

## **1. name of contribution**

The dropout in tertiary education at Czech public and private universities as a result of school marketing

## **2. name and surname of the author**

Hana Kučerová

## **3. perex**

The situation of tertiary education in the Czech Republic has changed dramatically in the last 15 years after joining the European Union. The demographic decline of the population, structural changes in the number of employees, the expansion of tertiary education and the impact of economic cycles change the overall extent and structure of the transition of university graduates to the labor market. The resulting changes can lead to serious problems, both on the supply side and the labor demand side. An equally significant impact on the dropout of university education has the implementation of school marketing. A school that makes better use of marketing in its activities has a greater chance of getting material and quality teachers. To some extent, private schools are in a better position because to have effective marketing policies in place for some time now. This article deals with the development of the dropout at public and private universities in the Czech Republic. Further, it compares the dropout according to the degree of the study program. The answers to the research questions were obtained through the analysis of secondary data (literature, research, annual reports and long-term intentions of universities. Based on the performed analysis, the fact that in the Czech Republic the dropout rate is increasing every year is confirmed and thus represents one of the main actual problems of the Czech public but also private universities.

## **4. core text**

### **Introduction**

In the recent years, the educational market has become more dynamic and complex. There are many market forces that are trying to shape the educational environment (Sousa & Magalhães, 2019). Although the area of Czech higher education has been in the interest of several researchers in recent years (Dvořáčková et al., 2014; Šima & Pabian, 2013), only a few research studies engaged with the problem of the dropout in tertiary education at Czech universities (Mouralová & Tomášková, 2007; Fučík & Slepíčková, 2014). The phenomenon of dropout of university graduates is not only a topic for academic research but also has practical relevance. Both the universities themselves and the various representatives of educational policy in the Czech Republic are interested in what causes the dropout at Czech public and private universities and how to fight it.

The dropout in tertiary education is, therefore, a problem for almost all universities in the Czech Republic for several reasons. Firstly, the dropout of graduates increases slowly but at a steady pace, especially in bachelor's degree programs. Secondly, the rapid increase in the number of students in the last twenty years has brought new groups of people to universities in the Czech Republic, with a significantly different experience, previous education, expectations, and needs. Universities have reacted to this change through their capacities, but universities approach often very slow for more radical changes in the concept of teaching, access to students and support services (Stoeber et al., 2011). Just

competitive pressure has propelled many universities to increase the number of students admitted as a means of increasing their income (Watjatrakul, 2014). Thirdly, the number of applicants for higher education has peaked in 2010 and has been decreasing gradually since then. This is due to the lower number of graduates with GCSE. Universities that are still largely dependent on the number of students existentially have a problem to fill their capacities and thus turn their attention to the high dropout of their graduates. Fourthly, in Western Europe, the issue of the dropout of university graduates has been actively discussed for many years, and thanks to cooperation between countries, this topic is being transferred to the Czech Republic.

The European Commission also has a role in these problems (De Wit, 2020). The European Commission informs about the problem of dropout in strategic materials and also in the conditions for drawing on EU structural funds (Kehm et al., 2019). At the international level, despite EU efforts, there is no data available to reliably compare countries with each other according to the dropout of university graduates; there are too large differences in the methodologies used. However, the available information suggests that the dropout of university graduates in the Czech Republic represents an average in comparison with European countries (Pokorný, 2019). What, on the other hand, can be compared are the policies and approaches that countries apply about the dropout of higher education. A major contribution in this respect was the study HEDOCE (Higher Education Dropout and Completion in Europe), to which the authors contributed a case study that also offers inspiration for the Czechia (Stiburek et al., 2017).

