing their own employment chances and in the end acquiring a job. In help of networking Alumni clubs and Career centres are offered today by practically all faculties, no matter if these are private or public and no matter what country they are in. However, it is important to keep in mind that the inclusion of students and graduates in their own, i.e. between each other, networking could

be the key to increasing their employability and employment chances and with them, what is most important, their employment rates.

5.1 PRESENTATION OF THE METHODS FOR TESTING THE THREE HYPOTHESES

The research in this thesis refers to the issues of private and public HE graduate employment rates and the networking offered to graduates during their studies, looking for connections between these two phenomena with the purpose of ascertaining whether they are firstly present at all and secondly if yes in what (positive or negative) way they affect each other. After the research issue is specified hypotheses regarding the same issue are formed. The three focus areas of the thesis are: 1) types of higher education institutions and programmes offered, which are supplied in the theoretical part of the thesis, as well as 2) enrolment, graduate and employment rates of graduates, and 3) participation of socio-economic sector in higher education i.e. students, trade unions, business, professional organisations, together forming the networking for the purposes of employment of higher education graduates.

Generally speaking, the quantitative data collection methods rely on random sampling and structured instruments for data collection. They produce results that are easy to summarize, compare and generalize. Quantitative research is concerned with testing hypotheses derived from theory and/or being able to estimate not only the presence but also the size of a researched phenomenon. The quantitative data gathering strategies that are used in the research are obtaining relevant data from the existing information systems and performing surveys with closed-ended questions by means of a face-to-face interview and a questionnaire. In quantitative research survey, interviews are more structured than in qualitative research. In a structured interview, the researcher asks a standard set of questions and nothing more. (Leedy and Ormrod 2001) This type of quantitative research interview is used for the data collected in the EU and OECD statistics on the researched issue.

> *Face-to-face interviews have a distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore gain their cooperation. These interviews yield highest response rates in survey research. They also allow the researcher to clarify ambiguous answers and when appropriate, seek follow-up*

information. The disadvantages of such interviews include impracticality when large samples are involved of which processing can be time consuming and expensive. (Leedy and Ormrod 2001)

As regards the qualitative data collection methods these play an important role in evaluation by providing information that are useful to understand the processes behind observed results collected by means of large target groups, i.e. national level statistics. Furthermore qualitative methods also improve the quality of survey-based quantitative evaluations and help generate evaluation hypothesis, strengthen the design of survey questionnaires and expand or clarify quantitative evaluation findings. (Leedy and Ormrod 2010) In general, the qualitative methods used in the research are in-depth interview and document review. In order to expand the reliability of the statistical data and provide an in-depth research that concerns the three studied countries' higher education only, for the empirical part of the research two case studies of two private faculties in Slovenia are included and in addition the answers of one representative of the Slovenian public higher education as well as the answers of a representative of the German public higher education. For all four interviews a before-hand prepared questionnaire was sent to the selected or better available and willing to participate in my research representatives of public and private higher education, where these include the answers of the Chancellor of the University of Maribor, Prof. Dr. Danijel Rebolj, the dean of the GEA College Faculty of Entrepreneurship, Prof. Dr. Jaka Vadnjal, the Dean of the Faculty of Business Studies and Commerce, Prof. Dr. Marjana Merkač, and the Head of Alumni Office of the University of Würzburg, Prof. Dr. Michaela Thiel. As stated before in this paragraph, the first and the last interviewees are the representatives of the (Slovenian and German) public higher education, while the second and the third interviewees come from the field of the Slovenian private higher education, thus providing us with first-hand information on the topic of networking with the labour market at their faculties or university as well as on their following up on the employment rates of their respective graduates.

The methods used in the research of networking in public and private higher education in three countries that is Slovenia, Germany and the UK, are:

1) A secondary analysis of the existing EU and OECD data and a comparison of the differences and similarities between the three higher education systems – with interest in the number of enrolled students and graduates from private and public faculties at the state level yearly.
2) An interview with the selected representatives of the public higher education in Slovenia and Germany – important are the data on the following up on students and graduates, where their students or better graduates find employment, and how many of them actually have the 'employed' status.
3) The case study of the GEA College Faculty of Entrepreneurship and the Faculty of Business Studies and Commerce both representing the private higher education in Slovenia.

For the analysis of the data collected from statistics and by means of the questionnaire, the whole research is divided into three parts that is enrolment rates, graduate and graduate employment rates in higher education as well as networking forms with the labour market provided in higher education. In all three parts dependent and independent variables are presented as well as the most frequent answers of the interviewed representatives of higher education, as acquired in the interviews by means of open questions. Also, for each part an analysis is made in order to establish which variables influence most higher education enrolment rates, graduate employment rates and the existing forms of networking in higher education. In the end all three parts are compared and in them any variations and similarities as well as their common points are defined which help me either confirm or refute the three hypotheses. To be able to study the three hypotheses I provide table presentations with data on graduate rates and graduate employment rates, their respective cooperation with the private sector and the networking forms used with the purpose of increasing student and graduate employability and graduate employment rates. In the research the data used are of the European- and state-, but also university- and faculty-level. In research generally the so-called primary and secondary data are used, of which the first are acquired by means of instruments, as are a group interview, a questionnaire, an observation or an experiment research, and the second are collected from already existent sources, which contain the data needed for the research. In this thesis both types of data are used. For the primary, or rather in order to gain primary data, as a measurement instrument a one-on-one interview is used with an in-advance sent questionnaire by email. Taking into

account that the interviewees thus received time to cooperate by answering the questions, the answers certainly stand as valid and reliable and are therefore included in the research as the source of data which help ascertain the connection between networking in higher education and the employment rates of graduates.

A questionnaire is a measurement instrument that is known for being the most frequently used instrument for collecting primary data. A questionnaire is a predefined series of questions that the interviewee needs to answer. As a means a questionnaire is very flexible since it enables different formation of questions. It is necessary to include in it interesting and important questions and provide a clear goal and purpose of each question, i.e. what we wish to achieve or research with it. In questionnaires for confirming or refuting hypotheses the so-called closed or structured and open or unstructured types of questions are used. (Podošovnik v Orel 2011, 85)[20] Generally, the closed type of questions is easier to process and it produces an option to make a comparison. On the other hand, this type of questions tends to predict or rather predispose the possible options that are thus collected from the questionnaire creator's point of view only. Open questions are on the contrary more demanding to process and make comparison much more complicated, nevertheless they definitely contribute to an in-depth and more individual aspect of the interviewee on the topic researched. In the thesis as already stated both types of questions are used however questions with the open type questions prevail. The latter help us add a more detailed individual point of view on both researched areas that is the networking in higher education and employability and employment of graduates that are later compared to ascertain the influence of one on another. The questionnaire used in my research is based on the data collected in the BIS Report of 2011 and is expanded and adapted so that it covers not only the field of increasing graduate employability but with the focus on social networking as provided in Slovenia in its public and private higher education respectively. The questionnaire avoids using closed and instead makes use of open-ended questions in order to acquire the optimum answers and with them also the optimum results for this research. The questionnaire and the answers provided by the interviewees in person are translated into English and included in the empirircal part of the thesis.

[20] Source: A. Eva Podošovnik. *Priprava anketnega vprašalnika: gradivo za izobraževanje*. Portorož, May 2011.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION DEFINITION

A definition of a research question always requires first a clear explanation of it. Accordingly, the research issue of the master thesis is the networking in higher education with the purpose of improving that is increasing the employment rates of higher education graduates. The issue is dealt with from three perspectives, more precisely from the individual factors that affect networking in higher education, namely by means of comparing:

1) the selected three different higher education systems that together represent the sphere in which the researched phenomenon of networking appears, where in each system the enrolment and graduate rates are inspected on the basis of their division into public and private HE per studied country,

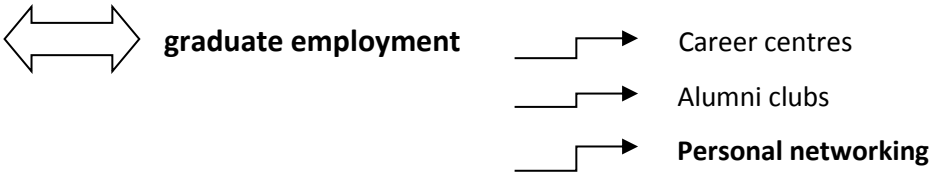
2) employment and/or unemployment rates of graduates in the three countries,

3) networking forms used in each of the selected countries' higher education system and how these forms affect HE graduate employment rates.

A formulaic presentation of the research question is as follows:

Networking in higher education = higher (public and private) education graduate rates + employment rates of higher education graduates + networking forms with the labour market in higher education.

Graphic presentation of the 'effect of networking in higher education on graduate employment rates'



Note:
Career centres – connections with the labour market
Alumni clubs – networking with students, professors and graduates
Personal networking – between students – proposed in the thesis to increase employment rates

It is evident from the presentation that networking arises from student and graduate employment and vice versa that (higher) employment arises from networking. On the right side is a list of the forms of networking as present in higher education, of which the last

enumerated is in comparison with other forms unusual since it includes personal involvement of the student or graduate, i.e. to take active part in the networking. However, since it is difficult to find data on each country's following up on their graduates, no public data are found referring to the among- and in-between student networking. Instead networking forms with the labour market by means of including potential employers in higher education are provided.

The networking definitions as acquired by means of the carried out interviews are presented below.

»… it is getting to know each other, getting to know somebody out of various reasons, on the basis of different intentions, e.g. for employment, project partner, academic networking, … in this thesis you are interested in the networking between job seekers and job providers«. (Rebolj 2013)

»I see networking as a network of colleagues which I can cooperate with on pedagogical projects and research as well as exchange know-how«. (Vadnjal 2013)

»Networking is a very wide concept depending on from which perspective and with what variables it is researched. If we consider networking from the perspective of graduate employability and graduate employment, then networking solely between schools would not produce many results. When talking about the labour market, networking should be looked at as being 'universal', i.e. an individual benefits from social networking as it is and most certainly those contacts that once actually prove useful turn out to be exactly those that showed the potential of once employing the job seeker in the labour market. From the perspective of what the school can offer students in the field of networking, there certainly exist many different forms, which students can take part in if they wish; our task is to enable them the opportunity, however the final decision is on the student. What is more, the interest is not at all high. (…) If we look at the most used formal form of networking i.e. alumni which include former students and graduates, even members of our alumni club are not really interested in any further cooperation with the faculty since they have already finished their studies and graduated. Otherwise cooperation with alumni takes place on a

very personal level, in other words, a professor contacts and invites a specific person«. (Merkač 2013)

It is evident from the last statement that for the Slovenian higher education the issue with its networking although the latter is present and provided to students is still very weak or not being actively used neither by the students and graduates nor the professors and potential employers. Nevertheless, in my opinion an introduction of a form of personal (i.e. between students) networking even, or especially due to high enrolment rates in certain study courses, in public higher education, which for example in Slovenia the majority of students enrol in, could prove useful especially in study programmes where enrolment and graduate rates are excessive. On the other hand, »study programmes as are informatics and technology, medicine, pharmacy and similar natural sciences and IT ensure their students already at the time of studying with a safe job after graduation, since such programs are always offered with a limited number of enrolment places«. (Rebolj 2013)[21]

5.3 PROCESSING OF THE DATA COLLECTED ON THE RESEARCHED PHENOMENA OF NETWORKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RATES DUE TO NETWORKING IN SLOVENIA, GERMANY AND THE UK

Before the analysis of the three hypotheses begins, I repeat that the empirical part researches the three hypotheses by means of using the three areas as presented in the theoretical part i.e. higher education enrolment and graduate rates, graduate employment rates and networking forms with the labour market with the aim of increasing graduate employment rates. Since the focus of the entire research is on the Slovenian higher education, the examples of the German and the British higher education data are used only as a means of comparison in order to establish the differences and similarities with the researched area in other (and most successful in low unemployment rate) EU member states. Also, the three presented areas of the theoretical part are transformed into statistical data in the empirical part of the research however these data are enhanced in their validity by using two study cases of the Slovenian private higher education and one study case of the Slovenian public higher education. The three study cases in the form of answers acquired via the interview method provide us with an in-depth insight into the researched phenomenon

[21] Prof. Dr. Danijel Rebolj. One-on-one interview at the seat of the University of Maribor, August 2013.

of networking with the labour market in higher education. The same statements are used as a means of help in ascertaining whether the three hypotheses are in the end confirmed or refuted.

In the continuation a basic overview of the Slovenian higher education and training are provided and represent the starting point of the research with higher education in a country with one of highest enrolment rates in this sphere of education in Europe, but also with the highest level of unemployed graduates of the same field of education. In recent years it has become well established that education and training are the key to solving social-economic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges that Europe and its citizens are faced with. Successful solving of these challenges calls for urgent cooperation of all EU member states. This cooperation has been reinforced in the document for strategic Framework European Cooperation in Education and Training by 2020, as published in 2009. By 2020 four goals are to be achieved, one of which includes strengthening creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training. Since Slovenia is a member of both EU and OECD, it is too obliged to working on achieving the 2020 European and national goals as defined in the European framework measures.[22] In the last decade the number of students who were not only enrolled in but also graduated from tertiary (either post-secondary or college and higher or university) education has generally speaking increased in Slovenia.

Table 5.1: Number of enrolled students and graduates in Slovenia in 2000, 2005 and 2010

	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11
No. of enrolled students	**91.949**	**114.794**	**107.134**
No. of graduates	**11.497**	**15.787**	**19.694**

Source: SURS Statistical Office of the RS, 2012

The numbers in Table 5.1 include post-secondary or college as well as higher or university student and graduate rates. What is interesting from a general overview of the rates is the great difference between enrolment rates, which are obviously much higher than the rates of students who actually graduate and this holds true for all three indicated academic years

[22] SURS, Statistical Office of the RS, *Kakovost in učinkovitost izobraževanja in usposabljanja*, 2012.

respectively. Regarding its share of citizens aged from 19 to 24 enrolled in post-secondary and university education, Slovenia is the first among all 27 EU member states. In the academic year of 2008/09 the enrolment rate in the Slovenian higher education was at 48%, while the average European level at the same time was at (only) 30%. (SURS 2012, 29) This shows that Slovenia exceeds the EU average by almost twenty per cent. How many of all these students graduate and find employment shall be discussed in the continuation under the first hypothesis, but »it is interesting that the rates for Slovenia stand out and are comparable to those of Finland, Poland, Lithuania and Luxembourg«. (SURS 2012, 31)

5.3.1 HYPOTHESIS ONE

The theoretical part sets a clear foundation for researching the three selected hypotheses. The first one is a special challenge since the data on the private versus public higher education graduate rates do not exist.

H1: 'Graduates of private faculties carry higher employment rates than graduates from public faculties.'

