

In Search of Social Justice:

**Current Developments in Higher Education and the Labour Market
in Bulgaria**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
EC	European Commission
EHEA	European Area of Higher Education
ESS	European Social Survey
ET 2020	Education and Training 2020
EU	European Union
EU-LFS	European Union Labour Force Survey
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NMS	New Member States
NSI	National Statistic Institute in Bulgaria
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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INTRODUCTION

Justice is an immensely important idea that has moved people in the past and will continue to move people in the future. And reasoning and critical scrutiny can indeed offer much to extend the reach and to sharpen the content of this momentous concept.

(Sen, 2009, p. 401)

Research problem and rationale

The discussions about social justice date from ancient times, but despite the enduring interest in the topic and the progress made, we are still witnessing injustices throughout the world. Thus, the search for social justice, under some form, is an inseparable part of our lives. In general, social justice may be considered as a critical idea that challenges us to reform our institutions and practices in the name of greater fairness (Miller 1999, p. x). In political and policy debates, social justice is often related to fair access (Brown, 2013) but at the same time its meanings seem to vary when we consider different definitions, perspectives and social theories (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). When seen in the context of higher education, social justice appears in relevant literature as a buzzword (Patton, Shahjahan, Riyad, & Osei-Kofi, 2010). Within the recent studies of higher education and public debates related to the development of higher education, more emphasis is placed on the link between higher education and the economic growth and how higher education could be more responsive to the labour market demands, and little emphasis has been put on social justice. Given this, the present study attempts to at least partially fill the gap with regard to this apparently very topical issue, especially in the context of the unprecedented worldwide expansion of higher education in the last century (Schofer & Meyer, 2005), an expansion that is expected to continue in the next decades.

More specifically, the expansion of higher education intensified in the second part of the 20th century, especially after World War II. It was seen as a result of the intertwined dynamics related to demographic, economic and political pressures (Goastellec, 2008a). This trend undoubtedly contributed to the increase of the size of the student body. To illustrate this trend, we may point

out that in the period between 2000 and 2007, the number of tertiary students in the world increased from 98,303,539 to 150,656,459 (UNESCO, 2009, p. 205). This growth occurred in all regions of the world, including Central and Eastern Europe, North America and Western Europe, and contributed to raising the number of tertiary graduates. Thus, in the period between 2000 and 2008, the total number of tertiary graduates in the European Union (EU) 27 increased by a total of 35 percent (or 4.5 percent per year). However, this growth was very uneven, ranging from 21.1 percent in Romania to 0.7 percent in Hungary (European Commission working staff document, 2011). The increase of the number of students and graduates was seen as enhancing the social justice in higher education, since it is assumed that expansion “extends a valued good to a broader spectrum of the population” (Arum, Gamoran, & Shavit, 2007, p. 29).

However, concerns for a deep contradiction for 21st-century higher education also emerged with regard to its expansion. Thus, there are also claims that, “[as] access expands, inequalities within the higher education system also grow” (Altbach, 2006, p. 5). Most likely, these concerns emerged given that expansion itself was accompanied by different developments, such as massification (Trow, 1974 in Buraque, 2010), diversification (Meek, Goedegebuure, Kivinen, & Rinne, 2007) of higher education, growing importance of university ranking systems (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011); last but not least, it was implemented via different routes (Kwiek, 2013c). At the same time, the developments that emerged after the establishment of the Bologna Process have resulted in reforms of the degree structures and have led to the introduction of the three-cycle tertiary programmes. Overall, these developments have supported the expansion of sector but undoubtedly contributed to increased heterogeneity of the student and graduate body.

At the same time, the relationship between higher education and the world of work experienced a significant change due to the expanding of the number of graduates caused by the expansion of higher education and the transformation of the labour market and quickly changing skills requirements caused by economic globalization, the knowledge economy and the rapid expansion of the service sector. Given this, some controversial trends may be observed. On the one hand, the expansion of higher education is recognized as a mechanism for enhancing graduates’ employability and economic growth. This view is shared at different levels - intergovernmental (Bologna Process), supranational (Lisbon strategy; Europe 2020) and national, and is based on the assumption that tertiary graduates have better chances to find a job in comparison with their peers with lower levels of education. On the other hand, the labour market signals for problems

of mismatch, unemployment, and credential inflation among people with tertiary degrees. Furthermore, there are serious concerns that the expansion of higher education leads to problems with graduate employability (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Teichler, 2011) and, in a more global aspect, to ‘broken promises of education, jobs and incomes’ (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2011) for many tertiary degree holders.

In the light of these controversial views, this research addresses the following question:

What is the influence of the expansion of higher education in Bulgaria on social justice in higher education?

In this connection, the study focuses specifically on two aspects of higher education related to *entry* and *exit*, inasmuch as both aspects involve significant social justice issues and are relevant spaces in which the distribution of economic and social benefits, and of social and economic advancement for individuals and their families take place. More specifically, the study sheds light on the current level of inequalities in *access* and *labour market outcomes* of higher education in the context of higher education expansion and economic crisis, and explores them in static, dynamic and comparative perspectives. For this purpose, I draw upon the social justice theoretical framework of the capability approach to conceptualize and evaluate these inequalities and to seek solutions for redressing them.

Context

The research project uses Bulgaria as a case study and places it among other new EU member states that are also post-communist countries: Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria provides a unique case for investigating these two aspects of the current developments of higher education and the labour market from a social justice perspective for at least three main reasons.

First, Bulgaria is a post-communist country, and such a case allows exploring the development of these inequalities under conditions of transition from a totalitarian society with a command-driven economy to a democratic one with a market economy. The Bulgarian higher education system underwent a radical transformation after 1989. This transformation also influenced the access to higher education and the relationship between higher education and the world of work.

Thus, in contrast to the socialist period, when social criteria were applied alongside the academic ones and when graduate employment was more or less guaranteed and there was central distribution of graduates after graduation aimed at providing a match between the numbers of graduates and the number of jobs (Boyadjieva, 2010a), the collapse of communism in 1989 was accompanied by reforms that led to elimination of the social criteria for access to higher education, widened access to higher education, and freed young people from coercive state institutions and planning. However, the larger freedom that people obtained/acquired to pursue higher education studies and to manage their careers, occurred in a period of economic model transformation in all public spheres, involving unfavourable privatization and restructuring of employment opportunities. All of this contributed to growing social inequalities, uncertainty and insecurity of people's working lives. Thus, these current developments will be investigated in a country with relatively stable high income inequalities, being the country with the highest Gini coefficient for 2013 in EU 28 - 35.4 (Source: EU-SILC - Eurostat).

Second, viewed in a comparative perspective, the Bulgarian case definitely stands out. A recent report reveals that Bulgaria is among the countries where inequity in access to higher education caused by socio-economic disadvantages is most salient (Eurydice, 2012). Furthermore, despite the low unemployment rates among tertiary graduates, respectively 2.3 percent for 2008 and 4.4 percent in 2010 and 5.8 percent 2012 (www.nsi.bg), when comparative data on graduate employment is analyzed, it becomes evident that even before the ongoing economic crisis of 2008, more than a quarter (28.4 percent) of higher education graduates in Bulgaria aged 25-34 were employed in jobs that required a lower level of education (Eurostudent, 2009, p. 228). This share is above the EU 27 and Bologna averages and is the highest one among all post-communist countries that are new EU members.

Third, despite the presence of these problems, to the best of our knowledge, Bulgaria has not participated in any of the studies that address the issues on inequalities in access to higher education or graduate employment, studies that have included countries from Central and Eastern Europe (Shavit & Müller, 1998; Shavit, Arum, & Gamoran, 2007; Kogan, Noelke, Gebel, 2011; Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Teichler, 2007a; Allen & van der Velden, 2011).

Aim and tasks

A growing body of literature attempts to map social justice in relation to education (e.g. Gewirtz, 1998; Lucas & Beresford, 2010; Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006; North, 2006; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007) and higher education in particular (e.g. Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Boyadjieva, 2010a, 2010b; Marginson, 2011b; Wilson-Strydom, 2014). Much more numerous studies have focused indirectly on this issue when exploring the levels of inequalities in access and participation in higher education (eg. Shavit, Arum, & Gamoran, 2007; Ballarino, Bernardi, Requena, & Schadee, 2009; Camilleri & Mühleck, 2010; Boliver, 2011; Breen, Luijkx, Müller, & Pollak, 2009; Clancy & Goastellec, 2007; Raftery & Hout, 1993; Reimer & Pollak, 2010). Despite this ample research, which in most cases examines the extent to which expansion has influenced inequalities of educational opportunities among people of different backgrounds, it seems that there is no unanimous understanding as to this influence. Furthermore, very little research on the matter has been done in post-communist countries (eg. Matějů, Řeháková, & Simonová, 2007; Koucký, Bartušek, & Kovařovic, 2010; Kreidl, 2006). Overall, less importance has been attached to exploring the qualitative dimensions of these inequalities, such as differences between various fields of studies (Kivinen, 2001; Griga & Mühleck, 2010). Most of the research has focused on access, and very little research has addressed the issue of social justice at the exit of higher education.

Against this background, the *aim* of the research project is twofold. First, it seeks to examine the mechanisms through which the higher education expansion influences social justice in *access* to higher education in Bulgaria. Second, it sets out to explore the mechanisms through which the expansion of higher education influences the distribution of labour market *outcomes* of higher education in Bulgaria. To achieve this aim, *seven tasks* have been formulated.

First, to make an overview of the developments in higher education and the labour market in Europe in the recent decades and discuss their social justice implications.

Second, to find an understanding of social justice that will be appropriate for its study in the specific context of higher education and to link the prevailing approaches and concepts in the analysis of access and labour market outcomes of higher education to the ongoing discussions about social inequality, and social justice.

Third, to explore the heuristic potential of the theoretical framework of the capability approach for the study of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education.

Fourth, to discuss and critically review the main theories and hypotheses concerning the dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education, inequity in higher education and in the labour market outcomes of higher education over time.

Fifth, to explore the specific country-context of this research, into the light of historical developments and experience which Bulgaria has had over time.

Sixth, to operationalize how the concepts of access and employability can be analyzed through the lens of the capability approach, and to suggest a way how these concepts can be measured in the context of this research.

Seventh, to apply the framework of capability approach to investigate the current levels of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education in Bulgaria in the context of the dynamics of these inequalities, and to explore the levels of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education in a wider comparative context by placing Bulgaria among other new EU member states, and to ascertain whether there are common patterns among these countries.

Argument

The main argument is that *the influence of higher education expansion on social justice in higher education operates through two different mechanisms which run simultaneously*. On the one hand, the widening of the access to higher education plays an important role in decreasing inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education (i.e., more students from all strata, including those with disadvantaged backgrounds, are carried further into the education system - Arum, Gamoran, & Shavit, 2007, p. 28) and in increasing equity in a sense of inclusion. Thus, expansion brings more people from all strata into higher education and more highly-educated people in the labour market.

On the other hand, through the diversification processes which accompany it, the expansion leads to maintaining/perpetuating high socioeconomic inequalities in access, less equity in a sense of fairness in the higher education system and socioeconomic inequalities in the labour market

outcomes of higher education. By taking into account the diversification developments in higher education, I would like to put an emphasis on the qualitative dimension of the inequalities, which seems to be a neglected issue in the existing studies on social selectivity in higher education (See for instance Griga & Mühleck, 2010)¹.

Research strategy and contributions

In seeking to highlight the current level of inequalities in *access* to and *exit* from higher education in the context of higher education expansion and economic crisis, complementary disciplines (political philosophy, sociology and economics) and approaches (quantitative and comparative) are applied in the theoretical part of the study. Its empirical part is based on data from the European Social Survey (2006-2010) and applies secondary data analysis - more specifically, descriptive statistics and linear and logistic regression models. This analysis is enriched by data from the Eurostudent survey (III & IV), Bulgarian Universities Ranking System and the official statistics – the National Statistical Institute (NSI) in Bulgaria, and Eurostat.

However, due to data restrictions and changes in education and occupational classifications, the analysis focuses only on the current inequalities in *access* to and *exit* from higher education and, where possible, uses dynamic and comparative perspectives. The study places Bulgaria among five other countries: Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Similarly to Bulgaria, these countries are new EU member states and share in common a socialist past. Despite their common features, these countries differ significantly with regard to the state of their economy (Adam, Kristan, & Tomšič, 2009; Feldmann, 2006; Lane, 2007; Nölke & Vliegthart, 2009).