The changing demands of the labor market require universities to develop more marketing activities (Rizkallah & Seitz, 2017). These include the preparation and implementation of training programs aimed at developing key skills supporting employability and flexibility of graduates. The number of students decreases every year. Competition between universities is growing, not only for students but also for qualified teachers, competing for funds from both public and non-public sources. The range of study offers is increasing, and education has become more global with EU accession. This places higher demands on newly oriented development of educational institutions. In addition to the introduction of modern management methods and the creation of a “learning universities”, these also include: introduction of quality management; customer orientation in terms of “total customer care”; benchmarking; disseminating good image; improving public relations (Rahman et al., 2019; Al-Hazmi, 2020). Also, possibilities for universities are to use digital content marketing as a means of brand building for colleges and universities (Pharr, 2019). In some of the above areas, universities in the Czech Republic are active, for example in providing support and compensatory courses. Unfortunately, in other areas, the situation is worse, especially when it comes to working with potential candidates. Most Czech universities more invest in their marketing and try to attract as many students as possible. But only a few universities give true and comprehensible information about what is waiting for potential candidates in the study and what are requirements, which they will have to fulfill in their studies (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). The fact that is most neglected in the creation of measures in the field of graduate dropout in the Czech Republic is a more detailed work with students' motivation (Švec et al., 2015). The state of the policy in the field of support for the study successes of university students reflects a large extent the surviving conservative concept of the role of universities (Christie et al., 2004).

Higher education institutions are looking every possible way to the increase of a number of students, accepting lower admission criteria and seeking to drive out graduates more

quickly (Štrach, 2017). How universities influence their students through their marketing activities may later be reflected also in the spread of a good reputation about their alma mater (Rózsa, 2018). Modern approaches for prediction of dropout students include machine learning, logistic regression, and decision trees (Kemper et al., 2020).

### **Methodology**

Considering the aims of this article, a quantitative approach is chosen for its elaboration. The work with secondary data includes mainly the research of existing literature and the study of publicly available data about dropout at private and universities in the Czech Republic. The yearbook of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, which is freely available on the Ministry's website, was selected as the main source for compiling a quantitative content analysis of secondary data. The characteristic of quantitative research is the straightforward data collection and the work with accurate, numerical data, which enables their rapid analysis. The results are independent of the researcher in quantitative research. As the time period was chosen range of years 2008/09 - 2018/19, it is the range of the past 10 years.

The Yearbook of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic includes various information and data about the development of Czech higher education (numbers of students, numbers of graduates, numbers of foreign students, numbers of women and men studying, numbers of students of private and public schools, students according to the form of the study program, etc.). For analysis about dropout at Czech public or private universities in this study were important data about the number of students and the number of graduates in individual academic years.

The following formula was used to calculate the dropout rate:  $(\text{number of students} - \text{number of graduates}) / \text{number of students} * 100$ . The decisive factor in calculating the dropout rate within each type of study program was the determination of the period of study due to the initial number of students and the final number of graduates. The standard period of bachelor studies in the Czech Republic is 3 years, master study program 5 years, follow-up master study program 2 years and doctoral study program for 3 years. The graphical representation of the results was used to better represent the results in Microsoft Excel.

Finally, a comparative analysis of the dropout rate was conducted within private and universities in the Czech Republic. Based on the results were determined conclusions about the development of dropout at Czech private and public universities as one of the consequences of school marketing in the Czech Republic.

Limits of this study can be considered to be limited to quantitative research only, and it would be interesting to include qualitative approaches such as semi-structured expert interviews with vice-rectors for study affairs or with people from a strategic or similar department, who process analysis of dropout. Another limit of this study is the limitation only on dropout within the Czech Republic, further research could be focused on comparative analysis of dropout data with other countries.

### **Research**

The first part of the research was focused on the analysis of data on the dropout of university graduates in the Czech Republic in bachelor study programs. From Table 1 we can see that the percentage of graduate dropout rates ranges at public universities from about 78-81 % and at private universities from 67-81 %.