Regarding higher employment rates of graduates from private faculties, it is necessary to look at the data on how many enrolments and graduates each country produces per year in both private and public higher education that is in their general higher education respectively. The 2012 OECD research and report on the entry rates of both university-level and vocationally-oriented higher education are provided as a comparison for the years 2000 and 2010 respectively. For my research the data on the entry rates for the year 2010 are taken out and summarised in the table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Entry rates into both university and vocationally oriented higher education for the year 2010

2010	Slovenia	Germany	The UK
Entry rates into university-level education	76%	43%	63%
Entry rates into vocationally-oriented higher education	19%	21%	25%

Source: OECD, 2012, *Education at a Glance 2012*.

From the table 5.2 it is obvious that Slovenia clearly stands out with its high enrolment rates in university level education, which exceed the entry rates of both the UK and Germany. It is interesting here that in the UK, although higher education is mainly payable, the enrolment

rates are still pretty high, however in Germany, where this field of education is in principle free of charge, the enrolment rates are much lower that is by 33% when compared to Slovenia and by 20% when compared to the UK. In the second row of the table 5.2 the entry rates into vocationally oriented higher education are provided, where the trend is opposite to the one appearing in the university level enrolment rates that is the UK has the highest rate with its 25%, followed by Germany´s 21% and Slovenia´s 19%. Overall, these rates do not differ as much as those of the entry rates into university level education. This stands as proof that university level education is still more ´popular´ among students than its vocational counterpart although the current Slovenian labour market looks mainly for secondary school or higher education staff. However, the given rates are only enrolment rates and it is a question how many of these same students also graduate and finish their education with a bachelor or master or doctor degree respectively.

For purposes of researching higher or equivalent to higher education attainment, the Eurostat database is supplied with its statistics on higher attainment level (in %) for the year 2011. The statistics report findings point to a differentiation between tertiary and low tertiary education attainment, where the latter is reported to »create (the so-called) skills bottlenecks in knowledge-intensive economic sectors and hamper productivity, innovation and competitiveness. Given the ever-increasing level of skills required by the labour market, the fast pace of technological progress and the intensity of global competition, low tertiary education attainment levels limit smart, sustainable growth«. (Eurostat 2011) The Europe 2020 Strategy is a document that touches on the field of higher education and its level that is to be achieved by the year 2020. The target set for the year in question is 40% for all citizens aged 30-34 who should all acquire a tertiary degree qualification or an equivalent to it by the year 2020. The table 5.3 provides percentage rates as regards tertiary attainment levels for the selected three countries and includes also the EU-average rate for the year 2011.

Table 5.3: Tertiary attainment level (%), 2011

2011	Slovenia	Germany	The UK	EU-27
Tertiary attainment level (%)	38%	31%+11%	46%	35%

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey (2011).

Looking at the table 5.3 and the EU-27 average regarding tertiary attainment level in percentage it is clear that only two out of the three selected countries truly exceed the EU average, and these are the UK with its 46% tertiary attainment level and Slovenia with its 38% same education sphere attainment level. What is interesting about the German rate is its specificity of including also post-secondary education attainment into tertiary level education, that is, while in Slovenia and the UK only ISCED levels 5 and 6 are regarded as being of tertiary level, in Germany also ISCED level 4 qualifies as belonging under the tertiary attainment level. (Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2011) And while higher education attainment levels when compared to those of the US, Canada, Japan, Korea and Australia are lower in Europe, the Eurostat survey concludes that exactly these low higher education attainment levels »hinder competitiveness and undermine Europe´s potential to generate smart growth. While European labour market projections show that around 35% of all jobs will require tertiary graduate-level qualifications by 2020, only 26% of the EU´s labour force was qualified at this level in 2010«. (Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2011)

Considering the 'need' for more highly educated graduates with the aim to keep up with the modern labour market development, the issue of the available vacancies in the same labour market needs to be taken into account. Since Slovenia is currently facing highest unemployment rates with higher education graduates, the research includes the latest enrolment rates in the Slovenian higher education. Looking at the enrolment places for the academic year 2013/2014 of the University of Ljubljana not so much the limitation of the enrolment places in the areas as mentioned by Prof. Rebolj is evident, but more surprisingly stand out the places available in courses that are already known for creating a surplus in the existing Slovenian labour market. For example, for the first year of undergraduate study at the University of Ljubljana the highest number of enrolment places is provided by the Faculty of Economics which amounts to 2050 free places (1000 full– and 1050 part-time), followed by the Faculty of Arts with 1703 available enrolments and the Faculty of Administration with 1290 enrolment places. These three top the other study courses and considering that at least half of these students graduate, the question why the labour market is saturated with graduates of these study courses becomes clearer. On the other hand, with courses as are veterinary medicine (60 places), theology (275 places), medicine (250 places) and pharmacy (175 places) one would expect an increase in the available

enrolments which would be in line with the course of the labour market needs. In addition these numbers confirm the statement of Prof. Rebolj on the issue in question that certain enrolment places and especially graduation rates that follow are still simply too high for the current labour market. (Rebolj 2013)

> *As regards enrolment rates, there are already limitations, if in nothing else than in the size of premises, the number of assistants, also funding. Up to today we have not taken into consideration these limitations seriously, and that is the reason why we are today faced with funding problems in higher education, since in the period of last eight years the expenses have always been higher than the income. The university sets the limit on enrolment places, that is each faculty provides the number of their study programmes and then the government confirms the faculty's proposal, nevertheless these numbers of enrolment places are mainly too high, and for this reason on one hand, professors are overburdened, they do not have enough time for quality research and also quality preparation of each study course subject, and on the other hand the consequences of such limitation, as for example, due to high numbers of students per class assistants do not have enough time to finish their own studies or do research, since they spend day and night dealing with paperwork, preparation, material, corrections, in short it is important to find balance in this to make it possible for assistants to focus on research work more pedagogically and also perform it at a high quality level, thus ensuring students with a high quality study in suitable premises and with suitable curricula*. (Rebolj 2013)

To get a clearer picture of the Slovenian higher education, it is necessary to look into the data on the actual enrolments in HEIs and actual graduate rates as well. As an introduction to the enrolments in Slovenia, I provide a statement from the Statistical data survey on the situation in the Slovenian higher education. »In the academic year of 2009/2010 a half of the entire youth population of Slovenia was included in higher education – this piece of data ranks Slovenia as first among EU-27. Among the Slovenian population aged 30-34 one third are with a college or higher education degree. By 2020 there are expected to be 40 percent of them«. (SURS 2012)

Table 5.4: Higher Education Students, in Slovenia and EU-27

Academic year	2000/2001	2005/2006	2010/2011
Number of students (in Slovenia)	**91,494**	**114,794**	**107,134**
Number of students (in EU-27)	**14,595,132**	**18,775,041**	**n/a**

Source: SURS (2012).

According to the Table 5.4 the number of enrolled students was first increasing quite dramatically in the period between 2000 and 2006 until it then eased a little in the following five-year period. The same happened in the EU-27 where a slight fall in enrolment rates could be observed, nevertheless the estimated number of students keeps increasing and currently amounts to around 20 million in the EU. With the increase in students also the number of graduates increased – in 2010 Slovenia acquired around 20,000 new graduates with either a college or higher education degree. The trend is present also elsewhere in Europe, where in 2009 the number of graduates was at 50% more than in 2000. Despite the growing number of students and graduates in Slovenia, the highest increases in the number of higher education graduates are evident in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania with on average a 10% increase per year. (SURS 2012, 28)

Table 5.5: Higher education graduates, Slovenia and EU-27

Year	2000	2005	2010
Number of graduates (in Slovenia)	**11,497**	**15,787**	**19,694**
Number of graduates (EU-27)	**2,848,912**	**3,860,274**	**n/a**

Source: SURS (2012).

The second Table 5.5 shows a gradual increase in the number of higher education graduates in Slovenia where the increase amounts to around four thousand graduates more every five years, while the growth in the EU-27 is that of having a good million more of graduates in the same period. The latest data on the website of the Statistical Office of RS unfortunately do not include data for the year 2010. Nevertheless, the comparison of both tables (i.e. 5.4 and 5.5) provides us with some insight into the situation with students and graduates in Slovenia and the EU-27. Firstly, the difference in the student rates and the graduate rates are to say the least quite dramatic not only in Slovenia but Europe as well. As regards the OECD and EU promoting an increase in average higher education acquisition by 2020, it is important to consider as Professor Vadnjal states that »the philosophy of economy and the labour market have changed. If employability in the past meant 'acquiring a job after

graduation', it is today replaced by a new meaning of 'self-employment'«. (Vadnjal 2013) This statement calls for the introduction of teaching all students, i.e. of all study courses, entrepreneurial skills and connecting them with the labour market by means of internships and exchange programmes. »We want to be competitive as Europe by means of high quality assurance – this is achievable with higher education that teaches students to stop being 'job seekers' and instead become 'job creators'. The idea is of students being actively involved in companies and creating and offering working places«. (Vadnjal 2013) As regards the higher education quality and its effectiveness in 'producing' a higher number of graduates, in general it is interesting that in 2009 in Slovenia the highest unemployment rate was not in graduates with elementary or secondary school education, but with graduates with either college or higher education degree. The problem still present today in Slovenia is the weak link between higher education regarding the number of graduates it produces and the real and actual needs of the labour market, leading to the phenomenon of a too highly educated population when considering the needs of the existing labour market. (SURS 2012, 40) »The share of unemployed and those with an inactive job status in youth was in the EU-21 countries in 2009 the highest among the youth with secondary school education (14.5%), while in Slovenia this share was highest among the youth with college or higher education (10.8%9). (…) The youth with a finished college or higher education degree find it harder and harder to find employment«. (SURS 2012, 40) In addition comment to the latter statement, the number of higher education graduates aged 30-34 with the status of unemployed in Slovenia has by October 2013 increased to 13%.[23] (Huš 2013) What is more, unfortunately and quite surprisingly, in Slovenia no public national statistics can be found on the division of graduates according to the private and public higher education institutions, but instead the data on both sectors together are provided, which I find a great deficiency, since I personally believe that on the basis of so many newly established higher education institutions in Slovenia this division should be introduced and measured regularly in order to ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of the 'newcomers' i.e. new HE suppliers in the Slovenian 'HE market' as it can be called today due to the increasing number of higher education providers. Instead of providing a publicly and privately divided HE for each country, the rates for university and vocational or professional level are supplied. This division of graduates in the thesis is argued by the fact that all private HE institutions in Slovenia, of which the

[23] Oddaja *Na svidenje, pamet*. 2013. TV SLO 1.

majority are entitled to the Bologna education process, offer vocationally- or professionally-oriented study programmes which is in accordance with the Bologna reform that requires all bachelor graduates are ready for the labour market after graduation, thus making their graduates much more easily employable than their academic education level peers. In addition, taking into account that their networking with the labour market is better than in the public sector due to faculty being private in nature, their networking seems to affect positively their employment rates, however more on this issue follows under the second hypothesis, since the focus of the first hypothesis is the employment rate of private and public higher education graduates in Slovenia. Generally speaking, tertiary education is presented by the OECD as an indicator of the rate at which countries produce advanced knowledge. »Countries with high graduation rates at tertiary level are also those most likely to be developing or maintaining a highly skilled labour force«. (OECD 2010, 3) But in Slovenia the rising issue is of what to do with the Slovenian highly skilled labour force or better, where to employ them. The rates of graduates are influenced by the accessibility of higher education but also by the demand of skills that is study courses that graduates acquire during their studies in the real labour market. It seems in Slovenia the focus is more on offering accessible higher education however with not a truly good response to or connection with the existing labour market. »For the 26 OECD countries with comparable data, about 10% of young people graduate from vocationally-oriented tertiary education. Graduation rates are (…) in excess of 20% of young people in only a few OECD countries, most notably Canada, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand and Slovenia«. (OECD 2010, 3)

Besides showing an excess of highly qualified graduates in Slovenia, the data provided in the above two tables (see Tables 5.4 and 5.5) also uncover a very important piece of information and that is that in Slovenia a higher percentage of graduates come from vocationally-oriented study programmes (otherwise provided mainly by the private HE institutions in Slovenia) which can be argued by the fact that since 2004 when the government changed the policy of private sector financing the Slovenian HE has witnessed a spread of private HE institutions thus attracting students to graduate from more practically-oriented study programmes.

> *While faculties and art academies can offer both academic and professional study programmes, professional colleges can offer only professional study programmes. After legislative changes in 2004, professional colleges may be accredited also for second-cycle study programmes, if they meet academic standards with regard to staff and equipment, otherwise such programmes must be carried out in co-operation with university establishments*. (CMEPIUS 2012)

In order to ensure students and graduates with a job, these programmes are adapted to students making it easier for these students to graduate since the programmes of private HE institutions are firstly private which means financially better provided, secondly better practically-oriented due to their tight(er) collaboration with the labour market that is the potential employer of their graduates since their teachers and lecturers are mainly part-time employees who already work for a company that can be used for internships and even employment of students after graduation. However, the irony in my opinion about the above two tables 5.4 and 5.5 is that both groups that is of vocational- and university-level HE are in Slovenia but also in the UK and Germany regarded as separate groups, but in reality when looking at the final degrees that graduates achieve in Slovenia, no difference is seen in their titles, especially in English with BA or BSc and MA or MSc as well as PhD. Consequently, both groups of graduates are looked at as belonging under the umbrella of formal higher education. Considering that in the Slovenian HE there are more vocational- than academic-level programmes of which vocational are provided by both the private and public sector respectively, nevertheless their common unemployment rate at least from the available statistics puts them in the same class of belonging to HE graduate unemployment rate. In other words, the national statistics does not specify or divide graduates into two groups of private and public HE graduates, instead only the division into vocational or professional and university HE is available. All these terms are too ambigious to mirror the true situation of these same graduates on the basis of the varied and diverse offer of current higher education institutions. This issue points to the fact that in the future a follow up on graduates based on their HE acquired at a private or public HE institution should be introduced and regularly performed. The chancellor of the Maribor University confirmed the fact that many of the faculties, even the entire universities do not follow up on students after graduation and when asked about the issue, he replied, »we started this survey in

2012, it is currently in a phase where I am not sure whether it is already published or not, however it is one of the key activities since it is impossible to deduct any useful data from the available statistics, although we need to know the exact employment rates on the basis of the existing study programmes«. (Rebolj 2013) His statement confirms that since follow up is not performed, no specific data on the exact employment rates of graduates divided into public versus private graduation rates are available.