Of particular interest for the analysis are those inequalities that are due to differences in the socioeconomic background of people. Furthermore, I focus exclusively on the labour market outcomes of higher education and do not cover outcomes of higher education not related to this aspect.

¹More specifically, Griga and Mühleck (2010, p. 54) have noted that persons stemming from the higher social strata might not only target more prestigious institutions of higher education but might increasingly enter the most rewarding fields of study as well. Given this, fields of study, tertiary degrees and higher education institutions can be considered to serve as a basis for evaluation of qualitative inequalities in access and labour market outcomes.

The contribution of this research is *fourfold* as it has theoretical, methodological, empirical and practical contributions. On theoretical level, the present study enriches the theoretical perspectives used in the study of social justice in higher education by drawing a model of conceptualizing higher education as a good which is useful for the evaluation of social justice in higher education. This model recognizes that education has three aspects: *private*, *public* and *positional*. The thesis also enriches the theoretical perspectives used in the study of social justice in higher education by applying the theoretical framework of the capability approach into the analysis of inequalities in the spaces of access to and outcomes of higher education. Last but not least, it also contributes to the further development of the research on graduate employability, capabilities and labour market by looking at it in historical and cross-national perspective. The methodological contributions of the thesis may be seen in its quantitative focus, which is not often applied in the study of social justice in higher education via the capability approach and in the use of a set of indicators to study the inequalities and equity and regression analysis in order to capture different aspects of the studied phenomena in the context of higher education. The empirical contributions of the study are that has addressed the gap in research on social justice in higher education for Eastern European countries. The practical contribution of the thesis is that it develops ideas about social justice in education and the labour market from a ‘bottom-up’ (rather than ‘top-down’) perspective: from problems to theory, rather than the other way round (in the tradition of public policy related to higher education and labour market).

Outline of the chapters

Following this introduction, Chapter 1 sets out to explore the developments in higher education systems and labour market in Europe in the recent decades in the light of their social justice implications. It shows that not only the quantitative growth of students to have access to higher education influence the level of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education in European countries but also the diversification trends by which it was accompanied such as the growth of the private sector, the horizontal and vertical differentiation of higher education, the diversity of higher education systems in terms of their structural characteristics and the broader scope of missions that higher education has. Given this, it provides the broad context in which the inequalities in access and in graduate employability will be then analyzed. The

chapter ends by identifying the need to seek an adequate understanding of social justice that considers the differences in the quality of higher education in these complex settings.

The second chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on the topic of study. It begins with a short overview of the meanings of the term social justice and highlights the lack of consensus in literature as to what social justice actually mean and how it may be pursued. Chapter 2 discusses how the concept of social justice translates into the higher education context. This chapter also introduces the concepts of equality and equity as means of framing and understanding the complexity of working towards justice in education in general and higher education in particular. Next, it focuses on the term ‘graduate employability’ as relevant to significant social justice issues. This chapter is important in that it selects a working definition of social justice in higher education and proposes a model for perceiving higher education as a good – a model that captures its private, public and positional aspects.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for evaluating social justice in access to and outcomes of higher education and how social justice in these two spaces may be further enhanced. Based on the theoretical concepts of the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999, 2009 & Nussbaum, 2000, 2006, 2011), it is argued that the space of capabilities may be used as the proper space in which inequalities in access and outcomes of higher education may be evaluated from a social justice perspective. This approach allows taking into account the variety of factors – social, institutional, personal - which shape the capability space, as well as the plurality of possibilities entailed by the access to and outcomes of higher education; this allows taking into account the qualitative side of inequalities when making interpersonal comparisons among people. By applying the theoretical concepts related to these two aspects of higher education - access and exit - it becomes possible to conceptualize the ability to access higher education and graduate employability as capabilities. The chapter also discusses the benefits of this approach for pursuing and enhancing social justice in higher education; it also highlights the extent to which the approach could inform higher education policies in respect to access to higher education, dealing with diversity, quality and outcomes of higher education.

Chapter 4 discusses some of the main studies and the existing research that have explored the influence of the expansion on socioeconomic inequalities and inequity in higher education. Two bodies of literature have been identified with respect to the dynamics of inequalities in access to

higher education in the context of its expansion. Whereas the first group of studies provide evidence for a decrease of inequalities of educational opportunity that may be due to the social origin of students, the second group suggests persistence of the effect of socioeconomic background on school success, despite the expansion of higher education. As regards the level of inequity, this chapter finds that this problem is very under-researched in studies on higher education. The overview of studies on the influence of expansion on dynamics of socioeconomic inequalities in labour market outcomes of higher education has outlined the lack of research on horizontal and vertical aspects of diversification of higher education in assessments of the influence of expansion of higher education on the level of inequalities in the labour market outcomes of higher education. Overall, this review of literature reveals there is no unanimous answer regarding the effect of the expansion on the level of inequalities and inequity, and that there is a scarcity of research on these phenomena in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, it has helped me formulate several hypotheses regarding the dynamics of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education in Bulgaria and, in a wider context, in the new EU member states.

Chapter 5 discusses some of the main developments in higher education and the labour market in Bulgaria, seen in a wider comparative perspective of Central and Eastern European countries in both the communist and post-communist periods. This is recognized as important because the current developments in higher education and the labour market are largely embedded in particular settings determined by the historical development of a country. As regards developments in higher education, special emphasis is given to discussing the admission policies and funding models in both periods. In addition, the routes of expansion of higher education in these two periods are explored. There follows a discussion of developments in the labour market in a historical perspective and of the graduate labour market position in both periods. The overview of the experience of the country with different ways of understanding and implementing the distribution of opportunities for access to higher education and for employment opportunities at the exit of higher education in these two periods provides a unique opportunity for comparing alternatives which may be useful in public debate over how social justice in higher education may be enhanced.

Chapter 6 gives an account of the research methodology. It proposes a secondary data analysis as a main research strategy and uses quantitative data for this analysis. More specifically, the advantages and the disadvantages of the chosen research strategy and data sources are discussed.

This chapter also considers some ethical issues and selects five post-communist countries which will be used as points of comparison with Bulgaria. It also operationalizes how the concepts of access to higher education and graduate employability can be analyzed through the lens of the capability approach. In addition, it suggests a set of indicators that can be used in the analyses of inequalities in access to higher education, equity of higher education and graduate employability at national level. At the end, the chapter proposes dependent and independent variables and concrete regression models which can be used in the analyses of inequalities in access to higher education and in graduate employability at individual level. Overall, the chapter is important in that it offers a basis for the testing of my research hypotheses.

Chapter 7 presents the main results from the analyses of the inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education and from the application of the capability approach. Overall, despite the expansion of higher education and the improvement of the system with regard to inclusion, the results clearly demonstrate that there is a huge equity gap in higher education in Bulgaria and considerable socioeconomic inequalities in access to higher education and in graduate employability. Although there are certain trends common to all post-communist countries, Bulgaria definitely stands out as the country where the problems of inequalities are most salient. This chapter also includes a discussion of the identified trends in the light of the verification of the research hypotheses and remarks on how the study findings refer to previous research.

The concluding chapter provides an overview of the main steps I have taken from its start till the end. More specifically, it shows how I answered my research question, presents the main findings and discusses the contribution of the thesis to scientific knowledge. Finally, it offers some policy implications and outlines a way forward.

Overall, by combination of theoretical framework of the capability approach and empirical evidence provided by its application, this study sheds light on the levels of socioeconomic inequalities in access to higher education and graduate employability in Bulgaria and on the factors that shape these inequalities. The study findings point to the need for a new vision of higher education development today that is based on idea of social justice in which improving the people's well-being and quality of higher education are not a separate but an essential part of enhancing social justice in higher education and in our lives.

CHAPTER ONE. DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET IN EUROPE

1.1. Introduction

The chapter is divided into two sections, each of them corresponding to the developments in higher education and to those in the labour market in Europe in recent decades. The first section of this chapter (Section 1.2.) presents the main developments in higher education. They are important to the extent that they influence the level of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education. More specifically, the section focuses on higher education expansion, the challenges it faces, as well as its achievements. One of the achievements of the expansion of higher education, and its accompanying processes of diversification and widening access to higher education, is that many people undoubtedly acquired the opportunity to access higher education but, at the same time, contributed to a more heterogeneous student body. Nonetheless, it seems questionable as to what extent these developments go hand-in-hand with more social justice in higher education.

The second section of this chapter (Section 1.3.) discusses the developments in the labour market which accompanied the expansion of higher education and the economic downturn of 2008. Firstly, it sheds light on the general trends in the labour market in the last two decades, related to the increasing unemployment rates, transformation of the economic sectors, decline of job security and growing flexibility of jobs. Secondly, it focuses on the developments in graduate employment in particular. More specifically, it discusses the changing relationship between higher education and the world of work and points to the importance of further investigation of the determinants of the phenomenon of ‘vertical mismatch’, especially in relation to the growing emphasis on graduate employability as a key to making Europe economically more competitive on a global scale.

Concluding remarks are given in the final section (1.4.) of the chapter.

1.2. Higher education growth: challenges, problems and developments

Higher education expansion has been an inseparable part of the development of higher education sectors in countries all around the world. Although higher education expansion has been observed worldwide, different systems have been expanding in their own way. Some of these differences come from the speed of expansion, and the mode of diversification adopted in different countries. As Ulrich Teichler (2006/2007b, p. 107) notes, diversification was necessary in order to cope with the rising costs of higher education, in order to concentrate the research function of higher education to a greater extent and in order to serve the increasing diversity of students as far as their motivations, talents, and job prospects were concerned. Thus overall, expansion of higher education was associated, not only with a quantitative growth of the number of students within the system, but also with growing diversity within the higher education systems, study programmes and institutions. Last but not least, it has led to changes in the value of higher education.

Against this background, the present section aims to shed more light on these developments. The rationale behind this is that these developments have contributed towards the change in the nature of inequalities themselves – from merely inequalities in access to higher education to inequalities in access to what kind of higher education or what type of higher education institution.

1.2.1. Quantitative growth

The trend of expansion of higher education is a worldwide phenomenon (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). The expansion intensified in the second part of the 20th century, especially after World War II. The trend of higher education expansion is triggered by a variety of factors ranging from demographic, social, psychological, economic forces to institutional changes in secondary education and political pressures (Trow, 1974; Goastellec, 2008a). Given its significance and diverse effects, it has become a central topic for scholars from different fields, but mainly for sociologists and economists (Trow, 1974; Scott, 1995; Altbach, 1999; Schofer & Meyer, 2005; McNay, 2006; Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009 and many others).

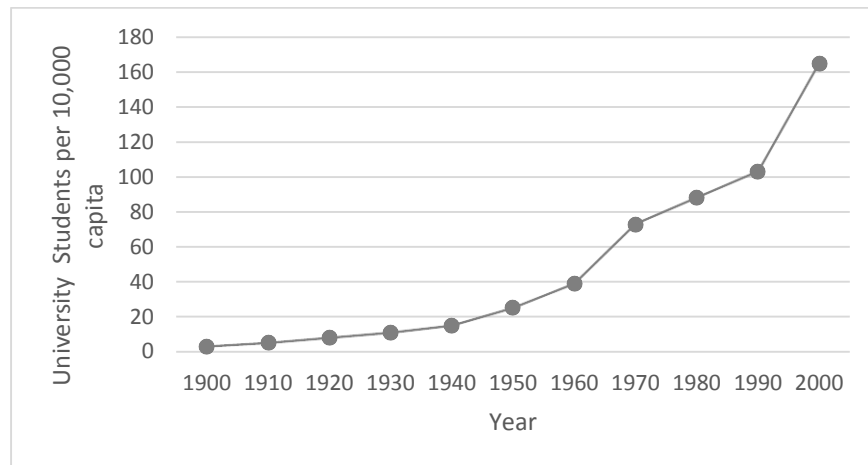


Fig. 1.1. World Higher-Education Students per 10,000 Capita, 1900–2000.

Source: Adapted by the author from Shofer and Meyer 2005, p. 899.