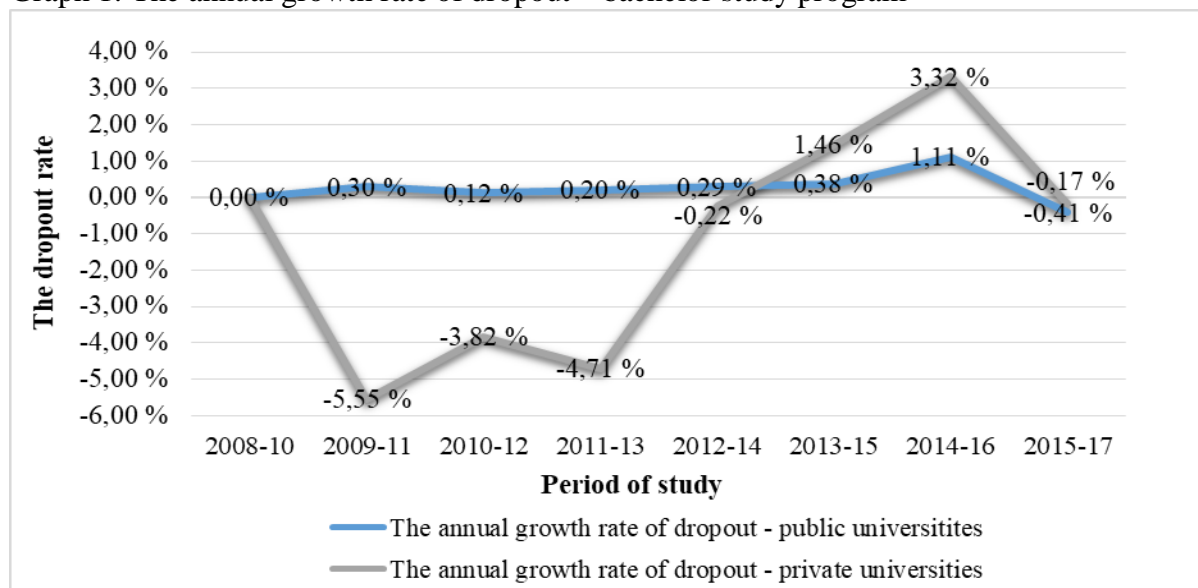
Table 1: The dropout tertiary education – bachelor study program

Period of study	The dropout rate – public universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – public universities	The dropout rate – private universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – private universities
2008/09-2010/11	78,20 %	-	81,37 %	-
2009/10-2011/12	78,50 %	0,30 %	75,81 %	- 5,55 %
2010/11-2012/13	78,62 %	0,12 %	71,99 %	- 3,82 %
2011/12-2013/14	78,82 %	0,20 %	67,28 %	- 4,71 %
2012/13-2014/15	79,11 %	0,29 %	67,07 %	- 0,22 %
2013/14-2015/16	79,48 %	0,38 %	68,53 %	1,46 %
2014/15-2016/17	80,59 %	1,11 %	71,85 %	3,32 %
2015/16-2017/18	80,18 %	- 0,41 %	71,67 %	- 0,17 %

Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

Graph 1 shows the annual growth rate of dropout of graduates, which studied in bachelor's programs at Czech public and private universities. Based on the results of Table 1 and Graph 1, the dropout rate at private universities is lower than the dropout rate at public universities. Marketing activities play the most important role in promoting bachelor's degree programs at private universities.

Graph 1: The annual growth rate of dropout – bachelor study program



Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

The next part of the analysis was focused on the development of the dropout rates in master's degree programs (Table 2). The percentage of dropout rates of these graduates ranges from about 85-88 % at public universities. The success rate of the study is approximately 12-15 % at public universities. The percentage of dropout rates of these graduates ranges from about 25-70 % at private universities.