> *Unemployment rate depends very much on the field of study. There are studies where students practically already find a job in their third year, e.g. in the areas of computing, IT, and we even sometimes have a problem at our university that students could have graduated earlier but as they get involved in working for firms already during studies, it is consequently so much more difficult for them to find time for their studies. However, there are areas where there are simply too many enrolments considering the demand for them, and it is exactly in such areas that competition appears where connections that are gained via networking are so much more important*. (Rebolj 2013)

In the above statement it is pointed out that many students work already during their studies but since it is not specified by what means they are involved in work, I presuppose that they work mainly via student services since they are students by status. In order to clarify the question on the exact employment rates of on one side academic- and on the other professional- or vocational-level graduates, it is necessary to look for data on their separate rates. The basis for this division arises from the American higher education where a follow up research titled *Ten Years after College* on graduates of the bachelor degree of the 1992-1993 generation was performed in the period from 1994 that is a year after their graduation up to 2004. The research is mainly focused on the labour force status but nevertheless provides us with the data that can be used as an example of performing such a survey also in the Slovenian higher education, especially by faculties themselves. These graduates are analysed in their activities about a year after their graduation in 1994, followed by about four in 1997 and ten years in 2003 after their graduation. »For this

analysis, graduates were categorized in each of these years as *only employed*, *only enrolled*, *both*, or *neither*«. (NCES 2008, 11)[24]

The structure and the data researched that follow are included also as examples of a manner in which such a survey can be carried out. This will prove useful in the thesis part that deals with high unresponsiveness of graduates in the Slovenian higher education, especially private one. Graduates' labour force status is in the American national statistics perceived from two perspectives that is the career-oriented and academic majors and their employment rates in each of the three selected years, changes in their employment status in 1994, 1997 and 2003. The survey also includes a »summary of their status across all 3 years (always only employed etc.) and the timing of enrolment and employment combinations«. (NCES 2008, 31) The same follow up is needed as shall be seen later especially in the Slovenian higher education.

Table 5.6: Percentage distribution of 1992-93 bachelor's degree recipients' employment and enrolment status in 1994, 1997, and 2003, by undergraduate academic and career oriented status in the US

1994	Only employed	Only enrolled	Both	Neither
Academic	67.8%	10.4%	14.2%	7.6%
Career-oriented	79.7%	4.8%	9.7%	5.8%

1997	Only employed	Only enrolled	Both	Neither
Academic	67.2%	9.4%	15.9%	7.5%
Career-oriented	81.1%	2.4%	11.5%	5.0%

2003	Only employed	Only enrolled	Both	Neither
Academic	76.1%	1.5%	8.8%	11.9%
Career-oriented	82.0%	0.9%	6.2%	10.9%

Source: NCES (2008, 31).

The above Table 5.6 points clearly to a higher employment rate with career-oriented graduates, however it is surprising that by the year 2003 their rate in the status of neither employed nor enrolled doubled and if it amounted to 5.0% in 1997 it increased to 10.9% in 2003. Nevertheless, the differences between these graduates and academic ones employment rates are obvious, for example already a good four per cent higher employment

[24] National Center for Education Statistics. *Ten Years After College: Comparing the Employment Experiences of 1992-93 Bachelor's Degree Recipients with Academic and Career-Oriented Majors.* Februar 2008.

rate of career-oriented graduates in 1994 shows that they were already at that time more employable in the US. In 1997 this difference only increased where there was a good 14% difference between the two groups of graduates, i.e. 67.2% academic and 81.1% career-oriented employed graduates. In 2003 the employment rate increased only slightly for one per cent for the career-oriented but on the contrary rose by about 5% for the academic graduates. The latter per cent shows that eventually these academic graduates too find employment, but their rate is never higher than the one of career-oriented graduates. The research of the American higher education in the academic versus career-oriented majors specifies also how the division into the two groups is defined, where career-oriented majors include business, education, health, engineering, computer science, and a category of the so-called residual majors with too small a number of graduates to be included in the survey. The academic majors are social and behavioural sciences, arts and humanities, biological sciences, mathematics/physical sciences, and again an extra category of small number graduates. »Students with academic majors may well have career plans, but their undergraduate programmes are not specifically geared toward preparing them for work in a particular field«. (NCES 2008, 22)

> *College graduates enter the job market well positioned for success in the labour market, and most earn more than their non-college-going peers within a few years. In 2004, full-time workers aged 25-34 with bachelor's degrees earned 60 percent more, on average, than their counterparts who were high school graduates. (...) In this study, a nationally representative sample of undergraduates who earned their bachelor's degrees in 1992-93 were interviewed in 1994, 1997, and 2003 and asked about their job search activities, work experiences, further participation in degree and certificate programmes, family formation, and other apsects of life after college*. (NCES 2008, 21)

The survey besides including the data on former students as stated above enquires also about graduates' employment stability and intensity, occupations and industries, salaries and benefits, even about how they perceive their jobs but the focus is always on the division or better comparison of the graduates with academic and graduates with career-oriented bachelor degrees. All these are enumerated here in order to provide an idea of the types of questions the Slovenian higher education research that is follow up on graduates should

include as well since as has been established the US higher education is basically private and if their HEIs can do such a follow up research on their graduates, the same should be used for both private and higher education sector in Slovenia respectively.

In the continuation the focus transfers onto the EU higher education, more precisely on the Slovenian in comparison with the German and British higher education. Since as has been discussed so far on the example of the US HE vocationally- or professionally-oriented study courses cause higher employment rates in graduates, the next table 5.7 presents first how vocational education and training are perceived among EU higher education students that is its reputation among the Slovenian public. The survey is from the year 2013 and was published by the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana.

Table 5.7: Perception of the image of vocational education and training (in percent)

OPINION	Positive	negative	I don't know
EU-27	71%	23%	6%
Austria	88%	9%	3%
Germany	84%	10%	6%
Slovenia	50%	47%	3%
The UK	70%	21%	9%

Note: The Question put forward to interviewees: *And do you think that vocational education and training have a very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative reputation in (country)?*
Source: Pavlin and Grigić (2013, 36).

The table 5.7 above uncovers the perception of the interviewed as regards the image of vocational education and training and shows firstly that while it carries a positive image in countries as are Germany and the UK, but where Austria is also included for additional comparison and the EU-27 average as well, in Slovenia its image is only 50% positive. On the contrary, when the negativeness of the VET image was assessed, it again proved that it is viewed negatively most in Slovenia with 47% negative opinions. The next table 5.8 investigates the main factors that influence or better cause a student's decision in selecting a VET over academic higher education.

Tabel 5.8: Factors affecting students' decision making about the programme, by the selected country (in percent) – only the three most common among all studied EU-27 countries and highest in percent factors are included

Most common factors of students in deciding for a VET study course	Austria	Germany	Slovenia	The UK
the programme offered good job prospects	78%	63%	**45%**	70%
the occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	71%	72%	**57%**	71%
the programme provides a good foundation for further qualification/education	83%	79%	**56%**	70%

Note: The Question used to ascertain the above factors: *How important were the following aspects for you when you were choosing your current programme?* The answers are presented on a scale from 1 = 'Not at all' to 5 = 'Very'.

Source: Pavlin and Grigić (2013, 41).

Although it is evident from Table 5.8 that Slovenia carries the lowest percentage rates as regards the factors that affect students' decision making about the vocationally-oriented programme they select over an academic one, it is necessary to mention here that the education provided at Slovenian private faculties are most often for example accountant, commercialist, sales, that is more or less jobs which the labour market is already saturated with. Additionally, as evident the rates for Slovenia are the lowest among the selected countries, nevertheless these rates are still the highest for Slovenia when compared to its percentage in otherwise other put forward questions referring to for example 'couldn't enrol in wanted faculty', 'somebody's recommendation', 'reputation of the programme' etc. Also, when the same students were asked about how important the attractiveness of the selected programme was to them in order to select their VET study course over an academic one, the following percentage was provided: in Austria 48% of interviewed students agreed programme attractiveness was important, while in Germany this percentage was at 41%, in Slovenia (only) 25% and in the UK surprisingly 59%. (Pavlin and Grigić 2013, 41) Nevertheless, Table 5.8 with the three main factors for the preference of the VET programme over academic shows a strong prevalence of future job prospects over for example only the simple attractiveness of the programme and serves as proof that students themselves too are changing their grounds for continuing their education after secondary school and what is more that these grounds are more and more connected with future employment prospects.

Further survey on the division and percentage presentation of academic versus professional or vocational higher education as provided for the US higher education is not available in the same form for the European. Nevertheless, the Eurostat Eurydice Key Data on Education in Europe 2013, completed already in February 2012 which means some data inside refer to the end of 2012, provides an insight into the levels of ISCED 5 and 6 where data are extracted for the study of the Slovenian, German and British higher education respectively. ISCED or the International Standard Classification of Education is »an instrument suitable for compiling statistics on education internationally. It covers two cross-classification variables: levels and fields of education with the complementary dimensions of general or vocational or pre-vocational orientation and educational or abour market destination«. (Eurydice 2013, 189) Generally, there are seven different levels, where ISCED 0 is pre-primary education, ISCED 1 primary education, ISCED 2 lower secondary education, ISCED 3 upper secondary education, ISCED 4 post-secondary non-tertiary education, ISCED 5 tertiary education (first stage) and ISCED 6 tertiary education (second stage). The thesis focuses only on levels 5 and 6, i.e. tertiary or higher education of first and second stage. The first stage ISCED 5 includes programmes with either »academic orientation (type A) which are largely theoretically based and programmes with occupation orientation (type B) which are typically shorter than type A programmes and geared for entry into the labour market« which means that this level 5 includes also all master level graduates, while ISCED 6 presents only tertiary studies that »lead to an advanced research qualification – Ph.D. or doctorate«. (Eurydice 2013, 189)
The next table (i.e. Table 5.9) presents the trend of people in the younger age groups who are more likely to hold a tertiary education qualification than older people. »The percentage of people holding a tertiary degree reduces with age, so that older people are much less likely to have completed tertiary education than their younger counterparts«. (Eurydice 2013, 174) One of the reasons for this trend is probably the fact that in Slovenia higher education at least the public one is mainly for free, in other words it is accessible as such only to the young that is secondary-school graduate and rarely with the exception of second and third level studies do adults later decide to enrol in bachelor studies in a public faculty (where the majority of students are in late teen years or early twenties). However, higher employment rates of higher education graduates could be achieved by making education free of charge and thus allowing also adults decide for the continuation of their education and for free. This would attract the older population, for example in late forties, early fifties,

or even later, however the later age groups for higher education are in Slovenia already more or less covered by the University of the Third Age in pretty much all of its bigger towns. In the Eurydice document the percentage of the population with tertiary education qualifications including both ISCED 5 and 6 in the population aged 24-64, by age group for the year 2010 provides us with the insight into higher education attainment among older age groups for the three studied countries, Slovenia, Germany and the UK.

Table 5.9: Percentage of the population with tertiary education qualifications (ISCED 5 and 6) in the population aged 24-64, by age group, 2010

Age group/country	24-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-64
EU-27	31.6%	33.6%	30.1%	25.9%	23.6%	21.7%	19.1%
Slovenia	25.4%	34.8%	29.7%	23.7%	21.4%	18.5%	16.3%
Germany	20.6%	29.8%	28.3%	28.0%	26.6%	26.5%	25.4%
The UK	39.1%	43.0%	40.4%	34.8%	33.8%	32.2%	27.5%

Source: Eurydice (2013, 175).

The extraction of the data on the three studied countries provides an interesting insight into the level of higher education attainment with age. In Slovenia the trend is of a progressive decrease in this level of attainment in population of mature and old age, the same pattern appears in the EU-27 average, however in both the German and British higher education the trend is reversed. For example, in the UK in the period of age between 24 and 39 around 40 percent of population have attained tertiary level education and although the attainment level decreases with age this decrease never exceeds 10 percent in other words it amounts to from 32 to 34 percent of population with this level of attainment. After the age of fifty the British population educates itself in from 27 to 32 percent. For comparison, in Germany around 20 percent of 24-29 year olds have higher education degree the percent then increases and remains at around 27 percent in all the following age groups including the 55-64 one. This means that in Germany throughout their lives a third of population always educates themselves. On the other hand, it is surprising that although in Britain higher education is payable, the attainment rate for the British higher education are higher than those of the German one where higher education is provided for free. Since no clear two-tier that is academic and professional or vocational level division is provided, the Eurydice document provides a more detailed division into different fields of education/professional training.

Table 5.10: Tertiary education graduates (ISCED 5 and 6) by field of education/professional training, 2009

	EU-27	Slovenia	Germany	The UK
Education and training	9.5%	**7.8%**	9.4%	11.0%
Humanities and arts	11.6%	**6.2%**	16.5%	16.2%
Social sciences, business and law	35.6%	**48.1%**	22.5%	30.9%
Science, mathematics and computing	9.2%	**4.4%**	12.5%	12.8%
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	12.9%	**13.4%**	12.3%	9.1%
Agriculture and veterinary science	1.7%	**2.5%**	1.6%	0.9%
Health and welfare	15.4%	**7.5%**	22.5%	17.8%
Services	4.2%	**10.0%**	2.9%	1.3%

Source: Eurydice (2013, 176).

The table 5.10 shows that Slovenia most often stands out in the given fields of education by either lowest or highest rates than Germany, the UK and even the EU-27 average. For example, Slovenia carries the lowest graduate rate in Education and Training filed (7.8%), Humanistics and Arts (6.2%), but what is more surprising is its low rate in Health and Welfare with 7.5%, while this rate is at 22.5% in Germany and 17.8% in the UK. Also, in Science, Mathematics and Computing where Germany and the UK boast of high 12% graduates in this field, Slovenia 'produces' only 4.4% of the same field graduates. Another peculiarity of the Slovenian HE is the extremely high percent of graduates in the field of Services (10%), while the same rate is much lower in Germany with 2.9% and the UK with 1.3%. Considering that all programmes are more or less filled with students in Slovenia at the beginning of an academic year, we see that not many students graduate in the same field they enrolled in, at least not in Slovenia.

Nevertheless, according to Eurydice higher levels of education make permanent employment more likely. »On average, between 10% and 15% of employees aged 25-64 in the EU, have temporary contracts. This general figure hides great variations between countries. (…) The highest levels are reported by Spain, Poland and Portugal. In these countries, about a quarter of the total work force is employed on fixed-term contracts«. (Eurydice 2013, 187) Although the survey does not investigate the true reasons behind the occurrence of the temporary employment, it can be presumed that it was caused by the great changes that have taken place in the world and EU labour market where the required flexibility of employment was introduced by means of the flexible length and type of

employment contracts. The table below (Table 5.11) shows the temporary employment percent in accordance with the level of educational attainment for population aged 25-64.

Table 5.11: Temporary employment according to level of educational attainment, age group 25-64, 2010

	EU-27	Slovenia	Germany	The UK
Low education (ISCED 0-2)	14.4%	13.2%	12.7%	3.3%
Medium education (ISCED 3-4)	9.5%	12.1%	7.9%	3.9%
Higher education (ISCED 5-6)	10.2%	11.9%	9.7%	6.0%

Source: Eurydice (2013, 187).