The growth of higher education over the twentieth century intensified especially in the last decades of the 20th century. Figure 1.1 clearly illustrates this trend, showing the change in global higher educational enrollments in the period from 1900 to 2000, reaching over 160 university students per 10,000 capita. This growth continues in the 21st century in all regions around the world, although at different rates (see Fig. 1.2). Despite this, whereas in 2000 there were approximately 100 million students, in less than a decade the student body has increased by more than 50 percent, up to approximately 160 million students (UNESCO, 2009)².

² Some scholars argue that this unprecedented expansion was only possible because higher education became part of national welfare policies (Pechar & Andres, 2011).

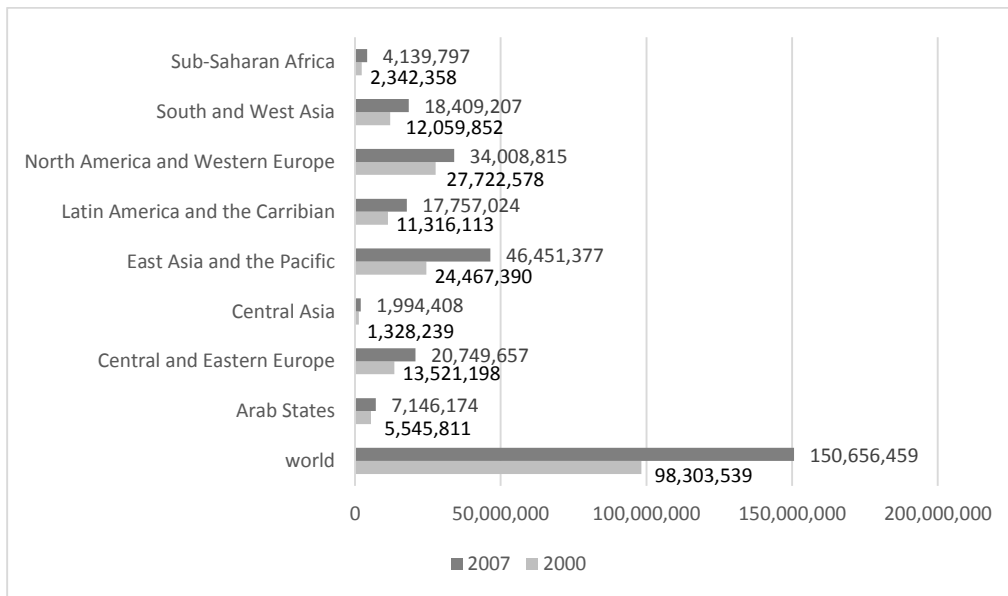


Fig. 1.2. Tertiary Enrolment

Number of Tertiary Students Average by country or region (total).

Source: Adapted by the author from UNESCO (2009, p. 205).

The expansion of higher education in Europe has also changed the expectations towards this sector. Thus, it was no longer expected that higher education would serve a small number of academics but that it would be more accessible for the masses (Teichler, 2001/2007b, p. 12). Martin Trow (1974) is among those who first captured these trends, predicting that higher education would become a part of the standard of living of a growing sector of the population:

Giving one's children a higher education begins to resemble the acquisition of an automobile or washing machine, one of the symbols of increasing affluence - and there can be little doubt that the populations of advanced industrial societies have the settled expectation of a rising standard of living. But in addition, sending one's sons and daughters to college or university is already, and will increasingly be, a symbol of rising social status (Trow, 1974 in Burrage, 2010, p. 127).

Trow (1974) suggests that the problems which arise from educational growth can be understood better as different manifestations of related clusters of problems which arise out of the transition from one phase to another in a broad pattern of development of higher education. In the framework developed by him he analyses two transitions - from *elite* to *mass* higher education and from *mass* to *universal* (See also Trow, 1976, 2000, 2006 in Burrage, 2010). According to this framework, educational growth could be achieved in three main ways. In this sense, a higher

education system that has less than 15 percent students out of the relevant age group is an *elite system*; between 15 percent and 50 percent higher education can be accepted as a *mass one*; above 50 percent the system can be accepted as a *universal one* (see Trow, 1976). More specifically, these transitions are associated with change in the size of the system, with different attitudes toward access, different functions for both students and society at large, the curriculum and forms of instruction, the student “career”, institutional diversity, characteristics and boundaries, the locus of power and decision-making, academic standards, access and selection, forms of academic administration and internal governance (See Trow, 1974 in Burrage, 2010, pp. 94-104). Higher education expansion is expected to contribute towards democratization of the society which, in time, will feed back upon, and contribute to, the extension of educational opportunities. Together with the growth and democratization of society, Trow (1974) foresees the continuation in the diversification of the forms and functions of higher education. This question relates to the overall expansion of higher education which was accompanied by changes in the student population in respect to its diverse social origins, motivations, aspirations, interests and adult careers.

In his book, *The meanings of Mass Higher Education*, Peter Scott (1995) challenges Trow’s framework by claiming that it tends to mask the subtleties which characterize the experience of British universities and colleges in the 1990s. Furthermore, in Scott’s view, it imposes a linear regularity on developments which are neither linear nor regular. Scott (1995) provides evidence for the adequacy of this critique by using British higher education as a case study. He argues that, on the one hand, as a result of the transformation of British higher education from a binary to a unified system, the number of universities and students increased. But, on the other hand, many universities and colleges remain committed to a personal engagement between teachers and students, and to individualized (even charismatic) styles of scholarship and, less so, research, which appear to take little account of either the values or the imperatives of a mass system. As Scott puts it:

British higher education has become a mass system in its public structures, but it remains an élite one in its private instincts (Scott 1995, p. 2).

This finding challenges the view that the massification and expansion are related. The case provided by the development of higher education in Britain could also mean that the expansion of higher education may not always go hand-in-hand with its massification.

Despite the pervasive expansion of higher education all over the world in the last century and the efforts of many scholars in investigating the expansion of higher education, a recent study identifies a huge gap in the explanations as to why and how it occurs (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). This study clearly reveals that enrollments were significantly lower for Eastern European countries between 1970 and 1990 but, after the demise of the Soviet Union, the number of enrollments fell in line with the global norms. It makes the post-socialist countries an interesting case, especially due to the circumstances in which the expansion occurs. However, in the literature it has been argued that any assessment of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 21st century must incorporate elements of two characterizations, catching-up and radical experimentation, since none of them is quite appropriate (Scott, 2002). In this regard, it should be noted that the collapse of communism also had a homogenizing effect. It created commonalities between the countries in this region, since they were exposed to common dilemmas created by the transition to post-communist society. More specifically, in the case of the transition period after 1989, the circumstances of the expansion are related to the public underfunding of old public institutions and the emergence of new private institutions, opening their doors to hundreds of thousands of new students with mostly non-traditional socio-economic backgrounds (Barr, 2005; Kwiek, 2013a). All this suggests that the framework developed by Trow, which was mainly referring to the U.S. context, may have some different meanings in the case of Central and Eastern European countries.

The expectations from the side of economy and society to higher education have changed in the context of its expansion. However, these expectations and the real impact that higher education has on society should be distinguished. In terms of higher education's impact on society, in John Brennan and Rajani Naidoo's view (2008), three perspectives should be considered: its role in constructing the 'knowledge society', the 'just and stable' society and the 'critical society'. With regard to the 'construction of just society', credentials acquired through higher education seem to be increasingly central to the determination of life chances in most developed countries. In this sense, my opinion is consistent with Brennan and Naidoo (2008), who emphasize that the degree of social equity in the acquisition of credentials becomes an important indicator of social justice and that empirical studies have not provided solid evidence that the increased enrolments in higher education contributed to the achievement of more equitable access to higher education.

Two arguments, an economic and a ‘social equity’ one, can be outlined (Brennan, Naidoo, & Kavita, 2009, p. 143) which marked the development of higher education and its accompanying expansion. On the one hand, higher education is seen as a vehicle for the development of successful economies on a regional and national level and, on the other, it is important in providing opportunities for all individuals in a society to participate in, and benefit from, a successful economy. In fact, the growth in personal freedoms and high-skilled jobs has led many to believe that we have more opportunities than ever before (Brown, 2003). To a great extent, these ideas have pushed education to the centre-stage of the social and economic policy agenda as the widening access, raising of standards and further investment in education were believed to deliver opportunity, prosperity and justice. The growing importance attached to educational credentials symbolizes a tightening bond between education, jobs and rewards and as a guarantee of opportunities. This idea is clearly demonstrated in the following citation:

We are told that ‘the more we learn the more we earn’, as better credentials are believed to lead to good jobs and higher rewards, at the same time offering an efficient and fair means of selection based on individual achievement. Credentials are the currency of opportunity (Brown, 2003, p. 142).

The massification of higher education was also exposed to many challenges in the last decades of the 20th century. They were mainly related to its funding/cost-sharing; the growth of new sectors in higher education, including private higher education, for-profit higher education, and new vocational institutions; distance learning; the diversification and complexity of academic institutions; the managerialisation of academic institutions, the nature of the academic profession; and students and their increasingly instrumental attitude that they have to post-compulsory education (Altbach, 1999, pp. 107-124). These challenges also refer to the beginning of the 21st century.

At the same time as the numbers of people experiencing higher education increase, the diversity of routes through higher education is also likely to grow (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009, p. 84). In this sense, Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (2009) argue that, in many respects, modern (non-linear) forms of engagement involve an increased representation of “non-traditional” (i.e.) working class students who lack the resources to follow “traditional” routes. Given this, I will now consider some of the most important of them – more specifically, those related to the growing diversity of higher education in the context of its expansion.

1.2.2. Diversification

Growth of the private sector

The quantitative growth in the number of university students was accompanied by a growing cost of higher education which required an increase in the investment in higher education and resulted in greater pressure on state budgets. However, in the context of the liberalization of the economies and the growing role of the markets, the pressure was eased with the introduction of the market mechanism in the sector. This liberalization has encouraged private higher education (both for-profit and not-for-profit) and the privatization of public higher education (Johnstone, 2009). In this context, the growth of the private sector turned out to be “one of the most striking global higher education developments” (Levy, 2012, p. 178). The emergence of the private offer in the higher education sector has strengthened the debate over whether higher education should be understood as a public or a private good. In fact, the public-private dynamics have led to different developments across Europe. Thus, drawing on raw data from Eurostat (2009) Daniel Levy, in his article *How Important Is Private Higher Education in Europe? A Regional Analysis in Global Context* (2012), reveals that, whereas the EU 27 average private share is about 12.0 percent, this proportion is highest in Cyprus, Poland and Romania and Latvia, exceeding 30 percent.

Overall, although there has been a considerable debate about the influence of privatization on social justice, the literature is not unanimous as to whether privatization actually increases social justice or not (Walford, 2013). A recent comparative study provided empirical evidence that privatization is not among factors that influence the level of educational inequalities (Arum, Gamoran & Shavit, 2007). More specifically, this study found that, once we control for expansion, privatization enhances inequality of access. At the same time though, “privatization is associated with larger higher education systems and similar aggregate levels of inequality overall” (ibid, p. 25). This study does not include the countries which were mentioned as having the highest rates of the private sector and which are all Central and Eastern European countries.

In contrast, although not focusing explicitly on higher education, in their article *Social justice and education in the public and private spheres*, Sally Power and Chris Taylor (2013) emphasize the complexity of studying the relationship between social justice and private higher education. They suggest that it cannot be implied that there is a linear and one-directional relationship between the

rise of the private sphere and greater social injustice, because of two main reasons. Firstly, because of the fluidity of what constitutes the ‘private’ sphere and, secondly, because of the multidimensional nature of social justice (Power & Taylor, 2013, p. 476). The latter reason implies a possibility that a positive effect of the public or private sphere in one dimension of social justice may go hand-in-hand with negative consequences in another dimension. However, funding policies in higher education, seen in a historical perspective, may undoubtedly be perceived as one of the main instruments for realization of a given equity norm and a given understanding of social justice in practice.