Table 2: The dropout tertiary education – master's study program

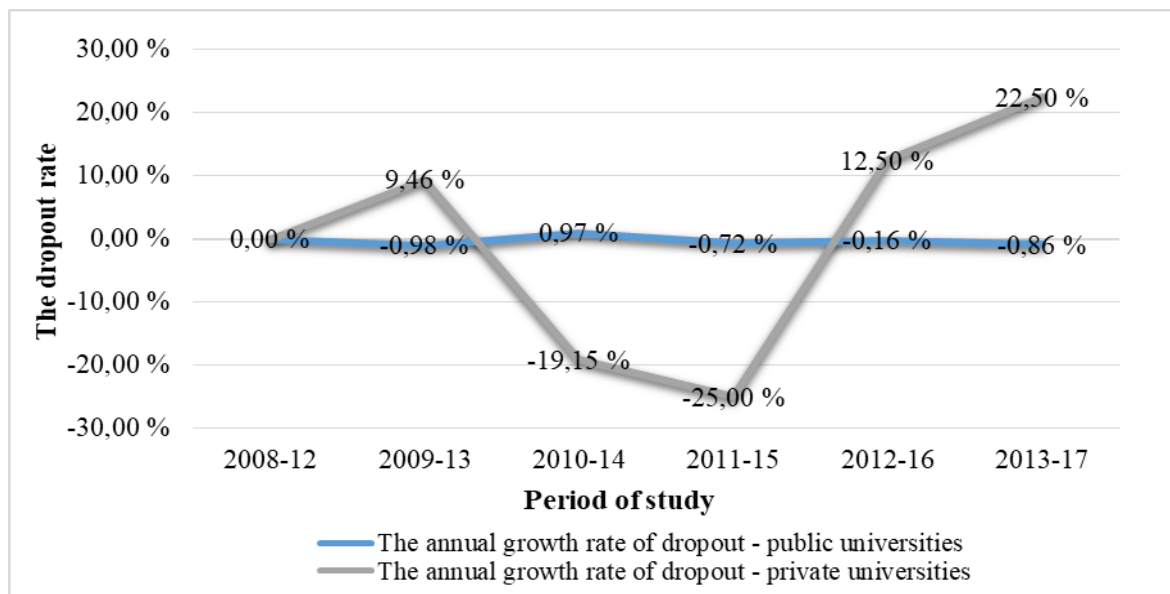
Period of study	The dropout rate – public universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – public	The dropout rate – private	The annual growth rate of dropout –
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		universities	universities	private universities
2008/09-2012/13	87,56 %	-	59,69 %	-
2009/10-2013/14	86,57 %	- 0,98 %	69,15 %	9,46 %
2010/11-2014/15	87,54 %	0,97 %	50,00 %	- 19,15 %
2011/12-2015/16	86,81 %	- 0,72 %	25,00 %	- 25,00 %
2012/13-2016/17	86,66 %	- 0,16 %	37,50 %	12,50 %
2013/14-2017/18	85,80 %	- 0,86 %	60,00 %	22,50 %

Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

Graph 2 also shows the annual growth rate of dropout for master's degree programs. The dropout of study in the academic year 2009/10-2013/14 decreased by 0,98 % compared to the previous year, which represents improvement in study success rate at Czech public universities. In the following year, on the other hand, the dropout to complete the master's programs at public universities increased by 0,97 % compared to the previous year. In masters programs starting in 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14, the dropout decreased first by 0,72 %, the following year by 0,16 % and the last year by 0,86 %, which on the other hand means an increasing the graduates' success. The number of students studying the master's program is considerably smaller in private than in public universities. This fact is also reflected in the alternating improvement and worsening of their failure to study.

Graph 2: The annual growth rate of dropout – master's study program



Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

Table 3 shows the dropout in tertiary education in the follow-up master's programs. The percentage of graduates' dropout rate in the monitored period ranges from about 63-69 % at public universities and from about 57-64 % at private universities in Czech Republic.