In general with Table 5.11 the Eurydice survey findings conclude that those who carry medium and higher education levels »are more likely to obtain permanent contracts than employees who completed their education at lower levels. It can therefore be suggested that lower levels of education make job seekers more prone to experience work uncertainty and volatility, (…)« and what is more, certain »EU countries are exceptions (…) and (in these countries) the frequency of temporary employment contracts is higher for people with tertiary education attainment«. (Eurydice 2013, 188) This pattern seems to have entered the Slovenian labour market where it is exactly highly educated who find it most difficult to land a regular full-time job but instead work as self-employed, part-time or freelancer that is working for more companies but not being employed at any.

No matter how much researched and invested in the issue of employability and employment of graduates is, it cannot be solved without a successful inclusion of the potential employer in the process of education, since the latter proves meaningful in teaching the true needs of the labour market and at the same time providing an option for internships or even a job afterwards. But how to connect successfully the higher education area and the labour market is still open and while in the British and the German higher education this sector is already being dealt with, in the meantime the Slovenian one has somehow fallen behind in and instead of focusing on improving the employability of their public higher education students, private faculties appeared and spread, causing higher numbers in graduate attainment rates but if by that also increasing graduate employment rates still remains an open issue that calls for further research.

The idea of building a bridge between the university and the environment was created two years ago. It is true that education provides also certain skills that help an individual not only find a job but build a career. In this view it is about 'useful' knowledge, although any knowledge is useful, except that today you find a job for one kind of knowledge but you do not find it for another. On the basis of this we decided it is best to start already in the beginning of studies with solving concrete problems and this way connecting companies and the university. And then the Demola project appeared. It was actually the Finnish university that visited us this spring and we were immediately impressed with one another. Such cooperations are the university's contribution to increasing graduate employability and their employment rates. Another way of doing this is by renewing programmes to focus also on the inclusion of companies or entrepreneurs or staff from economy. We tried to make such an implementation already years ago at one of our faculties, however unfortunately the experience with the economy was and still often is not too successful. On one hand, the economic sector often proclaims the university as being a piece of useless knowledge, but on the other hand when the university invites them to cooperate, their response is vague. I do believe that they lack time but nevertheless if the wish is to improve education, their more active cooperation is necessary. (Rebolj 2013)

Complaints on the cooperation of the Slovenian labour market were received also from another of the remaining two interviewees, where the dean of the FKPV stated that they »are also counting on a better responsiveness of the potential employers and their more proactive participation in the process of networking for internships, vacancies, etc« (Merkač 2013), which on the other hand could not be confirmed also by the dean of GEA College, where quite the opposite »sixty per cent of our graduates work in economy, and some of them also in the public sector and insurance, in other words, many of them are employed in the financial sector and real-time business« and what is more »we have strongly developed both full- and part-time study programmes, however as regards the latter half of the enrolled students already own a company. What is more, in their responses no cases of closing a business could be found«. (Vadnjal 2013) Since GEA College is an entrepreneurship education provider which in Vadnjal's words means a good quarter of their students are business people not to mention that many come from family businesses the situation with

their graduate employment rates is more complex. Almost the same holds true for the other studied faculty, where the dean of the FKPV confirmed that they too receive mainly students who are already employed.

> *The majority of our students are part-time, which means that they already have or at least had a job, and their ambition is to learn something new that will open doors to either promotion or a change of jobs. While the rate of full-time students is pretty low, for example the latter usually do not have a job yet, nevertheless many of them are engaged in work via part-time jobs which could also be considered as networking if it was not the work as is bar service and other manual work*. (Merkač 2013)

On the other hand, students are taught the skills they are required to have as job seekers and some of them even turn into real job creators, i.e. opening a company and employing staff or even colleagues. »Entrepreneurship is also important, so that students and also graduates themselves set up businesses, to teach them these skills, and not only the student of economics but instead all students by providing them with interdisciplinary groups. However, these are possible only with the use of interdisciplinary projects in the framework of the university and in time of studies«. (Rebolj 2013)

What most certainly affects the employability of graduates of both private and public HE sector are firstly, the Bologna program which makes study courses shorter and more importantly more practically oriented, and secondly the implementation of the public-private partnership in higher education which means the inclusion and co-operation with the private sector in the field of (higher) education. The latter also opens doors to new opportunities for networking with the labour market that is direct (personal) networking with the potential employers which certainly affects positively HE graduate employment rates as shall be seen also later in the third hypothesis. By implementing the Bologna reform private and public faculties started making use of networking in the form of student exchange programs, internships in companies, Alumni clubs and Career centres, however the problem with such networking especially in the public sector of HE due to higher enrolment rates than in the private sector is that it is reserved for only a small number or often only one position to be taken by only one student or graduate applicant, leaving other

applicants behind. In such a case with an excess of enrolled students and graduates it seems the only option left is that students and graduates alone take up personal social networking and start being more proactively involved in their not only search for a job published on the website of the employment centre, but instead by actively participating in social networking not only with other students or graduate colleagues, but also professors and staff in companies where students do their internships. They should also themselves look for jobs that are in accordance with their study field and start being proactive in the process of landing a job after graduation already during their studies. It is definitely better to be proactive earlier than remain permanently unemployed. It is evident from the existing data that no conclusions can be made on the first hypothesis solely on these data. Thus, I make further use of the answers acquired by the interviews to establish whether the first hypothesis is refuted or confirmed.

On the basis of the interviews, it can be confirmed that in Slovenia the percentage of unemployed graduates is higher in the public sector than in the private one however it is important to consider also other findings from the interviews especially regarding the kind of students that enrol in the Slovenian private sector HE but also the fact that the majority of Slovenian students enrol in public HE since it is provided for free at least at the Bachelor level and in the majority of cases also Master level. While at GEA College it is the children of families who already own a business and sometimes even the students themselves manage one, at the Faculty of Business Studies and Commerce the average student is already employed and looking for additional training or even degree. In addition, many private faculties in Slovenia receive state funding, i.e. a concession and still charge tuition, and although some of them do offer discounts and appear in the media as the most ‘student-friendly' HE institution, one questions the credibility of so many new HE institutions. The dilemma here is the private higher education providers boasting of increasing their enrolment and graduate employment rates, and on the other hand the public higher education where for the last eight years faculties have been dealing with an increase in both the number of students and graduates but at the same time ‘getting through’ with the same or often decreased state funding. (Rebolj 2013) Private HE institutions also select and look for the best, or better most suitable, students who are 'allowed' to enrol, while at the same time the majority of students enrol in the public that is free HE. Considering the growth in

the number of enrolled students and graduates it is evident this affects the quality of the overall HE in Slovenia but also does not directly improve that is increase higher education graduate employment rates.

> *Mass higher quality higher education is not possible - it simply does not go together. It is also a question what all is included and considered to belong under the area of higher education. It can be from a highly professional, narrowly focused to a very abstract, demanding … well, demanding can be everything, but not everybody is for everything. It is also true that the work of the society is changing very much, there is less physical work but also less of work where only elementary education suffices. On the other hand, I can say with clear conscience that the width of the knowledge of general secondary school students forty years ago often surrpasses the knowledge of today's higher education graduates. Speaking solely about levels is not comparable. It seems better to me that we had in Slovenia also a trully high-quality secondary school system that is professionally- and/or vocationally-oriented and that would provide occupations or vocations as required by the labour market. Today a good carpenter or a cook quickly finds a job. However, it also makes sense to upgrade such a vocationally-oriented secondary school into a for example vocational college and if somebody is really good why should not this student be entitled to enrol into a master study programme and practically upgrade the existing knowledge or expand it into a more theoretical one. In general, in my opinion such study options should be more open. In Slovenia we have very isolated programmes, where each has its subjects, and often there is not much connection between these subjects. I find the American higher education system very efficient, everything is purpose-guided, subjects are of high quality, it is known what the requirements or the necessary entry knowledge are, also which subjects exactly are needed for a certain study programme, while everything else is completely open. Their system of building study programmes is much more efficient than ours. And as regards making changes in this area, the University of Maribor is already working on changes*. (Rebolj 2013)

As regards following up on graduates after leaving faculty, as stated by the chancellor of the Maribor University, despite starting their research on their university graduate employment

rates in 2012, the data of the survey are still not publicly available, however the chancellor does confirm that »this is one of the key future activities of the university since it is impossible to deduct any useful data on this issue from the existing statistics«, and adds that »we need to know the exact employment rates of graduates on the basis of the existing study programmes«. (Rebolj 2013) These two statements only show the lack of graduate follow up in the Slovenian public higher education. What is more, the chancellor questions the widespread of private higher education providers and even the quality of the knowledge of the new graduate generation.

The second interviewee, i.e. the dean of GEA College, confirms that a survey on their graduate status after leaving their faculty was performed in May 2013.

> *The data on where our graduates find employment are relatively new. I think the survey on this issue was performed this year in May in which we surveyed all of our previous graduates on what they were currently doing in their lives. About twelve per cent of them were unemployed nevertheless the majority of them were first-time job seekers, while out of those who were permanently unemployed only one was found. (…) According to the GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) survey GEA College can boast of an above average graduate employability. For the realisation of a yearly follow up on graduates we needed to first develop a suitable methodology. If we consider the fact that we acquired the first bachelor graduate in 1999 and that due to being a young higher education institution we only have a data base of around 1200 contacts, i.e. graduates, the research was not too demanding to perform*. (Vadnjal 2013)

Considering the dean's statements on their graduate employment rates the first hypothesis can be confirmed, i.e. that their graduates actually do find employment faster than graduates of other private or public faculties in Slovenia, nevertheless it is important here to keep in mind also what Rebolj says on the fact that employment depends on the study field a student selects for his studies, and what Vadnjal says about the fact that the majority of their students come from family businesses or even own their own business, and what is more, the majority of the remaining students work mainly in the economic sector. Contrary to the first two interviewees, the dean of the FKPV confirmed that their faculty follows up on

their graduates regularly nevertheless she exposes another problem i.e. in the process of acquiring answers from the graduates who have already graduated from their faculty.

> *We have data on everything about what happens with our graduates after leaving the faculty since we are all in the same higher education system and from the point of view of ensuring quality we are required to follow up on student and graduate employment rates as well. We also perform analyses, however, as stated before, it is difficult to ascertain from the existing statistics as provided by the Employment centre what the true situation with graduates of individual faculties is. Our situation is also maybe a little specific since the majority of our students are already employed, consequently we can only follow their promotions, what happened with them for example a few years after graduation, whether they changed jobs or got promoted, etc. We also inquire them about competences and whether our programme supplied them with useful knowledge, what new they have learnt, and whether our programme has made them more successful in their field of work but in their life skills as well. It is difficult for me to give you the exact numbers in per cent and confirm that after graduating from our faculty in a certain period of time a certain share of graduates find employment exactly due to studying at our faculty. We of course as probably any other faculty or perhaps even more since we are private strive very much for actually teaching our students something. Currently we have professional programmes of the first, second and third Bologna level and we are very much grounded on teaching students the skills for their field of work or craft and on how to deal with matters during their internship. From that we suppose that if an individual studies at our faculty from not completely wrong reasons but actually learns from what the faculty offers he or she is then able to turn things around also in life*. (Merkač 2013)

In the interview the FKPV dean even confirms that their faculty too like GEA College offers higher employment rates of graduates exactly due to the networking as provided by their faculty.

> *We can certainly find a connection between the employment rates of our students due to networking as provided by our faculty however I cannot claim that the networking at*

our faculty is anymore plentiful or enhanced than elsewhere that is at other public or private faculties. The fact is that from the pedagogical view as well as its connection with the environment the concept of our school is very much oriented into the practical aspects of life. Our ambition is to produce employable students and graduates, especially with concrete knowledge, to teach them how to turn something around in certain tasks or marketing or anywhere else, in other word our study programmes are guided by practicality at all levels of the pedagogical process. (Merkač 2013)

In the continuation of the interview however the FKPV dean first confirms their regular follow up on their graduate employment rates stating that »the statistics on what our students and graduates are doing after leaving our faculty are available on our website since we do perform analyses that we later need to submit together with the accreditation and application forms«, but adds that in a successful acquisition of the answers they usually have the issue of high graduate and also student unresponsiveness as regards their readiness to cooperate in such a survey. (Merkač 2013)

The reality of acquiring responses from former students and graduates is more complex. It is possible to follow up on statistics with students, while with graduates it is much more difficult exactly due to their high unresponsiveness. When we see the amount of returned questionnaires, it is extremely difficult to generalise the results on a generation. I cannot remember the exact response rate of graduates, but the response was extremely low. And then there is the dilemma how to publish these results without making generalisations about the entire generation solely on the basis of those who have responded. The answers received provide only a vague assessment of the true situation and it can be quickly misinterpreted if for example all those who have not replied actually have an excellent and successful career. However, this phenomenon is not specific for Slovenia only since I have wittnessed that all higher education institutions are facing high student unresponsiveness. (Merkač 2013)

From the detailed research of the first hypothesis it can thus be stated that graduates coming from the Slovenian private higher education sector actually carry higher employment rates when compared to these rates of the graduates from the public higher education

sphere. Nevertheless, it is important here to take into account the fact of who the students and graduates of private higher education providers in Slovenia are, that is they are mainly part-time students, which in other words means that their education is secondary to their first status of being already employed, or at least it is so in the majority of cases, since some students enrol also with the purpose of changing their job or even career. Also, since the majority of Slovenian students still enrol in public higher education which is mainly for free, the situation of networking with the labour market with the purpose of increasing their graduate employment rates is easier for the private faculties in Slovenia since firstly, they are (more) closely connected with the existing labour market due to being companies that decided to offer private higher education in exchange for tuition, and secondly, due to the small amounts of enrolled students which makes it easier for the faculty to focus more individually on students and help them in finding a job, while as researched in the case of GEA College, the majority of their students already have their own established company or are children of parents with a family business that these students are most likely to take over or work for after their graduation from faculty and on the other hand in the case of the FKPV the majority of their part-time students are already employed adults. Consequently, the first hypothesis regarding higher education graduate employment rates is both confirmed since private HEIs do carry higher employment rates than those from the public sphere and at the same time also refuted when considering the factors that influence higher employment rates of private HEIs graduates.

In the continuation the research touches on the topic of networking where the focus falls on the most frequently used forms of networking in each country's HE. To expand and provide an in-depth investigation of the Slovenian HE, also the most frequently given answers as provided by the interviewees on the topic and collected by using open-type questions are included. Since the same questionnaire is used for all three interviewees, I look for as many equal answers that appear in the description of networking in higher education as perceived by the selected and interviewed representatives of public and private higher education. This way I confirm or refute the second hypothesis that concerns networking.

5.3.2 HYPOTHESIS TWO

The second hypothesis states that students from private faculties network with the labour market better than students of public faculties and therefore carry higher employment rates, while students from public faculties keep up with the 'traditional' forms of networking that is as much as we can speak of ‘traditionalism’ of a phenomenon that has existed in Slovenia for about ten years only, that is since 2000 or the beginning of the Bologna process implementation in the EU member states. Nevertheless, the issue of networking has already been broadly discussed under the first hypothesis analysis since all three hypotheses refer to networking that is cooperation with the labour market as provided in higher education.