Axes of diversification of the tertiary programmes

We may roughly distinguish two axes of diversification of tertiary programmes which occurred in the context of the development of higher education at the end of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century: *horizontal* and *vertical*. Whereas the *horizontal* differentiation occurred through fields of studies, the vertical is mainly attributed to differences in the levels of tertiary programmes. In the context of expansion, and under the growing division of labour, modernization and growth of technologies, many new fields have emerged – such as computer sciences, and, overall, the difference in their prestige has increased. Thus, although varying by country, whereas some studies are much more prestigious eg. medicine and law, others carry very low prestige eg. social work. In contrast, the main driver for the vertical diversification was the Bologna process³. With its introduction of a two-level cycle of tertiary studies (Bachelor, Master) and, later on, by expanding it to a three-level cycle (including doctorate), this process gave rise to

³ The Bologna Process was launched in 1998 by Ministers of education of four countries in Sorbonne which initiated the establishment of European Area of Higher Education (EHEA). This area was seen as a space where national identities and common interests can interact and strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe, of its students, and, more generally, of its citizens. The signed joint declaration in 1998 became a basis for realization of the harmonization of higher education across Europe, for degrees to become portable and transferable across borders and student mobility to be encouraged. In the next year 25 more countries joined the process. In the subsequent meetings of the ministers of all participant countries, organized biannually, these objectives were reaffirmed, extended and additional actions were adopted. Meanwhile, many countries and partners got involved in this process.

This process operates as an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) or as a soft-law mechanism which secures agreement in respect of joint policy objectives through agreed declarations and commitments, and through institutionalizing stocktaking mechanisms which monitor and benchmark achievements and report on best practices (See more on the peculiarities of the adoption of the OMC in Dale, 2005; Gornitzka, 2005, 2006).

some structural⁴ transformations across European countries. Although their aim was to improve the comparability of tertiary degrees across countries and develop a better relationship between higher education and the labour market, they led to a growing vertical diversification of the tertiary programmes, in terms of their duration and the qualifications attained. However, it seems that this structural change does not happen with the same speed in all Bologna countries. As of 2008/2009, ten of the 34 higher education systems had all students enrolled in programmes following the Bologna-cycles structure, whereas Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain had less than half of their students following programmes within the Bologna-cycles structure (Eurydice 2012, p. 33).

The expansion was also associated with a prominent stratification of higher education institutions and a growing emphasis on world-class excellence. It has added an additional layer to the vertical differentiation of higher education, which is often associated and measured with University rankings; the so called “league tables”. The league tables, as such, are seen as a standard feature in most countries with large higher education systems (Usher & Savino, 2007). Although they have no official status, the notion that a wider public should be able to make judgements about the relative merits of institutions on the basis of published information does (Turner, 2005, p. 343). Historically, they appear in the 1980s when, in the context of massification of higher education, employers and policy-makers began to raise the issue of quality (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011, p. 2). Ranking studies are seen as a response to the public need for transparency about the quality of individual institutions of higher education and, as such, they

⁴ Four developmental theories are most frequently employed to explain the dynamics of structural change in higher education in the studies of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s (Teichler, 2008, p. 374-375) ‘expansion and diversification’, ‘drift’, ‘flexibilisation’ and ‘cyclical’ theories. According to the first one, the expansion of higher education creates pressure for diversification because of the growing diversity of the needs of the learners and other potential users of the services of higher education, which a certain ‘division of labour’ among institutions could adequately meet. In contrast, the ‘drift’ theories assume that, after some time, higher education institutions begin to consider themselves as competitors to other types of higher education institutions, which may trigger a vocational or academic drift, depending on the expectations from the labour market for graduates from purely academic or vocational fields. The ‘flexibilisation’ theories suggest that people may consider changing their educational career at any time and take into account the life-long aspect of higher education studies and the need for adaptability. Finally, the ‘cyclical’ theories postulate that certain structural patterns and policies come and go in cycles. For instance, segmentation and hierarchisation of higher education is favoured or occurs, when there are fears of oversupply or ‘over-education’.

have a strong impact on the norms and activities of the various actors in the higher education system (Teichler, 2008). Typically they are based on some combination of institutional performance, institutional characteristics, and other factors. However, a recent study among different league tables identified vast differences between university league tables in terms of what they measure, how they measure it and how they implicitly define 'quality' (Usher & Savino, 2006, 2007, p. 14). They can be conducted either on a national or international scale (Usher & Savino, 2007). Among the best-known league tables are the Times Higher Education Supplement World University Rankings, the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities and the QS World University Ranking. They are all global and are updated every year. The Times Higher and the Jiao Tong ranking systems have been criticized on the basis of the fact that they do not provide guidance on the quality of teaching (See Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Despite these concerns, other authors (Taylor & Braddock, 2007) provide evidence that although the Jiao Tong system is not perfect, it is a better indicator of university excellence than The Times Higher. The EU, on the other hand, also engaged in development of global rankings which are far from perfect but, at the same time, gain more and more importance as a tool for transparency of the quality of Universities among different groups: students, parents, policy makers, etc. In this respect, at the beginning of 2013, a new university ranking system called U-Multirank was officially launched. This project is bringing a new and broader approach to the assessment of universities throughout the world.

As regards the influence of the stratification of higher education on social justice, it should be noted that this issue is somehow neglected in the debates about social justice in higher education. Marginson (2011b, p. 32) even considers the status issue in higher education as the 'elephant in the room'. No one can talk about it – even though everyone knows it is there and that it matters. In the same vein, Walker and Boni (2013) also recognize status hierarchy as one of the challenges which higher education faces nowadays.

Diversity of higher education systems

All these trends suggest that higher education systems have become more complex as they have been expanding. The problem of their diversity definitely stands out in this debate. In this respect Leo Goedegebuure, V. Lynn Meek, Osmo Kivinen and Risto Rinne (2007, pp. 5-6) distinguish three types of diversity: *systemic*, *structural* and *programmatic*. The *systemic* diversity refers to

the different types of institutions that may be found within a higher education system. In contrast to it, the *structural* diversity refers to the institutional differences that exist due to the historical and legal foundations of institutions or differences in the division of the authority within institutions. Finally, the *programmatically* diversity is associated with the differences in programmes and services provided by different institutions within a system. They also distinguish three types of higher education system, by taking into account their structural characteristics: *unified*, *binary* and *diversified* systems. The *unified* systems are typical for countries where tertiary education is offered primarily by a single type of institution—usually, a research university. In contrast to them, the *diversified* systems consist of a mix of institutions which are stratified by prestige, resources, and selectivity of both faculty and students. Finally, the *binary* systems consist of two main types of institutions: academic and vocational. According to this classification, Austria, Sweden and the U.K. can be defined as unified, Germany and the Netherlands as binary and U.S.A. as diversified. Adopting this classification in comparative research on 15 countries, Richard Arum, Adam Gamoran and Yossi Shavit (2007, p. 4) observe that the relation between expansion and differentiation should not be interpreted only as one-way relationship “while differentiation is commonly regarded as a consequence of expansion, it may also *contribute*⁵ to expansion, as new places become available in new segments of the education system”.

Diverse missions and challenges

In the context of its expansion, higher education becomes burdened with new missions, alongside teaching, such as innovation and research. All three of them form the so-called “knowledge triangle”. The view has been expressed in literature that universities are becoming more unequal at the same time higher education and research are being organized, funded and marketed in more integrated ways and on larger scales – nationally, regionally and globally (Calhoun, 2006, p. 8). An example of that can be found in the distinction made by Patrick Ainley (2003) in the UK context of research-based, teaching-focused and locally-orientated higher education institutions. He terms them ‘gold’, ‘silver’ and ‘bronze’ universities. The first type refers to research-intensive institutions which undertake ‘great research’ at an ‘international’ level. The ‘silver’ institutions are constructed as delivering ‘outstanding teaching’ and operating at a ‘national’ level. ‘Bronze’ institutions are responsible for ‘training’ and serving regional economies, adopting a distinctly

⁵ It is italic in the original text.

'local' outlook and remit (predominantly catering for 'non-traditional' students) (Archer, 2007, p. 628). Overall, it seems that the research and innovation missions of higher education do not go hand-in-hand with enhancing social justice, but strengthen the ideas of excellence and competitiveness of higher education institutions.

The move to mass higher education also opened higher education to young people from an array of social class and educational backgrounds, to students from rural backgrounds, to students who were the first in their families to study at higher education institutions and has led to an increase of women's enrollments (Altbach, 2006, pp. 3-5). The fact that higher education serves such diverse needs has been seen as important from a social justice perspective. However, we may question whether it really contributes to justice if measures have not been taken to increase the quality of this education as well. This question seems relevant given the concerns that expanded access was also associated with deterioration in the conditions of study such as overcrowding, inadequate libraries and other study facilities (ibid.).

The move towards mass higher education has been accompanied by an intensified role for both the state and the market, but at the same time higher education systems and higher education institutions have different strategic relationships to these pressures (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009). It also brought significant changes in how academic institutions relate to society (Altbach, 1999, p. 122; Gornitzka, Maassen, Olsen, & Stensaker, 2007, pp. 183-184; Olsen, 2007; Brennan, 2008; Välimaa, 2009, p. 24; Maassen & Stensaker, 2010) affecting the functions of university and, most importantly, its education and research functions (Maassen & Stensaker, 2010). It raises the relevance of questions such as:

What kind of University for what kind of society? What do the University and society expect from each other? How is the University assumed to fit into a democratic polity and society? To what extent and how, are the University, government and society supposed to influence each other? What is the extent and direction of change? (Olsen, 2007, p. 25)

The answers to these questions gain particular significance in the light of re-orientation to a knowledge society and can be seen in a wider picture of university's search for a new 'pact' between higher education, political authorities and society at large (Maassen, 2009, pp. 289-291). This search could be seen as part of the more general transformations in the European order (Gornitzka, Maassen, Olsen, & Stensaker, 2007, p. 184).

In the context of its expansion, higher education has also been developing in conditions of growing world globalization. It was not possible to remain unaffected by the effects of globalization. The role of higher education in such a context is seen as being, on the one hand, closely linked to the questioning of the role of the nation-state in the global age, and, on the other, to the gradual decomposition of the welfare state in the majority of OECD countries (Kwiek, 2001). In this regard, globalization is used to underscore the fact that higher education is increasingly affected by worldwide economic developments which weaken national regulation, put a stronger emphasis on market mechanisms in most spheres of life and that certain “vertical diversification of the institutional pattern of higher education systems is desirable” (Teichler, 2008, p. 364).

1.3. Graduate labour market in the context of higher education expansion

In parallel with these developments, there were many trends outside the scope of higher education which occurred in the labour market and which have influenced graduate employment. Given this, the present section aims at discussing some general trends in the labour market as a whole, such as declining job security and growing flexibility of jobs and negative consequences of the economic downturn of 2008. This section then focuses specifically on the trends which refer to graduate employment. In so doing, the second part of the section discusses the changing relationship between higher education and the worlds of work in the context of educational expansion.

1.3.1. Labour market developments

Overall, the current labour market developments are associated with deregulation, liberalization and polarization. Some of the most evident trends are related to a contraction of employment in the public sector and a growth in the private sector and in the “informal” employment sector, fast-changing job structure and skill requirements in almost any given occupation; an increase in structural and long-term unemployment in many countries, a polarization trend of status, income and employment conditions within and between countries; an increasing demand for computer literacy and sophisticated skills in new information and communication technologies; an increase of job roles requiring high levels of knowledge in various areas; a loss of job stability and

security, not only about their current employment, but also about their career; growing emphasis on individual adaptability and flexibility (Teichler, 1998/2009, pp. 56-57; Standing, 2011).

Many companies are no longer able or willing to offer long-term career opportunities to their managers and professionals. All this has, as a result, a lack of clearly-defined career opportunities nowadays (Brown, Hesketh, Williams, 2004, p. 27). Furthermore, in the absence of permanent employment, people are being forced to exploit their ‘opportunities’ for permanent employability (Brown, 2003).

All these developments undoubtedly raise serious concerns about the quality of employment. In this regard, a recent study of EU 27 member states, which adopts a multi-dimensional approach⁶ to job quality, reveals considerable differences in job quality in European countries (Davoine, Erhel & Guergoat-Lariviere, 2008). More specifically, this study identifies four regimes of job quality in Europe 27 (ibid., p.175).

- a *northern* cluster: Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.
- a *southern* cluster: Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece and Malta.
- a *continental* cluster: Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Ireland, Slovenia and Cyprus.
- a cluster of the *new Member States* (NMS) divided into two groups. The first is composed of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, and the second comprises Poland and Slovakia.