Table 3: The dropout tertiary education – follow up master's study program

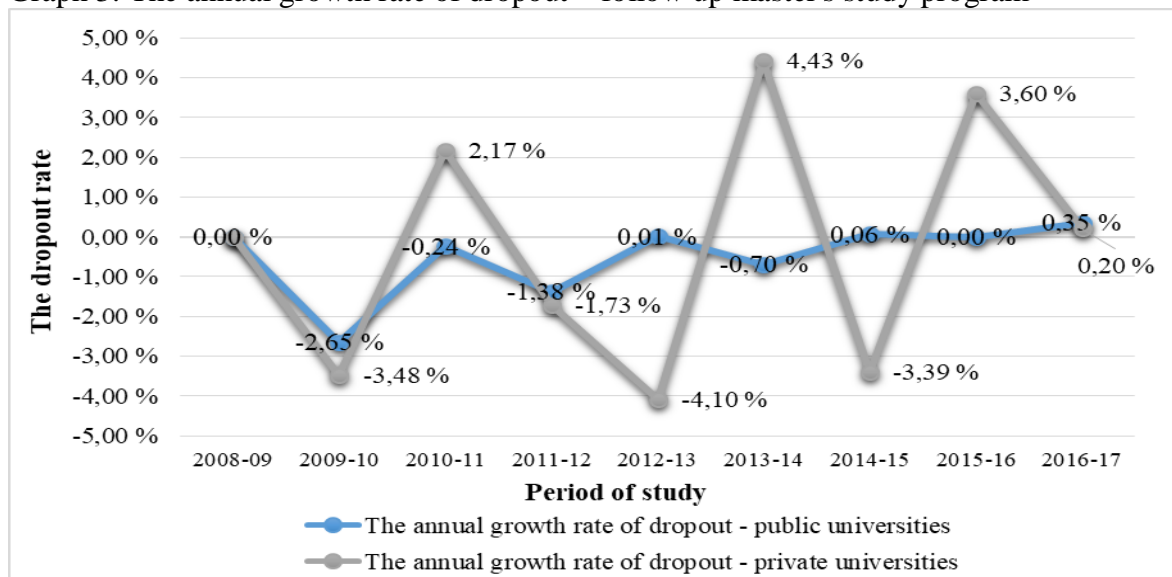
Period of study	The dropout rate – public universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – public universities	The dropout rate – private universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – private universities
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2008/09-2009/10	68,71 %	-	64,61 %	-
2009/10-2010/11	66,06 %	- 2,65 %	61,13 %	- 3,48 %
2010/11-2011/12	65,82 %	- 0,24 %	63,30 %	2,17 %
2011/12-2012/13	64,44 %	- 1,38 %	61,57 %	- 1,73 %
2012/13-2013/14	64,45 %	0,01 %	57,47 %	- 4,10 %
2013/14-2014/15	63,75 %	- 0,70 %	61,91 %	4,43 %
2014/15-2015/16	63,81 %	0,06 %	58,52 %	- 3,39 %
2015/16-2016/17	63,81 %	0,00 %	62,15 %	3,60 %
2016/17-2017/18	64,16 %	0,35 %	62,32 %	0,20 %

Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

The change in the dropout for graduates of the academic year 2009/10 compared to the dropout of graduation in the previous year was 2,65 %, which was a decrease in dropout at public universities. In the following two years, the graduates of master's degree programs at public universities were again more successful in their studies. Students who completed their studies in 2012/13-2013/14 increased their dropout by 0,01 %. In the following years, the dropout decreased by 0,70 % and then increased by 0,06 %. The academic year 2015/16-2016/17 recorded no year-on-year increase or decrease in the percentage of dropout. It was not until the last academic year in the reporting period that the value increased (Graph 3). The annual growth rate of dropout at private universities is alternately decreasing or increasing by about a few percent.

Graph 3: The annual growth rate of dropout – follow up master's study program



Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

Doctoral studies represent the highest level of education that can be achieved by studying at a university. The duration of this course is 3 years. You can see how successful graduates of the doctoral study program at universities in the Czech Republic at public or private universities are in Table 4. The range of dropout in this study program at public universities ranges from about 89-91 %. The success rate ranges from 9-10 %. The range of dropout in doctoral study program at private universities ranges from about 85-97 %.

