



PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Purpose: Paper presents differences between private and public higher education (HE) in Slovenia regarding number of students, graduates, academic and non academic staff. It reflects upon growing fragmentation of Slovenian HE and the blurred line between private and public HE institutions (HEIs). Characteristics of Slovenian private HE are described in more detail and can be useful to policy analysts and policy makers as well as researcher-scholars focused on higher education.

Design/methodology/approach: Based on the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) we first prepared basic overview of HE in Slovenia. Then we examined the relationship between the number of students, graduates, academic staff and non-academic staff in public and private HEIs, and even between publicly and non-publicly funded private HEIs.

Findings: We find that growth of private provision has been substantial despite the demographic decline in number of students. Student-to-teacher ratio (Full Time Equivalent – FTE) is better in public than in private HEIs and private institutions offer fewer full-time jobs than public ones. On the other hand private HE has more responsive management, is more flexible and cost-effective. Students –to- non-teaching staff ratio is higher in private than in public HEIs. Publicly funded HEIs account for more than half of enrolled students, graduates and academic staff in private HE. Some similarities can be drawn from public and publicly funded private HEIs on one hand and non-publicly funded private HEIs on the other.

Limitations/implications: In conclusion we provide implications for future policy decisions on public-private sector relationship.

Practical implications: We provide suggestions to increase interest among students in enrolling in private HE study programmes.

Originality/value: We provide a detailed analysis of the private HE in Slovenia with original data that we have collected on individual request.

Keywords: private HE, public HE, funding, Slovenia

Classification: research paper

INTRODUCTION

In past decades, higher education (HE) has been characterised by an increasing globalisation, market-orientation, privatisation of public and growth of private HE. Private HE has been a result of expanding HE systems, increased and differentiated demand and supply, substantial private returns, increasing constraints on public expenditure, increased levels of cost-sharing, introduction of neo-liberal economic policies and by fostering more internal and external efficient management in HE (Teixeira, 2009; Sanyal and Johnstone, 2011; Varghese, 2013).

However, the concepts of private and public, in the continually changing context of HE are more complex and can be misleading (Marginson, 2007). The difference between public (institutions established by the National Assembly) and private HE is not as obvious as one might think since the first is increasingly adopting characteristics of the latter (e.g. part-time studies with usually employed or older individuals paying tuition fees to study or complete their studies), while private HE is “becoming” public (e.g. public funding of full-time studies at private HE institutions - HEIs). The lines demarcating public and private HEIs have become almost impossibly blurred in many developed and also developing countries (see Sanyal and Johnstone, 2011, 166; Varghese, 2013, 145).

CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOVENIAN HE

In the academic year 2011/2012, there were 89,600 HE students in Slovenia (91,539 in 2010/11), i.e. 70,422 undergraduates and 19,178 postgraduates. One fifth of all students were enrolled in part-time (subject to tuition fees) studies. Women represented 61.1 % of all students.

According to Eurostat, in 2009 Slovenia (where in addition to HE students there were also 14,403 students enrolled in 2-year higher vocational study programmes, adding up to a total of 104,003 students) allocated to tertiary education (TE):

- 1.38% of its GDP , which was above the EU27 average of 1.22% of GDP;
- institutions funds below the EU27 average. Measured in purchasing power standards, Slovenia allocated 7,261.4 EUR per student compared to the EU27 average of 9,243.7 EUR;
- 22.1% of public expenditure for TE for student aid, which was above the EU27 average of 17.4%.

Table 1: Number of public and private HEIs v Slovenia (February 6, 2013)

	Universities (faculties and academies)	Single HEIs
Public	3 (49)	1
Private	2 (6)	36

Source: MESCS , 2013.

In Slovenia, there are 4 public and 38 private HEIs (legal entities). In terms of individual faculties and academies, there are 50 public HEIs, i.e. 49 members of 3 public universities and one public single HEI. Among private HEIs, there are 2 universities, i.e. Euro-Mediterranean University - EMUNI which is a network of universities and another university



with 6 faculties, as well as 36 single HEIs reflecting a high level of fragmentation of private HE which is still increasing.