Among those clusters, job quality in the NMS was most lacking in comparison to the rest of the EU countries in that working conditions are rather poor (characterized by long working days, health and safety risks) even if the intensity of work is lower than elsewhere in Europe. Socio-economic security measured through wage levels and perception of “being well-paid” or having “some good prospects for career advancement” is low. Contrary to older EU member states, new forms of employment such as part-time work and temporary contracts do not contribute to explain socio-economic insecurity, as they are not very developed in the new EU member states.

⁶ Job quality is measured by a multidimensional index, using four main components: socio-economic security (i.e. decent wages and secure transitions); skills and training opportunities; working conditions; and the ability to combine work and family life, and the promotion of gender equality.

Rates of participation in training are low and long-term unemployment is particularly high in some countries (Poland, Slovakia). The new EU member states are also characterized by very low levels of productivity alongside high rates of productivity growth, which is typical of countries engaged in a catching-up process. Workers in this group of countries are less satisfied than their counterparts in other countries. As regards education, the proportion of people who achieve the ISCED3-level of education in these countries is rather high (See also European Commission 2008, Chapter 4).

In terms of employment rates, studies show that the total employment in the EU 27 countries grew by 19 million between 2000 and 2008 (annual averages) and the employment rate rose from 62.1 percent in 2000 to 65.8 percent in 2008 (ETUI, 2013, pp. 58-59). The financial crisis of 2008, however, added additional complexities to the European labour markets and undoubtedly deepened labour market inequalities. The period of recovery was marked by stagnation and divergent developments in national labour markets (ETUI, 2013; OECD, 2013a). The groups that were most affected by the crisis, in terms of their labour market position, were young people (15-24), migrants and those with the lowest education (ETUI, 2013). Thus, whereas the unemployment rate for the lowest educated was relatively stable from 2000 to 2008, the gap in the unemployment rate for this group and the total unemployment increased significantly in the period from 2000 to 2011. It was 2.8 in 2000, 4.4 in 2008 and reached 7 percentage points by 2011 (ETUI, 2013, p. 61). Between 2008 and 2012 there was a decreasing number of employees in all job classes except in the professional sector and service and sales workers, which have grown by 9.2 million and 6.9 million respectively (*ibid.*, p. 69).

These problems go hand-in-hand with some structural developments related to the technological change which has led to labour market restructuring and changes in the nature of work in general. This raises the question, are the “good jobs” disappearing? Harry Holzer, Julia Lane, David Rosenblum and Fredrik Andersson (2011) provide a convincing answer claiming that, in the US context, the relatively good jobs are not disappearing, but they are less-available in the industries where they were traditionally found (in durable manufacturing and smaller local areas) and more good jobs are found in the professional service and finance and increasingly require higher levels of worker education and skill.

In the European context⁷ there was also a general shift away from the primary sector (especially agriculture) and traditional manufacturing industries towards services and the knowledge-intensive economy (Cedefop, 2008). Furthermore, this trend is likely to continue as a key feature over the coming decade, both nationally and across Europe (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Employment trends by industry, EU27+, 2000-20.

	Levels (000s)			Change (000s)	
	2000	2010	2020	2000-2010	2010-2020
Primary sector & utilities	18 773	14 704	11 923	-4 068	-2 782
Manufacturing	39 698	36 526	34 338	-3 172	-2 188
Construction	15 039	15 425	15 701	386	275
Distribution & transport	54 321	58 773	62 179	4 452	3 406
Business & other services	41 735	48 773	56 033	7 038	7 260
Non-marketed services	47 548	53 056	54 309	5 508	1 253
All industries	217 114	227 258	234 482	10 144	7 224

Source: Cedefop (2010b, p. 91, Table 5).

Nevertheless, the direction and this rate of change as well as the assumed level and kinds of skills in demand are seen as controversial (Schneider, 2011). According to Ronald Schneider (2011), there is no clear-cut evidence suggesting that the declining share of employment in manufacturing and the rising shares of various service industries lead straightforwardly to higher skill requirements and ‘better’ jobs in terms of wages and working conditions. Moreover, there is increasing evidence indicating that expanding job opportunities in both high-skill, high-wage occupations and low-skill, low-wage occupations, together with contracting opportunities in middle-wage, middle-skill jobs, have led to a polarisation of labour markets in advanced economies. As he puts it:

The polarisation of employment, the widening gap between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ jobs, has been mirrored by wage growth: rising wages for skilled workers, falling wages for low- and unskilled workers. Long-term occupational employment projections suggest that the polarisation of employment is not going to go away (Schneider, 2011, pp. 205-206).

⁷ Since this report is based only on EU 25 + Norway and Switzerland, the latest data are given in the table.

The problem with many advanced countries, in Schneider's opinion (2011, pp. 206-208), is not that there are too few well-qualified workers but too few employers who want to employ them. Hence, promising policy approaches need to take into account the full range of contextual factors that shape the conditions of both the formation and use of skills, in particular business settings and competitive strategies pursued by them, institutions and policy frameworks for education and training, modes of engaging trade unions and employers in the process of designing and implementing training policies and the governance of vocational education and training (VET) institutions, the type and level of skills formation (apprenticeships or workplace- or school-based) and, last but not least, the structure of jobs. Schneider argues that training and innovation policies must confront the emerging risk of a high-skilled but low-wage economy, driven by global skills and sourcing strategies of companies, as well as by the rise of digital Taylorism.

The same concerns are shared by Philip Brown, Hugh Lauder and David Ashton (2011), who argue that the job market for higher education graduates can be better seen as a "global auction of jobs" where one could win if one bids with quality and price. In this auction of jobs the advantage is on the side of the one who provides the lower price and the better quality. One of the results of this bidding war on the global labour market is that 'the opportunity bargain' has not extended individual freedom but, on the contrary, has led to an 'opportunity trap' that forces people to spend more time, effort and money on activities that may have little intrinsic purpose, in an attempt to fulfill their opportunities⁸. On this basis we may draw the conclusion that one of the negative sides of the global auction of jobs is an 'individual opportunity deprivation' that affects not only people's jobs but also their way of life. However, Philip Brown (2003) underlines that the opportunity trap is not only a problem for individuals or families but it exposes an inherent tension, if not contradiction, in the relationship between capitalism and democracy. Or, as he puts it:

⁸ Trying to answer the question "How can middle-class families in USA afford to keep up?" Frank (2007) draws a picture of increasing of working hours, reduced savings, increased indebtedness, longer commutes, growing sleep deprivation, public service cutbacks (health, roads, bridges, education) from which we could conclude that the middle class in United States succeed in keeping up the same living standards over time but at the cost of increasing of unfavourable inclusion/employment in the society.

Opportunity, delivered through expanding education and social mobility, has kept the democratic dream of individual achievement and social justice alive throughout the twentieth century, at the same time as fulfilling the imperatives of economic growth (Brown, 2003, p. 143).

Realising this trend, Brown argues that the legitimate foundations of opportunity, based on education, jobs and rewards, are unravelling. Furthermore, he emphasizes that opportunities can be extended by widening access and through improving the quality of teaching and learning, but as long as the educational system has a selective role, inequalities in outcome are inevitable. As he puts it:

This is a key point as it recognises that equality of outcome is impossible, if we mean by this that everyone ends up with similar credentials or jobs (Brown, 2003, p. 144).

In this respect, Brown underlines that the rhetoric of expanding educational opportunities should not disguise the fact that the value of credentials is strengthened by exclusion and weakened by inclusion.

1.3.2. Trends in graduate employment

In the context of the expansion of higher education, the relationship between higher education and the labour market has undoubtedly experienced substantial changes over the recent five decades (Teichler, 1999). Whereas during the 1960s there was hope that higher education expansion might serve both economic growth and the reduction of inequality of opportunity, during the 1970s some fears of “over-education” emerged. These fears reflected the growing mismatches between the moderately-increasing demand for qualified labour and the rapidly growing number of graduates from institutions of higher education. These two decades, saturated by interest in the relationship between higher education and employment, were followed by a decade when this relationship was not so high on the agenda any more. The concerns for “employability” were renewed in the 1990s when, in many industrialized countries, there was an increase in the overall unemployment rates. These concerns were accompanied by an emphasis on the “diversification of higher education as well as on the options and responsibilities of the individual institutions of higher education and of the individual students” (Teichler, 1999, p. 171).

All these developments posed several dilemmas in this period. One of them was that, despite the efforts undertaken in the past to harmonize the quantitative demand and supply of highly-

qualified labour, either through planning, information or political campaigning, mismatch was believed to be widespread (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, the transition to employment was also severely hit by an economic crisis and a decline in the provision of paid work due to rationalisation and the use of new technologies. At the same time, higher education institutions and students were increasingly expected to be more responsive, in their study provisions and study activities, to the needs of the employment system. Another dilemma in the 1990s was that higher education institutions were held more accountable than in the past for their contributions to the cultivation of knowledge and the utility of education and research for the economy and society.

Following these trends, in the first decade of the 21st century interest in the relationship between higher education and the world of work grew even further (Teichler, 2007c). It was accompanied by the collaborative efforts to change the national systems of higher education in Europe in a similar direction (Teichler, 2011). More specifically, this interest was related to the European policies which aimed:

... to ensure the ‘employability’ of those who are awarded the new degrees established in the bachelor-master structure across Europe, as well as in increasing budgets for higher education and research in order to make Europe economically more competitive on a global scale (Teichler, 2007c, p. 12).

Against this background, raising employability is recognized as one of the tools to reach the Europe 2020 goal of becoming a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The introduction in 2012 of the new ET 2020 benchmark on graduate employability reaffirms this importance. Raising employability is seen as one of the keys in tackling youth unemployment and, in particular, in overcoming the challenges related to school-to-work transitions. According to this benchmark, the share of employed graduates (20-34 year olds) having left education and training with at least upper-secondary or post-secondary, non-tertiary qualifications, or with tertiary qualifications no more than three years before the reference year, should be at least 82 percent (as compared to 76.5 percent in 2010). As Figure 1.3 shows, there is a great divergence across Europe on this indicator. It seems that the New Members States are the countries with rates below the EU average.

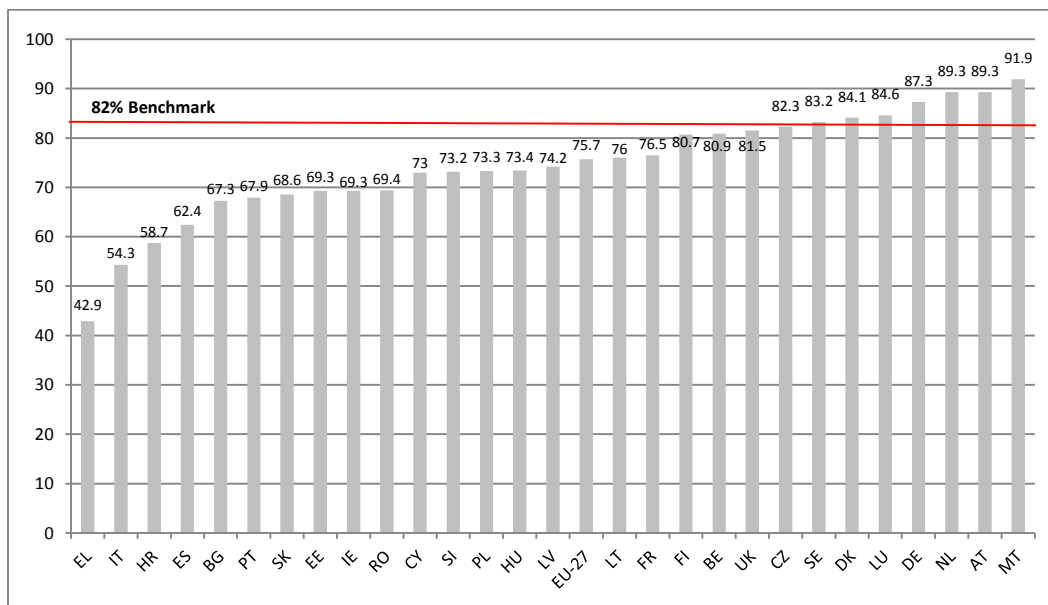


Fig. 1.3. Employment rates of graduates from upper-secondary education and above, aged 20-34 who graduated no more than three years prior to the reference year, ISCED 3-6, by country, 2012, (%).