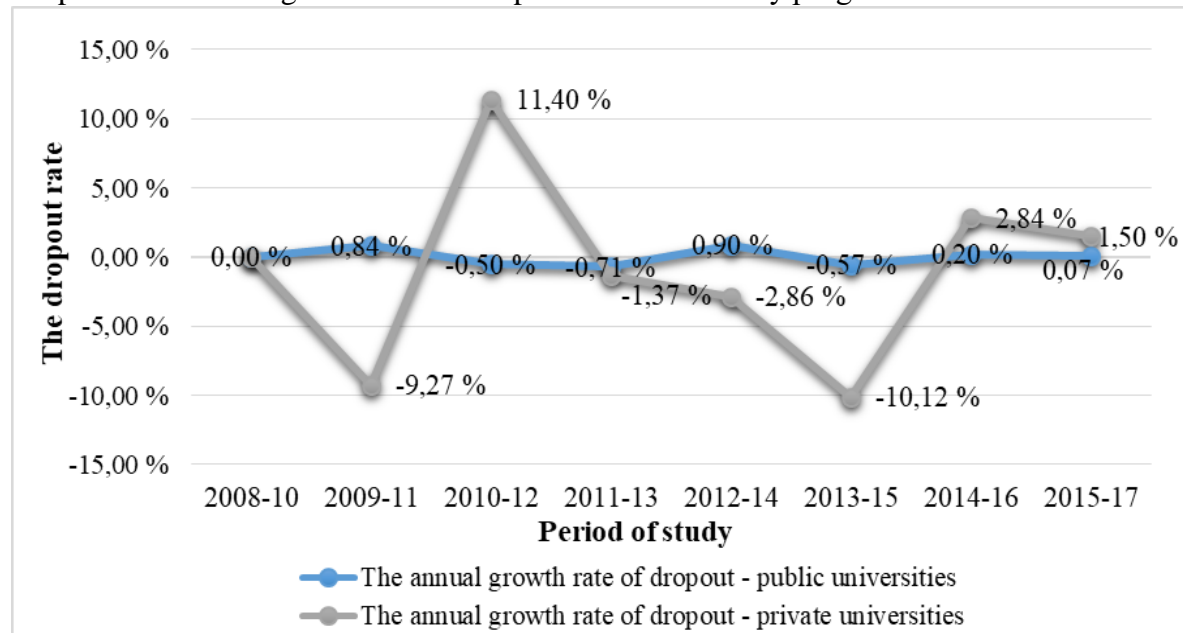
Table 4: The dropout tertiary education – doctor's study program

Period of study	The dropout rate – public universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – public universities	The dropout rate – private universities	The annual growth rate of dropout – private universities
2008/09-2010/11	90,09 %	-	95,24 %	-
2009/10-2011/12	90,93 %	0,84 %	85,96 %	- 9,27 %
2010/11-2012/13	90,43 %	- 0,50 %	97,37 %	11,40 %
2011/12-2013/14	89,72 %	- 0,71 %	96,00 %	- 1,37 %
2012/13-2014/15	90,62 %	0,90 %	93,14 %	- 2,86 %
2013/14-2015/16	90,05 %	- 0,57 %	83,02 %	- 10,12 %
2014/15-2016/17	90,25 %	0,20 %	85,86 %	2,84 %
2015/16-2017/18	90,32 %	0,07 %	87,36 %	1,50 %

Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

Graph 4 shows the annual growth rate of dropout in the completion of the doctoral program at universities for the period 2008-2018 at private and public universities in the Czech Republic. The annual growth rate of dropout at public universities is relatively stable. While the annual growth rate of dropout at private universities is relatively unstable.