H2: ‘Networking with the labour market is better provided at private faculties than public ones.’

This hypothesis deals with the topic of inequality in higher education where students and graduates of private faculties receive what students and graduates of public faculties do not and that is besides better networking with the labour market also additional funding by means of tuition, smaller class groups, better contact with professors and future employers and consequently higher employment rates. What causes inequality here is exactly the different treatment of students as well as the inaccessibility of not only education due to tuitions which are on one hand often much higher in private than in public higher education and on the other hand extremely lowered and offered by instalments, but the networking with the labour market as well due to small-size classes in which real business people lecture and provide first-hand information. What is more, the number of enrolled and graduated increases every year which causes a large mass of higher education institutions, students and graduates, but more importantly the quality and reputation not to mention the credibility of higher education in Slovenia suffer seriously and gradually deteriorate. As the chancellor of the University of Maribor said, »mass higher education is not possible«. (Rebolj 2013) While the existing forms of networking with the private sector in each country’s higher education have already been presented in the theoretical part of the thesis here the focus falls on the three study cases that is of one public university and two private faculties in Slovenia, including a comparison of the similarities and differences in their answers as well as the information on how they are working on improving the situation with their respective graduate employment rates after they leave faculty.

Prof. Dr. Rebolj states that »unemployment depends on the course a student selects to study and many students acquire a job already during their study years, which sometimes causes them to prolong the study exactly due to being overburdened with working and studying«. (Rebolj 2013) In cases where there are more graduates than vacancies for that education, competition appears and again, according to Rebolj, »it is in these areas that networking can help in increasing employment opportunities«. (Rebolj 2013) Reasons for networking at private faculties are numerous, among which the first is definitely the fact of lower enrolment rates since these colleges or faculties are usually small in size and education provided at them is mainly payable where only exceptions are entitled to free or state-funded access to this level of education. Due to the small-size class groups for lectures also the contact with students is easier and faster, thus students receive a more personal contact with professors but also potential employers since in the private sector the majority of professors come from the economic or public sector of the Republic of Slovenia, and it is also easier to create and maintain these contacts because of the small groups of students that enrol per private faculty. Additionally, professors at private faculties depend on the enrolment rates and tuitions which are the source of their faculty's business but also their salaries which thus depend on student enrolment rates and their tuitions. (Rebolj 2013) What is more, since this education is charged it is available and accessible only to students who come from wealthy (or wealthier) families. The dean of GEA College states that the majority of students who enrol in their faculty already own their or family business and are most likely to inherit it from their parents or any other relatives. These students usually enrol with the purpose of upgrading their knowledge for a particular position within the company and since programmes are in accordance with the so-called VET (vocational educational training) study programme, their programmes are practically oriented and differ from the academic ones which generally focus more on theory. (Vadnjal 2013) In addition, the payer of such education is most frequently the student’s company. This also explains the next and very interesting piece of information from the interview with the dean of GEA College stating that from 1200 graduates of the faculty only one has been permanently unemployed. (Vadnjal 2013) This statistics was collected in May 2013 when all graduates of the faculty from the faculty’s data base were contacted and interviewed about their current status, that is employed or unemployed. The survey is however not available publicly. The answer to the same question as provided by the chancellor of the University of Maribor

states that they too are planning to perform a similar survey since this piece of information is important in the process of taking measures in order to improve high unemployment rates of higher education graduates. (Rebolj 2013) Nevertheless, the chancellor of the Maribor University adds that although their university does provide employment to its students and graduates to a certain extent, the main focus is still more on the fact that students actually follow their study programmes and try to finish them in a reasonable period of time.

> *It is certainly in the interest of the university that students follow the study programme. Our students of higher grades work on projects that deal with real problems and real companies and in such cases the university encourages that students work on such problems. We have also joined a network named Demola which is about demonstration projects, where a group of students from various study areas deal with solving the selected complex issue. The university of course supports this, even encourages students to such cooperation. Nevertheless, the fact is that some students start working for a firm already in the second- or third-year delays their graduation. Well, if they do not exaggerate with it, it is ok and acceptable. And it is certainly better that students programme than serve drinks in a bar. By means of its programmes the university can ensure that the studies are consistent and lead to a timely graduation or not*. (Rebolj 2013)

Research is thus as stated by Rebolj an important part of a way of networking with the labour market. In addition, the dean of GEA College stresses the importance of their faculty's cooperation in the field of research since in his words »research is obligatory in today's higher education however research in for example humanistics differs from the research in science« but at the same time he argues that in his opinion »Slovenia is relatively uninteresting as a basis for developing something new that could then be applied to world«. (Vadnjal 2013)

> *As regards the cooperation in research projects, it is mainly present in second-level master programmes since at that level we can talk about another type of maturity (as when compared to the maturity of students of first-level programmes). Encouragements to take higher participation in such projects is mutual, however the*

> *response is far from high. (…) Nevertheless, our students have organised themselves in the process of internationalization which means they themselves bring into Slovenia their contacts from abroad – our college is certainly open to this, but we definitely need to be more proactive*. (Vadnjal 2013)

His statement shows the high interest of the GEA College students in their networking alone with contacts from abroad and even make use of the offered opportunities to network by means of Erasmus exchange, however the problem with the students' perception of these exchanges is criticised by the dean, saying »students today are given great opportunities to take part in Erasmus exchange and in my opinion many of them are not really aware of the true meaning of such networking. These students are usually 20 years old and see Erasmus only as 'survival in a foreign environment'«. (Vadnjal 2013) Still, a great number of their students take part in Erasmus which can also be explained by the fact that their enrolment rates are much lower than those of the Slovenian public faculties, but as the GEA College dean informs us »the relationships that our students create abroad are called by students 'bonding'«. (Vadnjal 2013) Also, GEA too offers the classic forms of networking as are Alumni and Career Centre and since »our benefit is the small size of the college, which means that my door is always open to any student with a question or a proposal«, the networking is consequently much more easily performed than at a Slovenian public faculty. (Vadnjal 2013)

The issue of student networking with the labour market as provided by the FKPV at first seems to be the same as that offered by public faculties in Slovenia.

> *The Bologna reform requires that all first-year students take mandatory practice in a company. In this way even twenty-year students are encouraged to think about future employment. However, that is no novelty since all faculties are required legally to require practice from students, i.e. an obligatory practice in a company, with the only difference being in when the student alone arranges a company to work in, as the majority of them usually do, otherwise the faculty is there to help and enable that. This too is a large perspective of networking when the school helps students in such a way*. (Merkač 2013)

However, looking into the question of networking in the private higher education it can be deducted from the answers of the FKPV dean that their networking with the labour market does differ from the one provided at public faculties in that they are more closely connected with the private sector of business. As stated by the FKPV dean, »we have no sponsoring companies, however we do have signed contracts, connections and cooperations on projects with certain companies, in other words the majority of our students does their seminar assignments as well as final theses in concrete real-time companies in which they alone work or have access to these companies«. (Merkač 2013) However, it needs to be repeated here that the majority of FKPV students and graduates are actually part-time students with most frequently the status of 'employed'. The same holds true as was confirmed by the FKPV dean herself for their professors and staff.

> *Considering the fact that the majority of our professors are part-time partners who otherwise have the suitable academic title and habilitation, they are nevertheless already employed as entrepreneurs or work in the economic or public sector respectively, and from this perspective they are a precious source for students since they are experts in their field of work and can apply their knowledge onto practical examples. And as regards the networking, the professors or potential employers get to know certain potential employees and can help them increase student chances to open the doors to employment. Networking is everywhere and when there are no such problems as we are currently facing in the labour market, … even the west sources which we use professionally had assessed already decades ago in what way a person can create an overview of one's social network and how to enhance it, no matter whether the competition is tight or not*. (Merkač 2013)

Although the responsiveness of the FKPV students in cooperating in the faculty's follow up after graduation as has been established in the first hypothesis is extremely low, which explains the reason for the lack of data on this issue, their students are becoming increasingly involved in the networking form of Erasmus student exchange, however it was not so at the beginning of the dean's work at the FKPV.

We have a number of agreements with institutions abroad and students make extensive use of them. After working as the dean of GEA College I then came to work here at this faculty and my first impression was that at GEA students when considering the small numbers of them participated in large numbers in student exchange programmes. At the beginning of my work here, no Erasmus was available, but we soon established the system and when we asked for the donation for the first time, I cannot remember the exact number I suggested, but on the basis of having here a few thousand students, I think my suggested number of places for exchange was five. However, none of the (more thousand) students applied. I was of course utterly surprised, but later we decided to enhance this activity and began addressing students directly on a completely personal level. As a result the share of students taking part in Erasmus has improved. What is more, every year all the places for Erasmus are filled and the number keeps increasing. Besides Erasmus we offer our students also internship. (Merkač 2013)

Besides enhancing Erasmus programmes at the faculty, »in order to increase employment rates of our students, we have started engaging more in our career centre since there is plenty of room for additional cooperation with students where we need to find ways how to animate students to increase both their participation and their acquiring of additional skills«. (Merkač 2013) In addition, »we are also very proud that we have finally managed to close agreements with companies that we do research for on the basis of which we then open a call for applications from students who are selected to cooperate in such research. The aim is to open the doors to a new environment where students naturally need to prove themselves«. (Merkač 2013)

In researching this hypothesis it is established that various and regularly carried out forms of networking with the private sector or the labour market already exist in higher education. Generally, it can be ascertained that the majority of universities do take care of improving their students' and graduates' employability by means of organisations as are Career centres and Alumni clubs. These are present in nearly all both public and private higher education institutions, however according to Prof. Dr. Jaka Vadnjal, the Dean of GEA College, »the majority of the current students do not seem to be mature enough to understand the true

purpose of student exchange and cooperation in projects«.[25] Also, according to Prof. Vadnjal it is only in the later years of study or in postgraduate programs that students really get interested in this type of networking. What is more, the FKPV dean informs us of the surprisingly high unresponsiveness of their students and graduates in the networking of their faculty as provided in the framework of their Alumni.

> *Considering student initiatives to connect with the faculty practically none exist. And our alumni could, if it does or better when it does become used regularly by our students and graduates represent an excellent point for networking for future students and graduates. Some members of our alumni who are entrepreneurs or managers show a certain amount of interest and then our students are sent to them to do practice or internship or write their theses. Others come to lectures as visiting lecturers to present themselves and share their experience with students however this is not yet systematically performed. As already said, it all takes place between two people, i.e. between the professor and former graduate or vice versa, and our wish is to make our alumni a meeting point where members of the alumni respond to our initiatives. We often organise various lectures, meetings, and we always invite students too, however without or extremely low response from their side. To introduce participation in alumni as an obligatory part of the study programme has not been discussed. A lot of what we have been talking about today falls under the authority of career centre where students are usually recruited*. (Merkač 2013)

From the research on the second hypothesis of networking with the labour market in higher education, it can be concluded that all forms of increasing student and graduate employment rates generally do lead if not to a higher employment of the two groups then at least to a better acquisition of 'better' (i.e. truly needed by the labour market) employability skills that can lead to higher employment rates. Here it is necessary to repeat that as ascertained from the research the unemployment rate of graduates but also students depends on the field of their study, or in other words, students and graduates of natural sciences and other professional fields as are informatics and IT find employment faster than

[25] Prof. Dr. Jaka Vadnjal. One-on-one interview at the seat of the GEA College Faculty of Entrepreneurship. July 2013.

graduates with academic degree since for example natural sciences study programs are always limited in enrolment places not to mention that professionally-oriented study programmes are more practical in the knowledge they teach, that is the knowledge that can be used immediately in the labour market. (Rebolj 2013) In addition, it is easier to form a practically-oriented programme for e.g. doctor and accountants etc. than academics. Despite it all, generally looking in Slovenia yearly more graduates are produced than vacancies or free posts, in other words we are faced with the so-called 'supply exceeds the demand' situation, where due to an excess in the number of graduates high competition appears and it is exactly here where networking can be implemented as a means of helping students and graduates in increasing their employability and in finding a job during or after their graduation. To conclude the second hypothesis it can be confirmed that the networking as provided by the Slovenian private higher education is better from the one provided by the public higher education in the sense of being private in nature which enables such private faculties from the start greater access to the labour market, since the majority of faculty staff are part-time employees who already have a job at another or own company. In addition, the majority of private higher education students in Slovenia are adults who again already carry the status of 'employed' and participate in the education process for the purpose of changing jobs or being promoted. What is more, the status of 'employed' often denotes that students come from a family business and sometimes even have their own business which was enabled by the introduction of the possibility of opening one's own small business that is the so-called 's.p.' which means self-employed or sole proprietorship. This form of employment also influences the statistics on both the employment rates of all Slovenian citizens but also on the status of some of the students and later graduates of especially private faculties in Slovenia. »In Slovenia employment is also possible by means of a sole-proprietorship that is a one person business which is gradually entering the labour market due to being a form of employment. In our companies taking in a person with an s.p. is more convenient than employing the person permanently. This way it is also easier to 'fire' the person than if the person was permanently employed«. (Vadnjal 2013) This statement confirms that both students and professors in the private education sector often carry the status of being employed on the basis of their sole-proprietorship. Another question appears here on how the Statistical Office of the RS follows up on these statuses of students and

graduates, that is whether it includes their shares as employed or in education, however to answer this, further research would be needed.

5.3.3 HYPOTHESIS THREE

The third hypothesis regards the question that connects both first parts, and that is the employability and employment of HE graduates and the networking in higher education with the labour market respectively.

H3: 'Networking with the labour market in higher education increases or affects positively the employment rates of graduates.'

Networking and its effect on employability of graduates that leads to employment has so far been discussed as the networking that is provided with other in- and outside-the-state universities, and also companies that supply universities with internships and work placements. This issue was discussed already in 2005, i.e. before the beginning of the global financial crisis, in Bonn at the 'Vocational Content in Mass Higher Education?' congress with the session on knowledge producing partnerships and collaborative ventures between the academy and industry titled *Employability of Bachelor Graduates from Professional Higher Education Institutions* (HEIs). In the congress discussion it was established that by providing students with practice-oriented programmes, work placements and internships are integrated into study programmes which has been conducted, however in the Slovenian higher education it seems not in the same amount as in the UK or Germany, especially when comparing its public and private sector respectively since in Slovenia instead of incorporating the cooperation of the labour market into higher education, the problem has been dealt with by establishing a wide range of private faculties instead.

For the Slovenian higher education a subquestion appears here on what the situation is when this employability factor is affected by the student status that is when and where students become adults who already have employment and pay for their higher education only in order to change jobs or get a promotion. Is it only these 'adult' or better already employed students who show great unresponsiveness when it comes to (private) faculty follow up on their students? This is a question that needs further research of the so far more or less closed to the public statistics of the private higher education institutions in Slovenia.

Nevertheless, if we return to the question of the most typical higher education students, i.e. graduates of secondary shools, as already discussed, it is the internship or work placement that enables students the possibility of employment after graduation, not only due to the networking that the student receives by doing a full-time internship, but also due to first-hand experience in the real-time workplace, thus putting into effect the Bologna requirement of all first cycle graduates being immediately employable in the labour market.