Source: Adapted by Eurydice (2013b, p. 46), Eurostat – LFS (data extracted on 3 July 2013).

It is also believed that higher education is a key for tackling unemployment, given that the highly-qualified are the least affected by the risk of unemployment. This trend is also seen in the context of the economic crisis. In the recovery period, despite the increase in unemployment rates among the most-qualified, qualifications still served as a safety net for tertiary degree holders and the average unemployment rate for EU 28 in 2013 was about six percent. This rate is three times lower than the unemployment rate for the group of people with low or no education.

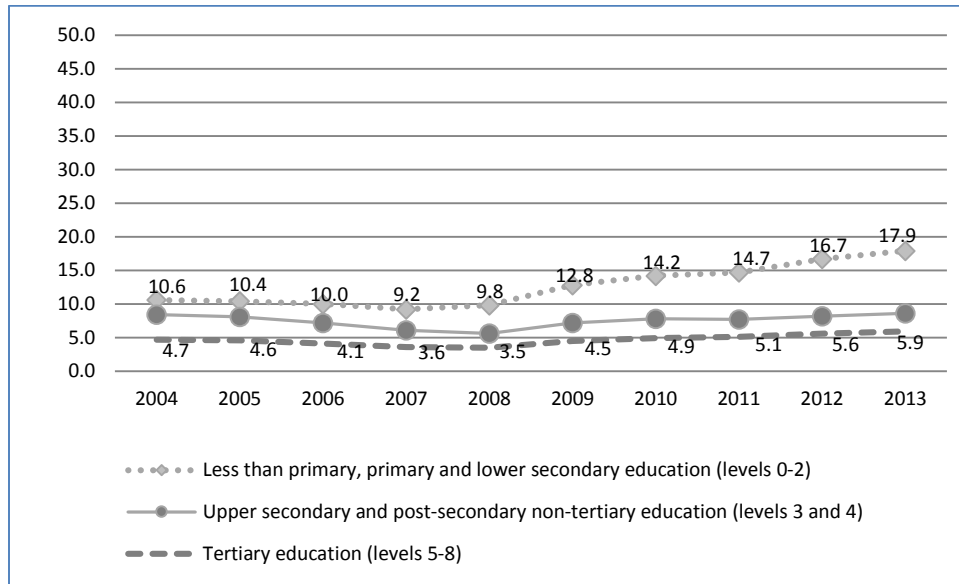


Fig. 1.4. Unemployment rates in European Union (28 countries) by highest level of education attained for people aged 25-64, (%).

Source: Eurostat (data extracted on 18.3.2015). ISCED 2011.

Despite the low levels of unemployment, it seems that graduates are much more severely affected by the risk of experiencing ‘vertical skills mismatch’. This phenomenon refers to the state when one is employed below one’s level of education. This problem is also common, especially among young people with tertiary degrees. Figure 1.5. illustrates the level of ‘vertical skills mismatch’ among young people with tertiary education qualifications in European countries (European Commission, 2012, p. 179). It shows that this problem is not negligible and deserves attention. Thus, in 2010, an average of just over one-fifth of the 25 to 34 age group was either inappropriately qualified or overqualified. The highest proportions of young people employed in a job which did not require their tertiary qualifications were in Spain, Cyprus, Ireland and Bulgaria. However, to the best of my knowledge, this problem has not received enough attention in literature and no studies are available for countries from Central and Eastern Europe that explain the determinants of this phenomenon and its implications for graduate employability.

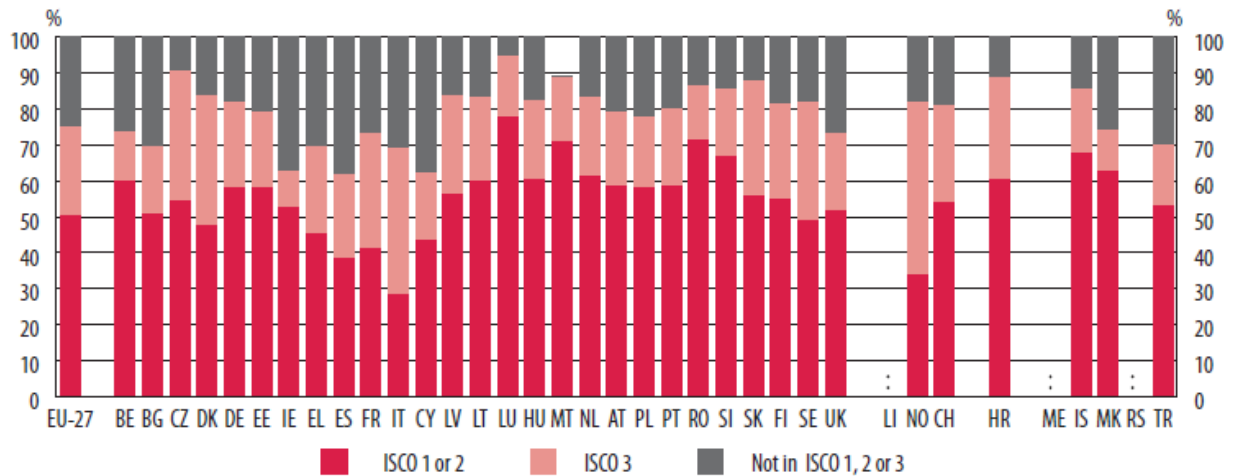


Fig. 1.5. Distribution of young people (aged 25-34) with tertiary education (ISCED 5-6) employed in ISCO 1 or 2 (legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals), in ISCO 3 (technicians and associate professionals), and not in ISCO 1, 2 or 3, by country, 2010.

Source: European Commission (2012, p. 179), Data: Eurostat.

Note: ISCO 1, 2 and 3 are categories of occupations usually requiring tertiary qualifications.

Last but not least, in the light of these trends and the growing emphasis on the “skills” that graduates should have, Cedefop’s report (2010a) alerts us that the economic crisis from 2008 might exacerbate structural differences in skill demand and supply. It forecasts increased deployment of higher- and medium-qualified people in jobs that used to require a lower level of skills. Despite this, high- (and medium)-qualified workers will still have a relatively better chances of getting better jobs than those with low formal qualifications. According to this report, the longer this trend lasts the more frustration it may cause to those affected, not to mention losses of prior investment in time and money. Michael Tomlinson (2009, pp. 3-4) adheres to this view, arguing that there may be a mis-match, not only in the supply of and the demand for graduate skills, but also a mis-match in the expectations graduates have around future employment and the realities of what they will experience. Furthermore, it should also be acknowledged that the underutilization of skills and competences is certainly a potential problem, not only for individuals but also for employers and society as a whole.

1.4. Conclusion

In the first chapter of the thesis the main developments in higher education and the labor market in Europe were discussed. They are important to the extent that they provide the wider context in which the present thesis positions itself and because they have influenced the level of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education in European countries. However, it seems difficult to isolate the effect of one development from the effect of another.

More specifically, the first section has focused on higher education expansion; the challenges it faces as well as its achievements. One of the achievements of the expansion of higher education was the quantitative growth of the number of people with tertiary degrees. The widening access to higher education undoubtedly gave many more people the opportunity to access higher education but, at the same time, the accompanying processes of diversification contributed to a more heterogeneous student body. Against this background, it seems important, when talking about the influence of higher education expansion on social justice in the access to and in the outcomes of higher education, to also consider the routes of expansion and take into account its diversification and see if these routes provide equal opportunities for all people or exacerbate certain inequalities.

The second section of this chapter has discussed some general developments in the labour market which accompanied the expansion of higher education, and then some specific trends which refer to graduate employment. It highlights some of the negative effects of the economic downturn of 2008, the trends of declining job security and growing flexibility of jobs. The chapter also discusses the changing relationship between higher education and the world of work and points to the importance of further investigation into the determinants of the phenomenon of ‘vertical mismatch’, especially in relation to the growing emphasis on graduate employability as a key to making Europe economically more competitive on a global scale, and also in the context of new Member states which are marked by poor overall job quality and in which this problem is under-researched.

Overall, the developments in higher education and labour markets associated with higher education expansion over the past decades should have important consequences for social justice in access and exit of higher education. However, the diverse trends which were presented and which interact with the educational expansion add additional complexity to the problem and raise

the question as to what extent the educational expansion has contributed to a more just distribution of opportunities for all. At the same time, this problem demands an overall understanding of social justice which is adequate to these developments, in order to assess their influence in their full complexity. The present study therefore proceeds by looking at the theories of justice, to find a meaning of social justice which fits the higher education settings, and which can be used as a guide in examining the influence of the expansion of higher education on social justice in access and in the labour market outcomes of higher education.

CHAPTER TWO. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND/IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1. Introduction

This chapter makes a review of the literature related to the issue of social justice in higher education. More specifically, it maps some of the most influential theories in philosophy, sociology and economics, developed since the 1970s, that are exclusively related to education, inequalities and the labour market. In so doing, it aims on the one hand to shed more light on the complexity of the issues of social justice and equality in regards to higher education (both at its entry and exit) in the contemporary context and, on the other, to find a suitable working definition that may be used further on as a guide in the pursuit of social justice in the context of current developments in higher education and the labour market.

I begin Chapter 2 by outlining different meanings of social justice. In so doing, I discuss some of the most dominant theories of justice and highlight ways in which social justice may be pursued in the context of higher education. More specifically, four different understandings of the term are identified. According to the first of these, social justice is a virtue attached either to the state or to the individual. The second one refers to the distributional dimensions of justice, while the third one focuses on its non-distributional dimensions. The fourth one is shared by those opponents of the notion of social justice who think that its pursuit is impossible and incompatible with capitalist society. Drawing on this discussion, a working definition of social justice is chosen, which will be used in the rest of the thesis.

Then I focus on the nature of higher education. More specifically, I distinguish between three different understandings of higher education as a good: higher education as a private good, higher education as a public good and higher education as a positional good. In developing this conceptualization of higher education, I have drawn upon the model proposed by Elaine Unterhalter and Harry Brighouse (2007, 2010) for measuring justice in education; I try to extend it in a way serving the purposes of the current thesis.

Then I present some valuable contributions by authors aiming to map the area of social justice in education and higher education in particular (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Brighouse, 2003; Furlong & Cartmel, 2009; Gewirtz, 1998, 2006; North, 2006; Walker, 2003; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007; Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006; etc.). Based on this body of literature, two different aspects of social justice in higher education are distinguished: *equality* and *equity*. The ideas of equality and equity are both intertwined with the distributive dimensions of justice and represent two different principles of justice against which the achievement of social justice may be assessed. Whereas *equality* refers to the equality of distribution of goods and services to different groups, *equity* plays the role of a correcting principle with regard to unforeseen consequences of the kind of application of the principle of equality that ignores certain structural characteristics of the particular society as a whole. Thus, thinking about equality and equity in higher education would serve as a proxy in the pursuit of social justice in the context of current developments in higher education related to its access and its outcomes.

Finally, I pay special attention to the social justice implications that arise from the distribution of employment outcomes of higher education, and more specifically focus on graduate employability as a term that encompasses significant social justice issues but is often neglected in the discussions on social justice in higher education. It seems that, in the context of current developments in higher education, such as its worldwide massification and the crowding that exists on the graduate labour market, the emphasis on the employment outcomes of higher education is increasing and there is growing concern about the distribution and equity of graduates' economic opportunities (Tomlinson, 2012).

2.2. The meanings of social justice

There are many interpretations of what 'social justice' means and how it may be pursued. In general, in contemporary literature there is some agreement that social justice is not an one-dimensional concept. However, the concept had to travel a long road before this understanding could be reached. Given this, in this section I try to map the different meanings of social justice and to show how the concept has been changing over time. This section does not set out to exhaust all definitions of social justice, but to demonstrate its dynamic nature and the extent of the spheres of life to which it has spread. More specifically, four different meanings of social justice have been identified on the basis of the review of literature, each of which is discussed in

the following subsections. In brief, according to the first of these, social justice is a virtue attached either to the state or to the individual. The second one refers to the distributional dimensions of justice, whereas the third one focuses on its non-distributional dimensions. According to the fourth, there is no such thing as social justice. On the basis of this discussion, the working definition I adopt is that *social justice refers to the distribution of goods*.