In Slovenian HE, a number of private HEIs have had publicly funded study programmes (programmes with concession) since the beginning of private HE in the mid-90s. Today, there are 12 (33%) single HEIs and one university with concession, meaning a total of 28 study programmes with concession, 20 of which are first-cycle and 8 second-cycle study programmes. Concessions were granted on the basis of a government public call in two periods, in the mid 90s and in 2007/2008 on the basis of two criteria: study areas of shortage occupations (engineering, natural sciences, health care) and regional criterion (located outside the major cities with developed public HE).

Regions in which HE is not developed or present are, irrespective of the small size of Slovenia (20,000 km²), in a very unequal position compared to the regions with university centres. In academic year 2006/07 living expenses of students who did not study in their home town were significantly higher than those of students who lived at home, 634 vs. 292 EUR respectively (Eurostudent SI, 2007, 40).

In Slovenia, social dimension of HE is very important since it can improve access to HE, increase educational structure of the population of the region, and create quality jobs in the region. Furthermore, numerous OECD studies and recommendations show a major influence of HE on the development of human capital, innovation and competitiveness of towns and regions with universities and other HEIs.

These are the key reasons why Slovenia allocates more public funds for student aid than the EU average and why it publicly funds its private HE. In 2010, it allocated 251.4 million EUR to HEIs for study activities (for first- and second-cycle full-time studies), 10.4 million EUR (4.1%) of which went to private HEIs with concession (MHEST, 2010).

CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOVENIAN PRIVATE HE

Private HEIs usually accounts for a larger number of total HEIs, but for a smaller number of enrolments (Tilak, 2006, 113). This is also true in the case of Slovenia. The number of private HEIs accounts for 45,7 % of total HEIs in terms of individual faculties but the share of students enrolled accounts for 11,7 % (see Figure 1).

Table 3: Students, Graduates and Teachers and assistants in private HE in 2010/11 and 2011/12

	Total	Under. Students / 1 st cycle	Post. students/ 2 nd +3 rd cycle	Total	Under. Students / 1 st cycle	Post. students/ 2 nd +3 rd cycle
Students (2010/11 and 2011/12)	10,321	8,098	2,223	10,446	8,167	2,279
. HEIs with concession	5,652	4,039	1,613	5,521	3,942	1,579
. HEIs without concession	4,669	4,059	610	4,925	4,225	700
Graduates (2010 and 2011)	1,448	1,154	294	1,500	1,124	376
. HEIs with concession	690	516	174	788	579	209
. HEIs without concession	758	638	120	712	545	167
Teachers and assistants* (2010 and 2011)	1,461	420**		1,556	490**	
. HEIs with concession	849	280**		796	319**	
. HEIs without concession	612	140**		760	171**	

* Higher education teachers, assistants and researchers

** FTE (Full Time Equivalent)

Source: SORS, 2012.

Publicly funded private HEIs in 2011/12 account for as many as 52.9% of students (48.3% of undergraduates and 69.3% of postgraduates), 52.5% of graduates and 51% teachers and assistants or 65% (FTE) of private HE.