> *The majority of the graduates entering the labour market have a first-cycle degree, which gives direct access to a vocational or professional job. This is entirely in line with the Bologna objective that all first cycle graduates should be immediately employable in the labour market. (…), a large number of first and second cycle graduates have through their professionally accredited study programs access to the professions that have been regulated on a European level.* (Vermeesch 2005)[26]

On the other hand, considering the statements from the interviews with the private sector representatives, since the majority of students are adults, especially at FKPV, in part-time study programmes, often they do the obligatory practice in their own working environment that is in the place where they otherwise work. If we consider that a person who is already employed perhaps receives in addition also internship questions that require further research open up. Nevertheless, the discussion provided by Mr Vermeesch speaks of the reasons why Bologna process has been successful in increasing the employability of graduates in general, especially those whose programmes are more practice-oriented. The British and the German higher education systems are in this respect organised and thus function differently from the Slovenian one, although all three offer practice-oriented study programmes with internships and student exchange programmes. When looking at the first two enumerated, both respect the inclusion of students in mandatory internship or work placement, however, the British HE in exchange for tuition, while the German one for free starting with the academic year of 2013/2014. The removal of tuitions is important since it

[26] Dr. Roland Vermeesch is President of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). His statements are taken from the congress *Vocational Content in Mass Higher Education? – Responses to the Challenges of the Labour Market and the Workplace*, which took place in Bonn, 8-10 Sep 2005. He presented his view in Session 5 on *Knowledge producing partnerships and collaborative ventures between the academy and industry* with the focus on the *Employability of Bachelor Graduates from Professional Higher Education Institutions*.

expands the accessibility of higher education and respects the Covenant Article 13 on gradually but progressively introducing higher education free of charge for all citizens. By providing free higher education, the state also provides free access to the labour market by means of internships and work placements that could later turn into a job. But it is important to stress here also the importance of the cooperation of the labour market itself. In other words, companies too need to open up to students and interns, and in labour markets as are the British and the German this cooperation is more easily fulfilled since neither of the two systems is familiar with the student work services that are available to students only in Slovenia.

Providing students with free education and with it free contact with the labour market is the networking as should have been used by students and provided by universities, implementing their cooperation with the labour market with the purpose of decreasing graduate unemployment rates. In Slovenia instead private faculties offer themselves in the form of commercials for higher education institutions, promising to be the best investment in yourself and your knowledge and additionally providing a coupon for a discount for enrolment at exactly their faculty or for very favourable payment of one's studies by instalments. None of these commercials for the private faculties in Slovenia talk about nor mention what your employability chances are after investing your money into their faculty because these data are simply not available, at least publicly not. It seems that priority is given to providing diversity of education in the higher education market, but forgetting about what happens with these same graduates after they leave faculty. Perhaps private faculties do not even need to worry so much as public ones about what happens with their graduates since the majority of private faculty students are adults with employment during their part-time studies at the private faculty. In short, the research shows the majority of students at Slovenian private faculties are adults with a job or about to change it or acquire a higher position, which definitely influences the true picture of the actual affect of networking with the labour market on their graduate employment rates. From the latter statement it can be concluded that the networking with the labour market by means of collaborating with companies and incorporating them in the education process as promoted by the Bologna should work towards increasing HE graduate employment rates. I consider this statement as the key to increasing graduate employment rates and use this type of

networking as it should have been implemented in all EU member state HE. Of the three studied countries, it quickly becomes clear that great anomalies are present in the Slovenian not only higher education but its collaboration with the labour market, where in my opinion the number one obstacle is the student service jobs supplied to students during their studies, proving that the majority of Slovenian companies are interested in employing temporarily only those students who have a student status. After the status expires, these same students are usually no longer 'usable' and are instead replaced by new students with the student status. Since this is not systematically regulated in Slovenia, such incorporation of student knowledge and work secures no future employment, but rather ‘abuses’ the working opportunities of students already in time of their studies and who usually do any jobs to earn money instead of doing those jobs that would equip them with the necessary knowledge that they will (definitely) need for the labour market after their graduation. On the other hand, as stated by the GEA College dean, it is also the students themselves who need to think about the jobs they do during their studies especially those via student services that are specific for Slovenia only within the EU member states.

> *In Slovenia among students a so-called 'hunt for student status' is very evident since the benefits of the insurance of having this status, including working via student services and more favourable conditions in receiving a pension, in other words the grounds for why it is good to be a student in Slovenia are simply too strong. The existing student organisations are usually youth organisations of political parties and they always step in when talks about eliminating student services in Slovenia begin.* (Vadnjal 2013)

The FKPV dean on the other hand cannot firmly confirm that student services actually affect negatively student employment rates in general.

> *It is difficult for me to assess that since if student services offered jobs that are similar to jobs in the economic sector or the public one that is if all these various jobs were also available to graduates or students, then I could maybe confirm your statement. But as far as I am familiar, student services instead offer manual, less demanding jobs which students anyway never educate for. When speaking of part-time jobs and internship*

from the perspective of staff management, our advice to students is always to try in advance to create an experience for themselves at the internship employer so that the employer gets to know them, however when the student graduates, the interest in doing a part-time job as is serving in a bar diminishes, which is logical, since who with a degree wants to do manual work. In short, these (the labour market and the part-time job) *are two very different worlds.* (Merkač 2013)

Vermeesch states that this form of networking cooperation is still not practiced to its fullest potential the main obstacle of which seems to be the fact that many professors from public higher education feel somehow reluctant to teaching practical knowledge that is the knowledge that can be used immediately in the labour market. What is more, »in many universities, professors (…) still express profound doubts regarding the possibility to offer a degree after only three years that is both academically valid and relevant to the labour market«. (Vermeesch 2013) The Chancellor of the University of Maribor confirms the expressed doubt about the validity of education after a 3-year study, by saying »the width of the education acquired at a general secondary school forty years ago many times surpasses the width of the education provided by many of today's faculties«. (Rebolj 2013) In his opinion, it should be re-established what truly belongs under higher education, which institutions really qualify to provide high quality higher education and warns that not every college should be made eligible to become a faculty. (Rebolj 2013)

Nevertheless, despite the best efforts to include the labour market in the higher education process, the cooperation of the two is not always as easy, depending on the country of course. On the example of the Czech Republic and based on a survey on the Cooperation between HEIs and production and service companies, the reality may be different as is the case also in Slovenia. The below enumerated examples, although referring to the Czech Republic, are characteristic also of the Slovenian both private and public higher education, but with a much higher effect on the public one:

- firms do not differentiate between a bachelor and a master, instead these graduates are perceived on the same level,

- firms are often not prepared to take bachelors as tertiary education graduates, and regard them as ‘better’ secondary school graduates and their salary range reflects this fact,
- an important percentage of the firms stated that they do not search graduates actively. (Vermeesch 2005)

In addition, all three interviewees have confirmed the unpreparedness of the Slovenian labour market to take in interns and claim Slovenian companies should become more proactively involved that is open in their cooperation with higher education with the purpose of enhancing student employability skills and consequently increasing graduate employment rates. This is especially important in the Slovenian public higher education where due to being public in nature the interest of the Slovenian companies in providing internships for free seems to be lower than in its private higher education sector.

6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The change in Slovenia in introducing private higher education institutions has brought in competition between the two types of faculties that is public and private respectively and although this competition can be viewed positively since it leads to a greater diversity and efforts to achieve the best results, the question regarding the increasing number of newly established private faculties remains, and that is, whether these are better from public faculties in their way of helping their students find a job faster and more easily. This question is answered by means of a detailed analysis of the available statistical data and the answers collected via the sent interview to the selected representatives of both the public and private tertiary education in Slovenia. The collected answers show that while the University of Maribor has begun doing something about their students' employability (but starting only two years ago), the private sector of HE most frequently takes in those students who are already employed or have their own or are to inherit a family business. This also explains the high employment rate of for example GEA College graduates, since according to the dean «only one out of 1200 interviewed graduates was permanently unemployed«. (Vadnjal 2013)

In the research assignment on tertiary education, a systematic presentation of the Slovenian tertiary system is provided and compared with the systems that exist in the other EU member states, more specifically in the UK and Germany. It is concluded that the systems differ greatly between each other despite seemingly having introduced the same level of higher education that is the Bologna. The Slovenian system is at first sight very much alike with the German one, however on the basis of further findings on tertiary education it becomes clear that the system of this sphere of education in the other two researched countries is somehow if not a lot more modern in that it has recognised the problem of graduate unemployment and is already tackling it. »It is clear (…) that graduate employability is of major importance to many in higher education in a wide range of countries. In some (…) graduate employment market conditions and government influence play their part. Many universities show a keen awareness of the need to position themselves as institutions that offer quality higher education which includes the development of graduates´ employability«. (BIS Report 2011, 45) After the analysis of the researched data this can be confirmed for the British and German higher education while the Slovenian one

still has a list of tasks to fulfil before achieving the levels of the before-mentioned countries, both in the quality of its higher education especially in its private sector due to its reputation among the Slovenian public as in the employment rates of its higher education graduates, especially from the public higher education sector. A comparison with foreign schooling systems is meant as a means of help for the Slovenian higher education to develop such a form of both public and private (the latter if necessary) schooling that would bring positive effects, while the experiences from abroad could help the Slovenian education avoid the negative sides of the provider pluralisation which is currently taking place in Slovenia where private faculties seem to be overtaking the higher education sphere with no justified reasons for doing so especially in a market that counts as the one with highest HE graduate rates. On the basis of the research made on private and public faculties, it can be concluded that at public Slovenian faculties the networking that is available to students is very similar to that described in the networking that takes place in the British and German public higher education respectively in the sense of providing them with the by the Bologna required networking with the labour market with the purpose of increasing their employability skills. The question remains how to transfer the private faculties' 'success' in carrying high employment rates of graduates into the public higher education in Slovenia without privatising its higher education.

6.1 HOW CAN THE SLOVENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION WORK ON INCREASING STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Providing contacts with employers as we have seen so far is today not sufficient to increase graduate employability, but instead all students and graduates should be taught what employers are looking for, that is, the so-called soft but also hard skills, by means of that helping all no matter if from ublic or private HE students and graduates in writing their CVs, dealing with job interviews, finding proper work that suits their education and needs, finding internships that will help them in their future search of employment, and more. All these should be enhanced by providing mock job interviews, if possible by the staff or prospective employers since they are the best source of first-hand information on the issue and should be done in both private and public higher education. And this should not be limited only to students of for example natural sciences or economics but instead include also the most vulnerable programmes as are humanistic, social sciences where enrolment rates are in

excess. Speaking about providing students and graduates with employability skills leads to the question on how to teach these skills of employability. The BIS Report divides the teaching of the latter into two groups, the before-mentioned so-called hard and soft skills respectively. The former of the two include skills as are job searching techniques, providing help with job search, CV writing, contacts with employers, help with finding and securing work placements/internships, career events and fairs, computer skills, research skills, time management, literacy, and provision of temporary and vacation work, while under the soft skills career identification and planning, interview practice, understanding of career and how it works, communication skills, decision-making skills, presentation skills, and team-working skills are listed. (BIS Report 2011, 61-62) »Good teaching for employability includes themes as ensuring the learning is student-centred, providing constructive feedback and developing autonomous learning, (…) working independently, using evidence to inform judgement, communicating appropriately, etc.«. (BIS Report 2011, 63) In the same report the American higher education methods of enhancing their graduate employability skills go even further and include teaching students some of the skills that the European tertiary education could use as model for improving their own tertiary education, since they do not only provide students with the knowledge on how to write a CV or resume and on how to prepare for interviewing, but cover also topics on banking and financing, real estate, insurance, dinner etiquette, and even wine appreciation, all of which are included in their study courses and assessed by means of tests, while students get extra credits for being pro-actively involved in and using networks as is LinkedIn. (BIS Report 2011, 65-66) All these are included here as an idea for improving especially the Slovenian tertiary education, but the same model could be implemented in all EU HEIs, thus enhancing their help in not only attracting higher numbers of students but also in helping them in learning the proper employment skills for their future job and consequently landing a job after their higher education level graduation.

In the UK and Germany HEIs are working on developing and enhancing graduate employability, while in Slovenia the question arises on whose responsibility exactly it is for the country´s graduate employability policies, and what is more, if the country provides any centres for improving the transition of tertiary education graduates from education to employment besides the (dysfunctional in this sense) employment centre. Also, both the UK and Germany show that the government intervention helps a lot on the issue of graduate

employability however regarding the Slovenian government the latter seems currently preoccupied with solving other issues, consequently putting education and employability of tertiary education graduates aside and appearing to be the last issue on the government´s agenda. Nevertheless, even if the government decides to intervene, to increase higher graduate employment rates the potential employer or the labour market plays an important role as well and needs to open up to new graduates by either employing them or creating new vacancies to balance 'the supply and demand' of higher education graduates.

6.2 PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORKING WITH THE PURPOSE OF INCREASING HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RATES

The BIS Report also points to a number of ways of increasing graduate employability as researched not only in the European but also world-wide tertiary education, of which besides networking with employers and alumni tracking, other ways are enumerated, some of which could be introduced in the Slovenian tertiary education. These other possibilities are, for example, overseeing practicum, acting as placement tutors and providing modules on teaching personal skills as well as using professional development profiles to support employability as practiced in the UK, while the American model provides other world HEIs with the ideas on integrating career presentations by career staff in their courses and offering faculty organised mandatory seminars on CV preparation and interviewing. (BIS Report 2011, 84) In my opinion, all these enumerated should become obligatory if higher employment rates of HEIs graduates are to be achieved and should provide students with credit points for participating in this type of activities thus making sure not only those who are interested but instead all students attend these events. Another proposal for the future of higher education in Europe is a regular follow-up survey on students and graduates of both the private and public sector graduates and their employment rates which would provide HEIs with the data on how successful their respective methods of improving their graduates´ employability are and could thus be used as examples of good practice that other EU but also world-wide HEIs could use. As is stated in the BIS Report, »the most common method of monitoring and evaluating student engagement in employability is through direct contact with students themselves«. (BIS Report 2011, 95) Nevertheless, it is a good question how to motivate students and especially graduates to a regular participation in the follow-up survey but if such a survey was performed in the US, the European higher education could

follow the example. Another question on the issue of students and the inclusion of them in higher education process is whether providing all the possible support to students and graduates can lead to their higher employment rates without students and graduates themselves putting in an extra effort as well. There is an increased need for the responsibility of students and graduates themselves to work on their employability skills, and not at the end of their studies but so much more already during their (first) study years, if not even before deciding which course to enrol in. The latter issue is especially important in Slovenia, since we have seen the alarming differences that exist between the enrolment and graduate rates of Slovenian students and graduates respectively. Considering prospective students before their enrolment decision would also, in my opinion, decrease the number of students who during their study years decide to transfer to another faculty or another study course, or in worst case, never finish their study, as is very common in Slovenia. This way the prospective students would also be informed of the true situation with their desired study course, that is, whether it is on a list of the so-called shortage occupations or the opposite, one of those occupations where there are too many graduates in the field available and thus saturate the labour market, which is currently under great pressure of (especially highly educated graduates) high unemployment rates.