2.2.1. Social justice as a virtue

The earliest definition of justice known in history considers it to be a virtue. Plato was among the first philosophers who raised the question: What is justice and why is it worth pursuing? In his seminal work *The Republic*, Plato referred to justice as one of the virtues that an ideal state should rest on. He also claimed that it might be seen as one of the virtues of the soul. His full definition of justice comprises the idea that a city may be called just when it is organized in such a way that the citizens assigned to rule the city are those of high intelligence and appropriate education, those of high spirit and appropriate education are assigned to defend it, and those of inborn abilities and appropriate education in the arts and trades are assigned to provision the city. As regards to the micro level, in Plato's interpretation, justice depends on the interplay between the main parts of each individual - spirit, reason and desire - and thus has to do with the psychic harmony of each individual.

For Aristotle, justice is likewise a virtue, but he assigns it only to individuals. In his view, the purpose of the polis is the good life of the individual, and the institutions of social life are only means to that end. Aristotle's interpretation of justice has two key aspects. Justice could be either about honouring arete (virtue) - as a matter of fit or as figuring out the end, the purpose, of the social practice in question. Aristotle identifies two types of justice: universal and particular. Whereas the universal refers to the idea of the just as that which is lawful, the particular refers to the idea of just as fair and equal. In its particular kinds, justice may be distributive or rectificatory. The distributive is manifested in distributions of honour, money or other goods that have to be divided among those who have a share in them. The rectificatory variant of justice plays a rectifying role in transactions between people.

2.2.2. Distributional dimensions

Most of the contemporary theories and research on social justice focus on its distributional dimension. The approaches differ mostly in terms of the currency of the distribution: whether it refers to primary goods (Rawls, 1971), resources (Dworkin, 1981), capabilities (Sen, 1992, 1999, 2009) or something else. As Joseph Zajda, Suzanne Majhanovich and Val Rust (2006, p. 4) note:

Social justice refers to the overall fairness of a society in its divisions and distributions of rewards and burdens.

In a similar vein Wolff (2008), emphasizes that the term social justice has been used to mark the idea that distribution of resources and opportunities in a society, as well as its conditions of work and the patterns of wages and profits, can be evaluated in terms of how well they meet principles of justice. Social justice often has to do also “with the relative value of the advantages received by different people” (Miller, 1999, p. 8). In this context, the pursuit of social justice is seen “as the search of fair (not necessarily equal) distribution of what is beneficial and valued as well as what is burdensome in a society” (Singh, 2011, p. 482).

In this regard, the most influential contemporary theory of justice which focuses on this dimension is that of “justice as fairness”, developed by the political philosopher John Rawls. In his seminal work *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls attaches justice to institutions. As he puts it, justice “is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought” (Rawls, 1971, p. 3). Rawls argues that the conception of social justice can be regarded as providing a standard whereby the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society are to be assessed (Rawls, 1971, p. 8). From this perspective, Rawls conceives that “the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation” (Rawls, 1971, p. 6).

According to the “justice as fairness” perspective, a society is just if it complies with three principles (Rawls, 1971, p. 266). The first principle entails priority of liberty to all:

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

The second principle is often interpreted in two parts and as comprising two principles: *equality of opportunity* and the *difference principle*. It says that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (ibid.):

- (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
- (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

In contrast to Rawls, in his recent book *The Idea of Justice*, the political philosopher and Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen defines justice not as a virtue but as a “momentous concept” whose content may be sharpened and extended in reach via reasoning and critical scrutiny (Sen, 2009, p. 401). In Sen’s account of social justice, based on his work on the capability approach, justice is ultimately connected with the way people’s lives go, and not merely with the nature of the institutions surrounding them. Furthermore, he claims that “the focus on actual lives in the assessment of justice has many far-reaching implications for the nature and reach of the idea of justice” (Sen, 2009, p. xi). Sen acknowledges the multiple dimensions in which equality matters, which are not reducible to equality in one space only, but encompass economic advantage, resources, utilities and achieved quality of life or capabilities.

According to another interpretation, still within the capability approach, proposed by the political philosopher Martha Nussbaum, the main question of social justice is “What does a life worthy of human dignity require?” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 32). In her opinion, the answer to this question refers to a threshold level of 10 central capabilities. More specifically, the basic claim of her account of social justice is:

... respect for human dignity requires that citizens be placed above an ample (specified) threshold of capability in all ten of those areas (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 36).

In contrast to the Rawlsian “justice as fairness”, Nussbaum’s version of the capabilities approach “does not make any commitment about how inequalities above the threshold may be handled” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 41). In other words, she justifies inequalities as long as a particular threshold of capability is provided. In this sense, Nussbaum (2011) develops a “partial theory of justice” which does not claim to solve all distributional problems; it just specifies a rather ample social minimum. It may be called “justice as respect of human dignity”.

Justice has also been of concern for sociology of education, indirectly, via its focus on equality. Thus, one more dimension of justice may be added, which may be designated “justice as meritocracy”. Actually, *meritocracy* is one of the most influential theories in the functionalist sociological tradition⁹. The concept of “merit” in this context originates from the work by Michael Young *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958). Within this perspective, inequalities may be explained by the fact that not all people are of the same level of intelligence. In other words, inequalities in access to education may be justified as far as they are in favour of the cleverest and of those who can meet the highest academic admission criteria. Thus, meritocracy may be seen as a distributive rule. However, this perspective is not historically neutral. The meritocracy has been also criticized for allowing the overlapping of intelligence and genetic differences that can be transferred from parents with different cultural advantages (Bell 1976). Daniel Bell (1976) sees meritocracy as a displacement of one principle of stratification by another (of achievement for ascription). As he puts it:

In the past – and this was the progressive meaning of liberalism – this new principle was considered just. Men were to be judged – and rewarded – not by attributes of birth or primordial ties but on individual merit. Today that principle is held to be the new source of inequality and of social – if not psychological – injustice (Bell, 1976, pp. 426-427).

Bell (1976) also criticizes the liberal understanding of equality of educational opportunities and advocates the equality of result. However, he underlines that one should not impose a rigid ideological egalitarianism in all matters if it were to result in a conflict with other social objectives (Bell, 1976, p. 452). He introduces the concept of “just meritocracy” and defines it as referring to those who have earned their status or have achieved positions of rational authority by competence. For his understanding of meritocracy, it is important that the earned status be

⁹ In general, functionalist theories try to explain how education system works and what purpose education serves in societies. They are based on the assumption that education as an institution in society operates to facilitate the smooth functioning of society, along with other social institutions. These theories originate from the work of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). A significant contribution to this branch of theories is made by Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) who sees education as performing certain important “functions” for society, such as preparing young people for roles in a democratic society. In his essay *The school class as a social system*, Parsons (1959) claims that the school class can be treated as a focal agency of both socialization and “manpower” allocation. Overall, the functionalist perspective views achievement in school as based on merit, not on a person’s status.

confirmed by one's peers. By contrast, the "unjust meritocracy" is that which makes these distinctions invidious and demeans the people who are in lower positions (see Bell, 1976, p. 453).

In *Spheres of Justice*, Michael Walzer adheres to a pluralistic understanding of justice. More specifically, Walzer (1983, p. 6) argues that the principles of justice are themselves pluralistic; that different social goods ought to be distributed for different reasons, in accordance with different procedures, by different agents; and that all these differences derive from different understandings of the social goods themselves. As he puts it:

Rather, goods with their meanings – because of their meanings – are the crucial medium of social relations; they come into people's mind before they come in their hands; distributions are patterned in accordance with the shared conceptions of what the goods are and what they are for. Distributive agents are constrained by the goods they distribute; one might almost say that goods distribute themselves among people (Walzer, 1983, p. 7).

In other words, according to Walzer, prior to choosing a criterion for just distribution, one should first clarify the meaning of the good that is the object of the distribution.

2.2.3. Beyond merely distributional dimensions

Another group of thinkers concerned with conceptions of justice argue that, in contemporary societies, the reach of justice goes beyond distributional issues. More specifically, thinkers who fall in this group touch upon the issue of embeddedness of people in society, and focus predominantly on human relations; they question if people are actually treated as equals (e.g. Fraser, 1997; Honneth, 2003; Young, 1990). They adhere to the view that social relations and the way people experience injustice also play a role in social justice and thus propose a more sociological view in the discussion on what social justice is and why it is worth pursuing. More specifically, they try to investigate its beyond merely distributional dimensions such as recognition, relations and possible conflicts may arise in respect of these as a result of the distribution.

Provoked by the new social movements in the United States since the 1960s among women, Blacks, Jews, working-class people, gays and lesbians, old people, etc., Iris Marion Young claims that "justice should not refer only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and

cooperation” (1990, p. 39). In her opinion, these groups are oppressed in different ways but they all suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop their capacities and express their needs, thoughts and feelings. Thus, she uses the term “oppression” to describe the common condition of injustice that these groups may experience, but at the same time, she tries to reveal the multi-dimensional nature of justice, arguing that one and the same person could suffer more than one form of oppression. In particular, she discusses exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence as the five faces of oppression. Thus, her interpretation of justice could be conceptualized as “*justice as freedom from oppressive relations*” (Gewirtz, 1998, p. 472).

In his book *Principles of Social Justice*, David Miller also focuses on the relational aspects of social justice. Miller (1999) criticizes Walzer’s approach to justice, since it seems unable to deal with cases where people seriously disagree about how a social good should be allocated according to the principle of justice. He gives education as an example of such a good and recognizes a potential conflict about justice which cannot be explained in terms of interests between people, nor can be resolved simply by appealing to the meaning of education. Thus, instead of distinguishing spheres of justice according to the good distributed, Miller (1999) proposes a different kind of pluralism with regard to justice, according to which the “modes of human relationships” that are at stake determine the relevant principles of distributions. As he puts it:

Human beings can stand in different kinds of relationship to one another, and we can best understand which demands of justice someone can make of us by looking first at the particular nature of our relationship (Miller, 1999, p. 25).

Miller distinguishes three basic modes of such relationships, i.e., *solidaristic community*, *instrumental association* and *citizenship*. The relevant distributive principle in a solidaristic community such as the family is *need*; in instrumental associations, such as economic enterprises, it is *desert*, whereas with regard to citizenship the principle is *equality*. Miller’s concern is that the uncertainty over modes of relationship may produce practical conflicts over distributive justice and illustrates this with the example of education, where, for instance, the demands for justice stemming from specific communities, from citizenships and the economy may go in different directions.

The reference point of a conception of social justice according to Axel Honneth (2003) should be the quality of social relations of recognition. This conception of justice may be termed “justice as recognition”. In particular, Honneth is concerned with the personal identity formation of all members of the society; he claims that this formation should be “based in the sphere-specific principles of love, equal legal treatment and social esteem” (Honneth, 2003, p. 180). This tripartite division arises from his reflection on the historical conditions of personal identity-formation.

Another great concern related to distributive justice is that, in order for resources to be justly redistributed, it is necessary for certain individuals and institutions to be identified - and therefore labeled - as being in need of additional resourcing. In Nancy Fraser’s opinion, the process of identification and labeling may result in social marginalization and personal devaluation. To overcome this drawback, she assumes that “justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition” (Fraser, 1997, p. 12). More specifically, at a first stage, Fraser (1997) distinguishes two distinct understandings of injustice - socioeconomic and cultural, or symbolic - and sees the redistribution and recognition as two distinct ways of how these two types of injustices may be remedied. At a second stage, she goes beyond the dichotomy of the recognition and redistribution dilemma, and sets the question of justice as a trilemma. Thus, similarly to Young, Fraser (2005) also captures the multi-dimensional nature of justice, suggesting that theories of justice should also incorporate a third, political dimension - that of representation, alongside the economic dimension and the cultural dimension of recognition. In Fraser’s interpretation, justice is understood as “participatory parity” (Fraser, 2005, p. 7). This comes to denote that:

... justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction (Fraser, 2005, p. 5).

It has been identified that justice may also have a contributive dimension. Paul Gombert first discusses the theory of „contributive justice”, which is in essence not a liberal one. He criticizes distributive justice for emphasizing on *what we have* rather than on *what we do* (Gombert, 2007).