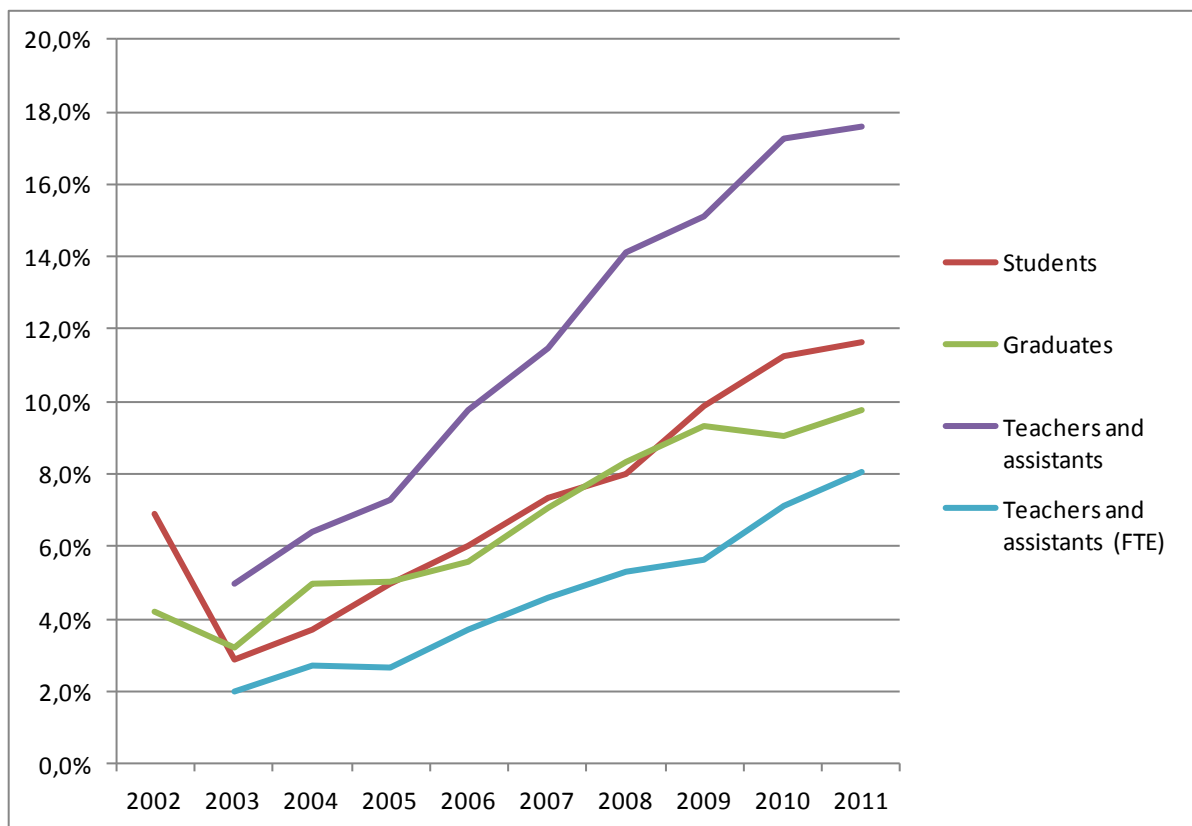


Figure 1: Share of private HE 2002-2011

Source: SORS, 2012.

Since 2003 when single HEIs in Primorska region joined to become the third public university, which is an interesting example of nationalisation of private HE, we have witnessed a sustained growth of private HE despite the decline in the number of students after 2005 when there were over 100,000 students compared to just below 90,000 in 2011.

Private HEIs offer considerably fewer full-time jobs than public HEIs. The main reason for this is that only 33% of them have a concession providing them with a greater stability of funding than tuition fees which depend on annual student enrolment. Another reason is a method of teaching in larger groups which is common in social sciences, business and administrative studies and law, the fields with the most students in private HE.

Table 4: The students to teacher and assistant ratio for 2010/11 and 2011/12

Academic year	Students / teacher and assistant		Students / teacher and assistant (FTE)	
	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12
HE in total	10.8	10.1	15.5	14.7
Public HE	11.6	10.9	14.8	14.1
Private HE	7.1	6.7	26.9	21.3
. with concession	6.7	6.9	20.2	17.3
. without concession	7.6	6.5	33.4	28.8

Source: SORS, 2012.

The students to teacher and assistant ratio in terms of FTE is significantly better in public (14.1) than private (21.3) HE (2011/12). It is especially unfavourable in HEIs without concession (28.8 in 2011/12 and 33.4 in 2010/11) although a two-year trend indicates improved. This raises a question about the quality of their education and research as much education is carried out by contract teachers and assistants, in addition to which many private HEIs do not carry out research activities.