The OECD 2004 Growth Study has concluded that governments need to be more responsive to the rapid transformation of innovation processes and related business needs and strategies, and that greater use of public-private partnership can increase this responsiveness and enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of technology and innovation policy. In the field of higher education, this public-private partnership should be taken into account for all study programmes, including (especially) those where enrolment rates are in excess. In addition, the idea of business in higher education also represents an opportunity for (a better and wider) networking outside faculty premises which is especially important in times of current economic hardships in which unfavourable economic conditions affect individuals' chances of being employed or unemployed as has been proven above all among the highly educated youth in Slovenia. As stated by the OECD, »data on the relationship between educational attainment on employment and unemployment provide valuable information to policy makers seeking to understand and respond to challenging economic circumstances«. (OECD 2012, 78) However, in Slovenia higher education is faced

also with the issue of the no or low response of the seemingly dysfunctional labour market itself since the Slovenian economy has been going through a period of stagnation, low purchasing power and increasing unemployment rates which in 2012 peaked among those who are highly educated that is with higher education degree. All these together represent a challenge for the Slovenian higher education. As Dr. Štefanc says, the today's fast changing society pressures schools and their management but at the same time represents an opportunity for a change« and adds »our (i.e. Slovenian) schools were created for industrial and not information economy«. (Štefanc 2010) In the process of dealing with the challenges the Slovenian (but also European) higher education is faced with, it is important to stress the relevance of the fact that education is an essential branch and part of every state system that should never be neglected. Efforts should be put into achieving an overall high-quality education system, irrespective of political, economic and social conditions within the state and irrespective of whether the school is public or private all students should be helped with finding a job after their graduation, if necessary, by means of the faculty providing them with networking with the labour market.

7 PODROBNEJŠI POVZETEK MAGISTRSKEGA DELA V SLOVENSKEM JEZIKU

Tema magistrske naloge se navezuje na področje visokošolskega izobraževanja, umik države iz javnega šolstva, marketizacijo izobraževanja in postopno spreminjanje le tega v plačljivo, s čimer se krši načelo izobraževanja znotraj mednarodnega sporazuma o ekonomskih, socialnih in kultrunhi pravicah, t.j. načelo dostopnosti do postopno brezplačnega izobraževanja vsem. Po dogodkih in spremembah, ki se dogajajo danes v visokošolstvu v Sloveniji, so predstavljeni kot posledica dogajanj izven slovenskega, t.j. vpliv evropskega kot tudi ameriškega visokošolskega sistema, kjer izpostavim dve glavni problematiki, in sicer visokega vpisa v slovenske visokošolske ustanove kot tudi naraščajoče brezposelnosti visoko izobraženega kadra v Sloveniji. Zunanji vpliv se na splošno v slovenskem visokošolstvu kaže tudi v poenostavljanju študijskih pogramov, kar se izvaja v skladu z bolonjsko reformo, poleg pa je v Sloveniji zaznati nenadno porast v odpiranju zasebnih fakultet. In čeprav naj bi zasebno šolstvo prispevalo k večji raznolikosti ponudbe, želim s svojo raziskavo ugotoviti, ali zasebno visokošolstvo s svojim načinom dela prispeva tudi k večji pod prvič, kakovosti na področju visokošolskega izobraževanja in pod drugič, višji stopnji zaposlenosti visokošolskih diplomantov.

V današnje izobraževanje so vlade prenesle določene mehanizme, ki sicer do neke mere delujejo v ekonomiji in so bile uvedene kot način boljšega povezovanja visokošolstva s trgom dela z namenom dviga stopnje zaposlenosti diplomantov, vendar v takšnem neoliberalnem sistemu prihaja do ravno nasprotnega pojava, ko se mnogo strokovnjakov, celo z doktorati znajde brezposelnih, oziroma opravljajo čisto drugačna dela od tistih, za katere so doštudirali. V času študija od začetka tega tisočletja pa do danes se je sprva zgodila informacijska doba in tej je sledila tržna, v kateri se zdi, da smo še sedaj, kjer ponudba visokošolskih ustanov raste, hkrati pa raste tudi število diplomantov in njihova stopnja brezposelnosti. Poleg tega je bolonjska reforma, ki se tudi šteje za soodgovorno pri nastalem številu diplomantov, saj je bolonjski program po trajanju krajši od predhodnega, ki je trajal štiri leta, uvedla poenostavitev oziroma praktično usmerjenost programov, da bi se na takšen način povečalo število diplomantov, saj le velik delež visoko izobraženega prebivalstva omogoča stalen razvoj in napredek. In da bi bili diplomanti po bolonjskem programu bolj zaposljivi, je praktičnost novih študijskih programov toliko bolj v skladu s to

zahtevo. Poleg je bilo uvedeno tudi javno-zasebno partnerstvo, to je oblika povezovanja ali mreženja med fakultetami in delom trga oziroma podjetji, in prav s tema dvema vzvodoma naj bi fakultete izobraževale tako, da so vsi diplomanti bolj zaposljivi in nosijo visoke stopnje zaposlenosti po zaključku izobraževanja. Vendar, čeprav takšen visokošolski sistem deluje v ZDA, Združenem kraljestvu in celo v Nemčiji, je ta trend v Sloveniji ravno nasproten, kjer se med brezposelnimi znajde največ visoko izobraženih diplomantov. Dogaja se torej situacija, v kateri ponudba presega povpraševanje, tako v smislu velikega števila ponudnikov storitev visokošolskega izobržaevanja kot tudi velikega števila diplomantov, ki pa niso iskani na trgu dela. Razvidno je torej, da so mehanizmi trga že globoko v slovenskem visokošolstvu, toliko bolj zaradi pojava dvojnega visokošolskega sistema t.j. javnega in naraščajočega zasebnega. Vsekakor pa je tu potrebno imeti v mislih, da bolj ko je univerza nezainteresirana za trg in avtonomna, večja je možnost opravljanja njene temeljne naloge, in to je širjenja kritične zavesti in znanja o družbi, naravi in človeku. Bolj pa ko je vpeta v mednarodno politiko in ekonomijo, večja je možnost, da se degradira na zgolj reprodukcijo razredne gospode. (Laval 2005) V Sloveniji glede na starost zasebnih institucij ne moremo ravno govoriti o reproduciranju gospode, lahko pa izpostavimo stopnjo zaposlenosti njihovih diplomantov ter raziščemo, ali je temu tako zaradi njihovega (boljšega) mreženja s trgom dela glede na to, da so te fakulteti po naravi zasebne.

Tema torej je relevantna, saj se dogaja v tem trenutku in močno vpliva na trg zaposlovanja in posledično na brezposelnost in preseljevanje visoko izobraženega prebivalstva v tujino. Hkrati vpliva tudi na kakovost izobraževanja, dogaja se umik države iz področja javnega visokega šolstva, postopno vendar precej očitno in progresivno. Cilj naloge je raziskati, kakšne spremembe so se zgodile znotraj EU in bolonjskega sistema v Sloveniji, Nemčiji in Združenem kraljestvu, in hkrati podati primerjavo s sistemom v ZDA, katerega kopija se zdi je evropski. Raziskovalna primerjava se nadalje osredotoči na bolonjski sistem znoraj EU, torej kakšne spremembe so se zgodile v posameznem visokošolskem sistemu po uvedbi reform, ali sistem spada pod javno ali zasebno visokošolstvo in katerega je v posamezni državi več, ter kakšni so rezultati oziroma dosežki tovrstnega sistema glede na stopnjo diplomantov in njihovo stopnjo zaposlenosti po zaključku študija. Poleg raziščem, koliko in na kakšen način katera država upošteva načelo dostopnosti izobraževanja vsem, ter kako reforma visokega šolstva vpliva na umik države iz njega, ki s tem izgublja svojo kakovost, kjer iščem odgovore

na vprašanje, ali privatizacija visokega šolstva vpliva negativno ali pozitivno ne le na 'opremljanje' bodočih diplomantov z zaposljivimi znanji temveč tudi njihovo dejansko stopnjo zaposlenosti po odhodu s fakultete.

Reforma visokošolstva se na prvi pogled zdi pozitivna, saj imajo študentje večjo svobodo pri oblikovanju svojega predmetnika, število študijskih ur je manjše, primerljivost z evropskimi programi je sedaj zaradi kreditnih točk lažja. Skratka, bolonjska reforma je tu in po njeni (dobro) uveljavljeni implementaciji lahko potrdimo, da so današnje fakultete v dobri meri podvržene vplivom trga dela. Proces vpliva trga dela na visokošolsko izobraževanje se zdi nepovraten in se tako njegovega vpliva ne da več zanikati. Prav zato se raziskava preusmeri v analizo delovanja fakultet v tej smeri, torej kaj in na kakšen način posamezen visokošolski sistem ukrepa, da bi svoj visokošolski sistem (bolje) povezal s trgom dela z namenom dviga stopnje zaposlenosti svojih diplomantov. Iz OECD in EU dokumentov razberemo, da je stopnja vpisa v visokošolske programe v zadnjem desetletju narasla v vseh državah, kjer je bila uvedena bolonjska reforma. Istočasno je narasla tudi stopnja diplomantov, vendar podatki pokažejo, da je Slovenija v samem vrhu evropskih držav, kar se tiče tako vpisov kot števila diplomantov, in zadnje čase tudi magistrov. Sedanji trend je, da se velika večina srednješolcev vpisuje v terciarno izobraževanje in ga tudi uspešno zaključi, še več, ga redno nadaljuje na magisterij in po možnosti tudi na doktorat in do svojega nekje 27. leta se tako visokošolsko izobražen diplomant nenadoma znajde v vrsti drugih brezposelnih doktorandov in magistrov, medtem ko so prosta dela na razpolago večinoma za poklicno oziroma strokovno izobrazbo. Poklicna izobrazba, vsaj v Sloveniji, sicer pomeni skoraj zagotovljeno zaposlitev, vendar je težava v plači takšnega dela, ki je običajno izredno nizka. Na osnovi takšnega razmišljanja se trend vedno višje izobraženega slovenskega prebivalstva hitro širi. Še več, v Sloveniji je zaznati razmah zasebnega visokošolstva, katerega razen z dovoljenim zaračunavanjem šolnin država poleg tudi finančno podpira v obliki koncesij. Te zasebne šole so pravzaprav podjetja, ki v zameno za šolnino izobražujejo po bolonjskem sistemu in podeljujejo nazive v skladu z bolonjo, t.j. diplomant prve, druge ter zmeraj bolj pogosto tudi tretje stopnje študija po bolonjskem programu. Značilnost bolonjskih programov je tudi praktična usmerjenost študija oziroma boljša opremljenost bodočih diplomantov z znanji, ki jim povečajo možnosti zaposlitve po diplomi. Najboljši vir takšnih znanj je zagotovo sam trg dela torej zaposleni v podjetjih, ki naj bi bili vključeni v proces visokošolstva skozi predavanja

in ponudbo prostih mest za izmenjave, pripravništva in pisanje zaključnega dela ter morda celo zaposlitve po zaključku študija. Zaradi narave delovanja zasebnih fakultet t.j. so zasebne in kot takšne naj bi po definiciji delovale izključno z namenom ustvarjanja dobička, trdim, da so te fakultete bolje povezane s trgom dela prav iz tega razloga, t.j. ker so zasebne in že ob začetku delovanja delujejo na področju poslovanja kot podjetje. Prav to po mojem mnenju boljšo povezanost s trgom dela, ki vodi do višje stopnje zaposlenosti diplomantov zasebnih fakultet, raziskujem skozi tri hipoteze, ki se vse navezujejo na mreženje visokošolstva s trgom dela z namenom izboljšanja možnosti za zaposlitev svojih diplomantov po zaključku izobraževanja.

Delo je razdeljeno na dva dela, teoretični, v katerem predstavim tri sklope, in sicer visokošolstvo, zaposljivost in zaposlenost diplomantov ter oblike mreženja posameznega sistema s trgom dela, medtem ko empirični skozi raziskovanje treh hipotez tudi statistično vključi in analizira sklope, razdelane v teoretičnem delu. Ker gre za temo, ki ni javno dostopna, v pomoč pri raziskovanju pojava mreženja v visokošolstvu z namenom izboljšanja zaposljivosti diplomantov uporabim mnenja treh strokovnjakov iz slovenskega javnega in zasebnega visokošolstva, ki sem jih pridobila z metodo osebnega intervjuja, posnetega na diktafon in nato pretipkanega ter prevedenega v angleški jezik. Predstavnik javnega visokošolstva je profesor doktor Rebolj, rektor Univerze v Mariboru, medtem ko zasebno visokošolstvo predstavljata dva strokovnjaka, in sicer dekan GEA College fakultete za podjetništvo, profesor doktor Vadnjal, in dekanja Fakultete za komercialne in poslovne vede oziroma FKPV, izredna profesorica doktor Merkač. Poleg so v raziskavo vključeni tudi odgovori predstavnice nemškega javnega visokošolstva, gospe Thiel, sicer vodje Alumni pisarne Univerze v Würzburgu, katere odgovore sem pridobila z vprašalnikom, poslanim po elektronski pošti, na katerega mi je gospa podala odgovore na temo mreženja v nemškem visokošolstvu. Pridobljeni odgovori pomagajo razkriti pravo sliko na tem področju in podajo vpogled v dogajanje predvsem v slovenskem visokošolstvu, ki ga sicer ni razbrati v javnih statistikah, kar se lahko šteje za kritiko na temo spremljanja dogajanja z diplomanti po odhodu s fakultete, saj kot je ugotovljeno v odgovorih, takšnega spremljanja nekatere fakultete morda izvajajo, druge pa so še zmeraj v procesu izvedbe le tega.