Graph 4: The annual growth rate of dropout – doctor's study program



Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

## Results

Based on the results of a comparative analysis of the dropout tertiary education at Czech public universities, it is possible to say that the highest percentage values are achieved by graduates of doctoral study programs, where the dropout rate in individual years is around 90 %. The second-highest percentage of dropout at university studies is achieved by

students of master's degree programs, which is approximately 87 %. This is followed by a bachelor program, where 80 % of students do not complete their studies at all. And lastly, in comparing data on the failure to study at universities, graduates of follow-up master's programs, where the percentage dropout rate is the lowest in the period under review and is around 65 %. The aforementioned dropout at Czech public universities in the individual bachelor, master, follow-up and doctoral degree programs are shown in Table 5. Popular fields at public universities include technology, engineering and construction, as well as fields such as business and administration.

Table 5: The dropout tertiary education at Czech public universities

<b>Academic year</b>	<b>The dropout rate (bachelor study program)</b>	<b>The dropout rate (master's program)</b>	<b>The dropout rate (follow up master's program)</b>	<b>The dropout rate (doctor's study program)</b>
2008/09	78,20 %	87,56 %	68,71 %	90,09 %
2009/10	78,50 %	86,57 %	66,06 %	90,93 %
2010/11	78,62 %	87,54 %	65,82 %	90,43 %
2011/12	78,82 %	86,81 %	64,44 %	89,72 %
2012/13	79,11 %	86,66 %	64,45 %	90,62 %
2013/14	79,48 %	85,80 %	63,75 %	90,05 %
2014/15	80,59 %	-	63,81 %	90,25 %
2015/16	80,18 %	-	63,81 %	90,32 %

Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

Based on the results of a comparative analysis of the dropout tertiary education at Czech private universities, it is possible to say that the dropout is in most cases lower at private universities in bachelor, master, master follow up and doctoral study program than public universities (Table 6). At private universities only a very small proportion of students study technical fields. Students most often choose fields of business, administration, and rights. One of the reasons for this is the marketing activities of private universities. Marketing here is a purposeful communication between an institution offering education on the one hand and demanders, founders and other partners who have (or may have) an influence on the operation of the school on the other. In the education market, as in any other market, only those who, in accordance with demand, provide the most advantageous supply. The longer the relationships between the bidder and the supplier, the more effective and stronger the links are. Marketing is also successful if all partners accept it, if it is done systematically, thoughtfully, and if the educational institution responds to the demands of the environment in accordance with its own capabilities and intentions.

Table 6: The dropout tertiary education at Czech private universities

<b>Academic year</b>	<b>The dropout rate (bachelor study program)</b>	<b>The dropout rate (master's program)</b>	<b>The dropout rate (follow up master's program)</b>	<b>The dropout rate (doctor's study program)</b>
2008/09	81,37 %	59,69 %	64,61 %	95,24 %
2009/10	75,81 %	69,15 %	61,13 %	85,96 %
2010/11	71,99 %	50,00 %	63,30 %	97,37 %



2011/12	67,28 %	25,00 %	61,57 %	96,00 %
2012/13	67,07 %	37,50 %	57,47 %	93,14 %
2013/14	68,53 %	60,00 %	61,91 %	83,02 %
2014/15	71,85 %	-	58,52 %	85,86 %
2015/16	71,67 %	-	62,15 %	87,36 %

Source: Author according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2019

In the Czech Republic, students can choose from a wide range of public or private universities. Most students study at public universities. At private universities, students must pay for their studies. Fees vary, for example, depending on whether the student is studying in Czech or English, or whether it is a Czech or foreign institution. The amount of tuition fees is usually in the range of 20 000 – 30 000 crowns per semester. Many private universities offer incentive programs to their students, and students receive a merit scholarship. Public universities usually offer more degree programs than private ones. Not all subjects can be studied at private universities. For example, medicine, architecture or chemistry can only be studied at public universities. Private universities most often offer economics, political science, law or marketing.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic increasingly pay attention to the dropout in tertiary education at Czech universities. It is starting to apply some tools for its reduction in this area, such as an amendment to the act taking into account the internal quality of higher education institutions, a change in the calculation of study dropout in annual reports, more detailed analysis of dropout rate, or methodical regulation for the calculation of dropout at universities (Matějů et al., 2009).