ADVANTAGES OF PRIVATE HE

One of the key advantages of private HE in Slovenia is that the “interest” of founders of HEIs is much more pronounced and present than in public HEIs. This is reflected in management where individuals in leading positions such as rectors, deans and directors are often not elected but appointed. Management of public HEIs is characterised by a dominant role of teachers who are not qualified for it. Its other feature is an inappropriate composition of management boards in which founders and representatives of employers have much too little influence.

Mainly due to different (better) management, private HE (both foreign and Slovenian) is more flexible and responsive and usually also more cost-effective. This is also reflected in the number of employees in professional/support services.

Table 5: Non-teaching staff ratios for academic year 2011/12

	Non-teaching staff		Stud. / member of non-teaching staff		Non-teaching staff / all staff		Teachers and assistants (FTE) / member of non-teaching staff	
	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12
Academic year	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12
HE in total	3,726	3,845	24.6	23.3	30.5%	30.3%	1.6	1.6
Public HE	3,439	3,589	23.6	22.1	32.9%	33.0%	1.6	1.6
Private HE	287	256	36	40.8	16.4%	14.1%	1.3	1.9
. with concession	161	148	35.1	37.3	15.9%	15.7%	1.7	2.2
. without concession	126	108	37.1	45.6	17.1%	12.4%	1.1	1.6

Source: SORS, 2012.

In public HE there are 22 students per member of non-teaching staff compared to as many as 41 students in private HE for academic year 2011/12 (24 and 36 respectively in 2010/11). This is not only due to less widespread support activities in private HEIs but also to a large duplication of staff at public universities in, for example, accounting, human resource, etc. departments at the level of faculties, academies and rectorates. These results in non-teaching staff representing 33% of all employees in public HE compared to only about 14% in private HE. 1.6 and 2.2 teachers (FTE) per member of non-teaching staff in public HE and private HE with concession respectively is certainly not enough considering that non-teaching staff in Slovenian HEIs generate much less revenue than at foreign universities which as a result have much more diverse revenues and are therefore less dependent on public funds than our HEIs.

VISION OF PRIVATE HE DEVELOPMENT BY 2020

By 2020 the number of 19 year-olds will drop to just over 19,000 compared to over 23,000 in 2010 (in 2000 there were over 29,000 of them and their number will be the lowest in 2019, i.e. 18,776). In this context, the key challenge is how to improve the reputation of private HEIs and thus increase the interest for enrolment in their study programmes.

This can be achieved by:

- strengthening human resource structure which is not integrated in the public sector and therefore has a better wage policy,
- promoting the diversity of study programmes and targeting groups of people not targeted by public HE,
- emphasising the quality of education and introducing online studies,
- enhancing research and international cooperation,
- joining single HEIs into universities which are organised differently than public universities and have a dynamic management with a clear vision and plenty of energy.

INTEGRATION IS THE FUTURE

Private HE contributes to a more dynamic Slovenian HE area, brings much-needed competition and is a balance to the dominance of public HE which has many advantages and privileges in accessing public funds for education and research. Concessions through which a

number of private HEIs are publicly funded have an important positive role not only for the institutions, their employees and students but for the entire HE. This is demonstrated in a greater similarity between public HE and private HE with concession on one hand than between private HE with and without concession on the other.

The state must provide a framework and mechanisms to:

- encourage the development of public and private HE in accordance with EU and national targets,
- encourage the greatest possible quality and accessibility of HE for all those interested,
- supervise HE activities and thus contribute to its greater effectiveness, efficiency and transparency.

Therefore, HE should do its best to follow the OECD recommendation that the future of HE lies in a reliable connection between public and private HE, and that distrust and competition between them should be replaced with mutual trust and cooperation. Only then will HE be able to provide access to quality education and contribute to the development of society (Cheng, 2009, 68).

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