V empiričnem delu raziskave postavim tri hipoteze, ki se navezujejo na zgoraj navedene vidike pojava mreženja s trgom dela na področju visokega šolstva v treh državah, in sicer Združenem kraljestvu, Nemčiji in Sloveniji, kjer pa vključim tudi ZDA, saj nam ravno statistika ameriškega izobraževanja poda primer (dobre prakse) izvajanja spremljanja diplomantov, katerega pa ni najti v raziskovanju spremljanja visokošolstva v treh izbranih državah, predvsem v Sloveniji. Vključeni podatki so zbrani iz obstoječih podatkovnih baz, ustvarjenih na osnovi že izvedenih raziskav na področju visokega šolstva znotraj EU in ZDA, kar pomeni, da gre za sekundarno raziskavo. Ker Bolonjski sistem predstavlja projekt EU, je slednja zavezana spremljanju in merjenju uspešnosti prej omenjenega sistema. In prav te podatke raziskujem. Gre za statistične podatke, izmerjene bodisi na ravni univerz (kot v Sloveniji, kjer jih je napram številu v Nemčiji, Združenem kraljestvu in ZDA, manj) bodisi na državni ravni v obliki odstotka vpisanih, kjer se raziskava izvaja po vzorcu študentov na vseh univerzah v obravnavanih državah. Torej, bolj podrobno opisano, je Slovenija obravnavana na ravni univerz in letnih vpisov na njih, Nemčija in Združeno kraljestvo pa na ravni EU in OECD statistike, kjer je v slednjo vključena tudi ZDA po odstotku vpisanih in diplomantov ter njihovem zaposlitvenem statusu po diplomi na leto. Tako gre za kombinacijo kvantitativne raziskave (po zbiranju podatkov iz statističnih baz) in hkrati kvalitativne raziskave (po majhnem številu obravnavanih primerov ter metodi pridobitve podatkov). Ugotovitve se tako nanašajo specifično na tri obravnavane države s poudarkom na slovenskem visokošolstvu. S predlaganim načinom raziskovanja visokošolstva in zaposlenosti diplomantov ugotavljam kakovost terciarnega izobraževanja v posamezni državi, na osnovi pridobljenih raziskanih podatkov pa poiščem odgovore na vprašanja, zastavljena v obliki treh hipotez. Cilj je na osnovi izbranega, najbolj dostopnega modela visokošolstva izbrati tistega, ki bi se lahko uporabil za uvedbo v državah, kjer se šolnine uvajajo ali višajo, in tako vrnili terciarno izobraževanje v dostopno vsem, kjer se diplom in zaposlitve ne dobi le s plačilom, temveč se je potrebno za pridobitev zaključene izobrazbe učiti.

Argumenti, kot so navedeni zgoraj, predstavljajo osnovo za raziskovanje prve hipoteze, s katero trdim, da diplomanti zasebnih fakultet nosijo višjo stopnjo zaposlenosti kot diplomanti javnih fakultet. Sprva raziščem, koliko vpisov in diplomantov je na državo na splošno, ter po iskanju podatkov glede na delitev na javne in zasebne kmalu ugotovim, da ti podatki ne obstajajo. V Združenem kraljestvu nam statistika poda stanje v predvsem

zasebnem visokošolstvu, saj kot je ugotovljeno v raziskavi, njihovo visokošolstvo velja za takšno prav zaradi zaračunavanja šolnin, čeprav so, podobno kot Slovenija, te fakultete financirane tudi s strani države, ki imajo tako nadzor nad programi teh enakih zasebnih, vendar imenovanih 'javnih', fakultet. Glede nemškega visokošolstva nam podatki razkrijejo, da se od oktobra 2013 šolnine več ne zaračunavajo tudi v še zadnji od 16 zveznih dežel, to je na Bavarskem, in tako Nemčija predstavlja javno visokošolstvo v še najbližjem pomenu te besede oziroma kot je to področje izobraževanja bilo zastavljeno že leta 1976, ko se je mnogo držav, med njimi tudi naše tri obravnavane, odločilo pristopiti in se s tem zavezale tudi 13. členu sporazuma, ki navaja postopno uvedbo brezplačnega visokošolstva. Od tu se fokus osredotoči na Slovenijo in njeno visokošolstvo. Kmalu ugotovimo, da se je v zadnjem desetletju v Sloveniji zgodil razcep visokošolstva na javno in zasebno, kjer se slednje kar vztrajno širi, in čeprav je morda v zadnjih letih zaznati nekoliko manjši vpis na fakultete, število diplomiranih, sploh na magistrskem študiju, narašča, k čemur po mojem mnenju zagotovo prispevajo tudi številne zasebne institucije, ki podeljujejo tovrstne nazive v zameno za šolnino. Vendar je tema hipoteze zaposljivost oziroma stopnja zaposlenosti teh enakih diplomantov, torej diplomantov zasebnih fakultet. V javnih statistikah je podana delitev vseh diplomantov izključno na diplomante z akademsko ter diplomante s strokovno usmerjeno izobrazbo. Ker zasebne fakultete v Sloveniji izvajajo le strokovne visokošolske programe in ne akademske, se njihov delež lahko upošteva le v statističnih podatkih o diplomantih s strokovno izobrazbo. Tako raziskava vključi tudi te podatke, kljub temu pa prave odgovore najdemo šele v intervjujih s tremi strokovnjaki iz slovenskega javnega in zasebnega visokošolstva. V intervjuju z rektorjem Univerze v Mariboru ugotovimo, da izvedbo raziskave o trenutnem statusu diplomantov izvajajo od leta 2012, vendar da rezultati zaenkrat še niso znani, hkrati pa rektor poudari pomembnost takšne raziskave, saj potrdi, da se uspešnost visokošolstva v smislu 'zagotavljanja' boljših možnosti zaposlitve po diplomi lahko meri prav skozi kontakt z diplomanti. Dekan GEA Collega ravno nasprotno potrdi tovrstno raziskavo, ki je bila izvedena v maju 2013 in je pokazala, da je le en od diplomantov nosil status brezposelnega dlje časa. Ker gre za manjšo fakulteto z bazo približno 1200 diplomantov, po besedah dekana, izvedba raziskave ni bila zahtevna, je pa potrdila kar je navedeno na spletni strani fakultete, in sicer, da so njihovi diplomanti dokazano bolj zaposljivi, t.j. zaradi študija na prav njihovi fakulteti. Odgovori dekana to potrdijo, vendar ti podatki niso javno dostopni. Za boljše razumevanje situacije s stopnjo zaposlenosti diplomantov zasebnih fakultet

vključim tudi mnenje dekanje FKPV, ki prav tako potrdi dejstvo, da so njihovi diplomanti bolj zaposljivi od diplomantov javnih fakultet, saj jih učijo praktičnih stvari, ki se dejansko takoj lahko uporabijo na trgu dela. Vse to drži, vendar je hkrati potreben tudi vpogled v tip študentov, ki se vpisujejo na zasebne fakultete v Sloveniji. In dokler se v javne fakultete vpisujejo povprečno mladi, torej v dvajsetih, morda zgodnjih tridesetih, medtem ko vpisov v kasnejši starosti ni zaznati, se na fakulteto kot je GEA College po eni strani vpisujejo prav tako mladi in sicer pogosteje v redni študij, in po drugi strani odrasli, ki že imajo službo oziroma nosijo status zaposlene osebe, in sicer pogosteje v izredni študij prav zaradi kombiniranja dela z izobraževanjem ob delu. Običajno je v vseh slovenskih zasebnih fakultetah močnejši izredni del študijskih programov, kar privede do ugotovitve, da je večina njihovih študentov že zaposlenih. Še več, dekan GEA Collega potrdi, da večina njihovih študentov že ima svoje podjetje ali pa izhaja iz družine s svojim podjetjem, v katerem ta študent tudi dela ali bo delal. Poleg večina najde zaposlitev v ekonomiji in financah, in če upoštevamo njihove študijske programe in dejstvo, da so prav tako podjetje, je očitno, da je njihovo povezovanje s trgom dela boljše kot enako povezovanje javnih fakultet. V primeru FKPV se razkrijejo podobni podatki, torej večina njihovih programov je izrednih, kar pomeni, da so študentje prav tako odrasli, ki že nosijo status zaposlenega. Vprašanje je tudi, kako se ta podatek upošteva v sedanji statistiki, vsekakor pa je spremljanje in točno navajanje letnih podatkov potrebno za vpogled v to področje ter za bodoče generacije diplomantov, ki bi se tako lažje odločili o nadaljevanju študija na ustreznem programu. Na FKPV sicer letno izvajajo spremljanje diplomantov, vendar se izkaže, da je težava njihova visoka neodzivnost na sodelovanje v tovrstni raziskavi. Tako dekanja trdi, da je odgovorov veliko premalo, da bi na osnovi njih posploševali na celotno generacijo, hkrati pa iz neodzivnosti ne moremo razbrati, ali je diplomant uspešen v iskanju zaposlitve po diplomiranju ali ne. Kot članica Sveta NAKVIS (Nacionalna agencija za kakovost v visokem šolstvu) dekanja tudi potrdi, da je visoka neodzivnost diplomantov prisotna na splošno v celotnem visokošolstvu, vendar se osebno ne morem strinjati, saj podatkov iz javnega visokošolstva ni, ker pa so v zasebnem v večjem številu prisotni izredni oziroma že zaposleni študentje, menim da to vpliva na njihovo željo po sodelovanju in dejanski udeležbi v raziskavi po zaključku študija. Na splošno lahko glede prve hipoteze potrdim, da na prvi pogled drži, da je stopnja zaposlenosti diplomantov zasebnih fakultet višja kot stopnja zaposlenosti diplomantov javnih fakultet, vendar je hkrati potrebno upoštevati, kakšen tip študenta se vpiše na zasebno fakulteto v Sloveniji. Tudi

dejstvo, da je program na zasebni fakulteti bolj usmerjen na študenta tudi zaradi šolnine, ki predstavlja del plače profesorja, ni zanemarljivo, kot tudi ne dejstvo, da se na zasebne fakultete še zmeraj vpiše znatno manj študentov kot na javne, za katere je na primer za leto 2013 po besedah rektorja Univerze v Ljubljani ta odstotek znašal približno 75%. Vsi ti dejavniki vplivajo ne le na dejansko stanje v visokošolstvu vendar tudi na statistične podatke, kot se jih podaja danes. Uvedba bolj podrobnega spremljanja je potrebna za raziskovanje povezanosti med zaposlenostjo diplomantov zaradi mreženja fakultete s trgom dela kot tudi vpliva tovrstnega mreženja na zaposljivost oziroma stopnjo zaposlenosti diplomantov.

Druga hipoteza razišče področje mreženja fakultet s trgom dela v smislu sodelovanja z njim skozi predavanja zaposlenih na trgu dela ter njihove ponudbe prostih mest fakultetam za izmenjave in pripravništva, ki lahko vodijo do kasnejše zaposlitve v enakem podjetju. Mreženje v takšnem pomenu besede se v raziskavi pokaže prisotno tako v Nemčiji kot Združenem kraljestvu, kjer sodelovanje s trgom dela dejansko (dobro) izkoriščajo za zaposlovanje diplomantov. Ravno nasprotno pa se je v Sloveniji namesto tovrstnega sodelovanja javnega visokošolstva s trgom dela razvila nova veja zasebnega visokošolstva, ki poleg šolnin (v večini) prejema tudi koncesijo s strani države. Na prvi pogled se tako v javnem kot zasebnem slovenskem visokošolstvu uporabljajo pravzaprav enake oblike mreženja s trgom dela, kjer dobimo vtis, da so zasebne fakultete pri tem boljše, vendar je tudi pri tej hipotezi potreben nadaljnji vpogled, zakaj je temu tako. Ponovno nam argument, da je zasebna šola pravzaprav podjetje, ki že od začetka poslovanja sodeluje na trgu dela s takšnimi in drugačnimi interesi, potrdi, da je mreženje zasebnih fakultet s trgom dela boljše kot enako mreženje javnih fakultet. To tudi pove, da zasebne fakultete lažje pridobijo sodelovanje trga dela kot javne, saj so tu v igri tudi drugi interesi in ne le 'javno dobro' kot je cilj javne univerze. Vseeno je potrebno dodati ugotovitev iz intervjujev in sicer, da je na splošno odzivnost samega slovenskega trga dela slaba ter da je potrebna večja proaktivna udeležba delodajalcev v procesu visokošolskega izobraževanja. S tretjo hipotezo ugotovim in jo hkrati tako tudi potrdim, da mreženje fakultet s trgom dela ugodno vpliva na zaposljivost in tudi zaposlenost diplomantov. Vendar, če to drži za Nemčijo in Združeno kraljestvo, se v Sloveniji pojavlja trend, ko je stopnja brezposelnosti najvišja med visoko izobraženimi. Pojav lahko pripišemo dejstvu stagnacije slovenske ekonomije po finančni krizi, ki se je začela leta 2008, hkrati pa se poraja vprašanje, zakaj država omogoča odpiranje novih zasebnih fakultet

in jih poleg še finačno podpira, ko pa je število diplomiranih že tako previsoko in poleg javno visokošolstvo po besedah rektorja Univerze v Mariboru deluje na enakem proračunu zadnjih osem let, ko se je na fakultete vpisovalo ravno najvišje število študentov v zgodovini Slovenije.

Raziskava nam pokaže veliko nepravilnosti, ki se dogajajo v slovenskem visokošolstvu in v zaključku želim opozoriti, da mora biti cilj visokošolskega izobraževanja splošna visoka kakovost le tega, ne glede na politične, gospodarske in družbene pogoje v državi, in še bolj ne glede, ali je visokošolstvo javno ali zasebno. Menim, da imajo vsi študentje pravico do visokokakovostnega visokošolskega sistema, ki bi moral biti dostopen brezplačno torej brez finančnega obremenjevanja študentov v času študija kadar koli v življenju, saj bi se le tako lahko približali nemškemu modelu, kjer je visokošolstvo brezplačno, a število vpisov kljub temu ni tako visoko kot v Sloveniji. Enako velja za Združeno kraljestvo, kjer je visokošolstvo sicer plačljivo, vendar je pri obeh primerih obvezno opozoriti tudi na njihov način povezovanja s trgom dela, ki ga zaznamo v najbolj podobni obliki v slovenskem zasebnem visokošolstvu in veliko manj v javnem. Tu je tudi zanimiva ugotovitev, da medtem ko se v Nemčiji in Združenem kraljestvu približno 30% prebivalstva vpisuje v visokošolstvo skozi celo življenje, je v Sloveniji ta podatek visok v času do zgodnjih tridesetih let, potem pa upade in nikdar ne doseže odstotkov drugih dveh raziskanih držav. Vsekakor bi se ob rednem spremljanju statusa diplomantov po odhodu s fakultete zagotovo pokazalo, kako uspešne dejansko so posamezne fakultete v zagotavljanju zaposlitve svojim diplomantom po zaključku študija. Velik izziv pri pridobivanju teh podatkov pa je za slovensko visokošolstvo, kako spodbuditi odzivnost diplomantov za sodelovanje v takšni raziskavi, za splošno visokošolstvo pa, kako doseči bolj proaktivno sodelovanje in večjo odprtost slovenskih podjetij za sodelovanje v procesu izobraževanja, nenazadnje pa so tu še akademski programi, pri katerih je toliko bolj potrebna uvedba prakse, kjer pa je povezovanje s trgom dela tudi toliko težje prav zaradi bolj teoretično usmerjenih programov. Raziskava tako pred slovensko visokošolstvo postavi vrsto izzivov in ponudi v premislek dejstvo, da je izobraževanje bistvena veja in eden pomembnejših delov vsakega državnega sistema, v katerega je potrebno vlagati in ga nikdar zanemariti.

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