Most public universities in the Czech Republic differ in the perception of dropout, mainly because of their funding. This fact also confirms the conclusion of the HEDOCE study or an article by Švec et al. (2015) that the way of financing has a great influence on the behavior of the institution. The dropout in tertiary education is further influenced by a number of external and internal factors. The internal factors are: the size of the school, the location, and the degree programs provided, the setting of the education system and so on. External factors also have a significant impact on universities, in particular demographic, governmental and economic impacts. These three factors are interrelated and very often translate into their pragmatic behavior. Government influences are very important for universities, which are very closely connected to economic influences at public universities, especially in financing. Given the demographic trends, current funding is not favorable.

Based on the analysis of the dropout in tertiary education at Czech universities, several recommendations can be proposed that could improve the situation. This is a measure both at the national and institutional levels. At the national level, this is a measure towards the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. This institution should further support the discussion and collect, analyze and publish data on the failure rate at Czech universities in more detail. Also, the ministry should adjust the funding conditions so that universities are not forced to accept more students who are not ready for higher education, which is causing an increase in the dropout. It is equally important that dropout not only is assessed at the central level but addressed at the lowest possible level. At the institutional level, I propose to collect data regularly, to analyze and evaluate this data on an ongoing basis. It is important that universities sufficiently inform their applicants about the form of their studies at universities. Public universities should also focus more on

developing their marketing activities and attracting sufficient numbers of students. (Pikálková et al., 2014).

Finally, it is important to note that the dropout in tertiary education is not always seen in a negative light. The dropout may not always have bad effects on an individual's life, but on the contrary, sometimes one realizes that the academic environment is not right for every person and some find much more sense in the working world.

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## **6. Key Words**

school marketing, public universities, private universities, dropout, education as a product  
marketing škol, veřejné univerzity, soukromé univerzity, studijní neúspěšnost, vzdělání  
jako produkt

## **7. JEL classification**

I21, I23, M54

## **8. Résumé**

**Studijní neúspěšnost terciárního vzdělání na českých veřejných a soukromých vysokých školách jako důsledek školního marketingu**

Neúspěšně dokončená studia představují téma, které začalo v posledních letech přitahovat pozornost jak vedení VŠ, tak MŠMT, veřejnosti a studentů. Na základě provedené komparativní analýzy neúspěšnosti absolventů VŠ v ČR lze konstatovat, že studijní neúspěšnost je vyšší na veřejných VŠ oproti soukromým v rámci téměř všech studijních programů. Jedním z důvodů této skutečnosti jsou marketingové aktivity, díky kterým soukromé VŠ snižují a předcházejí vysokým hodnotám neúspěšnosti svých studentů. Marketing školy nespočívá pouze v zakládání komisí, vyhledání sponzorů, provozování internetových stránek či pořádání jednorázových akcí. Marketing představuje cílevědomou komunikaci mezi institucí nabízející vzdělání a poptávajícími a zřizovateli, kteří mají vliv na chod VŠ. Na základě analýzy neúspěšnosti absolventů VŠ lze navrhnout několik doporučení. Na národní úrovni se jedná o zejména opatření směrem k MŠMT. Tato instituce by měla podrobněji sbírat, analyzovat a zveřejňovat data o studijní neúspěšnosti. Na institucionální úrovni je také důležité provádět pravidelný sběr dat, tato data průběžně analyzovat a vyhodnocovat. Neméně podstatné je, aby VŠ dostatečně informovaly uchazeče o podobě studia na VŠ v rámci svých marketingových aktivit.

## **9. Addresses**

**Ing. Hana Kučerová**

University Pardubice

Faculty of Economics and Administration

Department of Business Economics and Management

Studentská 84, Pardubice 530 09

Czech Republic

E-mail: hana.kucerova2@student.upce.cz