As he puts it:

Contribution has value *non-positionally*; it makes our lives and the lives of others go better (Gombert, 2007, p. 149).

According to this conception, justice is based on four norms and three ideas. Specifically, the norms are duties, equal opportunity to contribute labor and duties, and equal opportunity to participate in social decisions (Gomberg, 2007). The first idea is that there is a connection between contribution and distribution of social esteem. Thus, people receive social esteem in return for the contribution they make. The second idea is that material needs should be met independently of individual contribution and that overall contribution should be motivated by a sense of justice, not by the individual material rewards people expect to receive. The third idea is that distribution of material needs should serve contribution. This seems important because, according to Gomberg, “meeting material needs serves the norms of having both duties and opportunities to contribute, making it possible for each to contribute over the course of a lifetime” (2007, pp. 154-155).

This conceptualization of justice is further discussed by Andrew Sayer, who, in his article *Contributive justice and meaningful work*, argues that, when it comes to the injustices of class, distribution is not the only thing that matters; we should also acknowledge “inequalities in the availability of meaningful work” (2009, p. 12). In this sense, he notes that contributive injustice limits what some people can do and hence the extent to which they can develop their own abilities and find fulfillment, respect and self-esteem. To a great extent, this opinion is shared by Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (2009) who emphasize that social justice is not necessarily about equality; it can be about providing equal opportunities for access to an unequal reward structure. However, contribution should not be seen narrowly only in terms of fair access to meaningful rewards (such as education or jobs) but more broadly as contributing to other people’s well-being or to the society as a whole. Thus, social justice as a construct is also interpreted as an attempt to answer the following question: How can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone? (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). This aspect also looks at individuals not just as recipients of justice but likewise as agents who may contribute to someone else’s well-being or to social well-being.

2.2.4. Hard-line criticism of social justice as a notion

Despite the efforts of many thinkers to conceptualize the term, there are some opponents of the notion of social justice, such as Friedrich Hayek and Robert Nozick, who think that its pursuit is

impossible and incompatible with the capitalist society. In the second volume of his major work on political philosophy *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (1973-79), subtitled *The Mirage of Social Justice* (1976), Hayek tries to show that this term is meaningless¹⁰ in the context of a market economy. More specifically, he claims that:

... in a society of freemen whose members are allowed to use their own knowledge for their own purposes the term 'social justice' is wholly devoid of meaning or content, ... (Hayek, 1976, p. 96).

Hayek (1976) argues that demands for social justice are incompatible within an economic order based on the market. Furthermore, in his view 'social justice' can be given a meaning only in a directed or "command" economy. Hayek's main concern is that no system of rules of just individual conduct, and therefore no free action of the individuals, could produce results satisfying any principle of distributive justice.

Another opponent of the idea of justice is Robert Nozick, who follows a libertarian approach to justice. In his "entitlement theory", justice is ascribed to people's holdings and more specifically to the way these holdings are obtained. In *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974) Nozick claims that "a distribution is just if it arises from another distribution by legitimate means". In other words, within this theory inequalities in people's holdings are justified as long as they are obtained by a just procedure.

The view that social justice is incompatible with capitalist society is also shared by Glenn Rikowski (2000) who claims that:

Social justice is a latent social form within capitalist society that cannot attain real existence. As sustainable social justice is impossible on the basis of capitalist social forms, the drive to *create* social justice in capitalist society - fired by the anger of shocking social inequality - pushes at the boundaries of capitalist social relations, and against the limits of capital itself. The struggle for social justice in capitalist society is, therefore, an aspect of a struggle for a form of life where social justice is possible ...

The expressed opposition to the usage of social justice suggests that there might be a tension between individual and societal prospects, between liberty and equality, and that economic

¹⁰Hayek's claim about the meaninglessness of social justice is disputed by David Johnston (1997), who agrees that in a market economy the detailed, person-by-person distribution of wealth is neither deliberately brought about nor foreseen by anyone. However, in his opinion Hayek ignores the fact that, in a market economy, the broad pattern of economic outcomes is actually foreseeable.

growth and social justice may not always go hand in hand. In this context, social justice might serve as a corrective to some negative outcomes of capitalist societies. Thus, even if we have just principles and ideally just institutions, some injustice might still remain in human lives, that it is possible to remedy, so we have (to leave a room to be able) to reformulate these principles or institutions in such a way, that they allow us to live better.

2.2.5. Working definition of social justice

The above overview of definitions allows us to conclude that the meaning of social justice may differ in different contexts and could transform its nature over time. In other words, as a concept, it has a meaning only when analyzed as *embedded in a particular time and historical context*. Social justice is *closely related to the idea of equality*, given that many of the discussions try to determine the extent to which the inequalities may be justified.

In the contemporary context, justice does not appear as a single notion but may be better seen as a *plural notion with multiple dimensions*. This notion comprises different routes: some of which have already been passed and others have yet to be passed somehow. Issues of distribution, recognition and agency are implicated in this notion and in most cases intertwined in one and the same understanding of justice. These dimensions may also be in mutual tension or may go in different directions. To sum up, social justice may be seen as: i) an attribute of the individual or the state; ii) an idea that is concerned with fairness of distribution of resources and opportunities in a society; iii) a dynamic concept, the meanings of which change in time and space; iv) a relational concept rooted in human relationships and v) a concept which encompasses the active role of human beings in formulating the demands of justice and how it may be enhanced.

Given this complexity, it is difficult to choose an undisputable definition that should embrace the full idea of justice, capturing all of its aspects. Notwithstanding, in what follows I use the term in the sense that *social justice refers to the distribution of goods*. Under this formulation of the working definition of social justice, this thesis refers only to the distributional dimensions of justice. This does not mean, however, that I underestimate the value of the non-distributional dimensions. Moreover, choosing a working definition does not give us enough guidance as to striving for justice in higher education. As the different approaches have different meanings for social justice, they might have different implications for social justice in higher education as well.

Therefore, further work on the topic requires narrowing down the focus to just one way, which would allow scrutinizing the justness of the distribution of higher education as a good or particular injustices in the current state of affairs in higher education and the labour market in Bulgaria.

2.3. Towards understanding of higher education as a good

Following Connell (2012, p. 681), I assume that social justice in education not only concerns equality in the distribution of an education service (important as fair distribution may be) but also the nature of the service itself, and the consequences for society over time. Given this, the present study has identified that most of the studies on social justice in higher education are concerned with finding the right principles of distribution of higher education but are not engaged with the nature of the good that is distributed. Such alternative conceptualization, though, adds an additional complexity to the pursuit of social justice in the context of the changing nature of higher education, its expansion, diversification, globalization, and the transformation of labour market opportunities.

At this stage, I propose a rather static view of how higher education should be conceptualized and used in debates about pursuit of social justice. In developing this conceptualization of higher education as a good, I have drawn on the model proposed by Elaine Unterhalter and Harry Brighouse (2007, 2010) for measuring justice in education, and I try to extend it in a way that it might better serve the purposes of the current thesis; I further use it to investigate the social justice at the entry and exit of higher education. In so doing, I refer to the main social theories that have dominated the debate on the mechanisms and factors of the distribution of higher education.

2.3.1. Unterhalter and Brighouse's model for conceptualizing and measuring justice in education

Specifically, Unterhalter and Brighouse (2007, 2010) suggest a framework centered on the agency and well-being freedom of people. Furthermore, they distinguish three different aspects of the value of education and reveal how each of them intersects with a terrain of freedom. In so

doing, they explore the links between capabilities and primary goods as related to education. In this framework, education has an instrumental, intrinsic and positional value.

The instrumental aspect of education in their opinion refers to schooling (e.g. it may help people to gain and maintain employment). This aspect is very important because if a person has not attended school and has not acquired any skills, s/he could not achieve vital aspects of agency and well-being, i.e., could not live a life one has reason to value. However, what is important for people to know in terms of skills is contextual and may vary in different societies and economies. The instrumental value of education may be developed via the conditions in formal settings for learning, such as the teachers, support for practice on new skills from family, adequate time and other resources, and many other easily measurable conditions. However, the aspects of well-being and agency are often ignored when measuring the education production function.

In contrast, the intrinsic value of education refers to the non-instrumental benefits that people could gain from it, such as becoming attached to reading literature. Now, standard measures of educational achievement provide no indicator for thinking about this value of education. To capture it, proxy measures could be used: for instance, measures that would indicate a gain in agency and well-being achievement, such as data on valued aspects of life or on success in pursuing valued goals. If we try to take into consideration agency and well-being freedom, and the conditions which secure it, as it was suggested, in the field of the instrumental aspect of education, we may encounter the problem of 'adapted preferences', especially if we rely only on subjective measures, which have been criticized within the capability approach as being important but insufficient measures of well-being. However, the fact that the field of the intrinsic value of education also intersects with the area concerned with agency and well-being freedom, which will not be measured only by subjective preference statements, and also overlaps with the area of the instrumental value of education, makes it possible to collect data on objective measures as well.

The third aspect of education discussed by Brighouse and Unterhalter (2010) is its positional value. It is linked with the idea that the benefits one could gain from education depend on how successful one has been in relation to others. This value of education is associated with the certification aspect of education but also with the reputation or location of the school one attends, how well the teachers in the school transmit 'cultural capital', or to what extent they have

overcome race and gender hierarchies. Due to the positional value of some aspects of education, schools may have very unequal effects on different groups of people even if the schools are similar in terms of measures of the education production function. This field, as they put it:

... is an attempt to make invisible forms of discrimination by gender, race, or class, forms of misrecognition that occur, and to consider some way of using school system to effect redress and understanding of past injustices (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2010, p. 210).

The well-being and agency freedom in this aspect of education may be captured by using measures such as parental income, education or other aspects of social identities.

Overall, by placing people's well-being and agency freedom at the heart of these overlapping fields (values), Brighouse and Unterhalter attempt to work with some of the intersections of the capability and primary good metrics and to acknowledge the importance of social conditions with regard to any instrument of measurement of justice. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that, in societies with different level of inequalities, or at certain moments, certain fields may be more important than others for supporting the interest in living a life one has reason to value. Their idea is to show that measures of educational justice need to reflect all three aspects of education.

From my perspective, although this model is very comprehensive, it would be useful to further adapt it to higher education and to incorporate in it the public value of higher education. Thus, I have drawn on the model proposed by Brighouse and Unterhalter to develop a working conceptualization of higher education as *a good* that may be used when thinking about higher education in a social justice perspective. This conceptualization will be presented in the next section.

2.3.2. Model for conceptualizing social justice in higher education by adopting an understanding of higher education as a good

Similarly to Brighouse and Unterhalter, I also put at the center of our model the well-being and agency freedom of people, understood as the freedom to live a life people have reason to value and as a freedom to pursue and achieve their goals according to their conception of the good. Thus, in focusing on the well-being of people, my view is also consistent with Philip Brown, Hugh Lauder and David Ashton (2011), who justify the necessity of applying a new approach to

education¹¹ that would be people-centered and oriented to the quality of life that people live.

However, according to my conceptualization, higher education understood as a good can be better grasped if we take into account at least three of its dimensions— *private*, *public* and *positional*, which are inseparable and should not be neglected in discussions on social justice in higher education. Henry M. Levin, Ilja Cornelisz Barbara Hanisch-Cerda (2013) have recently discussed that education is neither a purely private nor a public but a ‘mixed’ good because it provides both types of benefits. Although I agree that higher education can be called a mixed good, I think that the positional aspect of higher education also should be incorporated in this mixture. Thus, I try to go beyond “the simple binary” used to illustrate the public and private divide in education (Power & Taylor, 2013, p. 465). Furthermore, talking about higher education as a good is useful when considering the distribution aspects in the access to it and at its exit.

Higher education as a private good

In fact, the debate as to whether higher education should be considered a public or a private good has a long tradition. As Calhoun (2006) has noted, the answer to this question refers to the answers of four main questions:

Where the money comes from? Who governs? Who benefits? How is knowledge produced and circulated? (Calhoun, 2006, p. 7).

More specifically, the private dimension of higher education in my conceptualization has to do with the question of the *added value of higher education for the individual and his/her own development*. The answer to this question refers to the intrinsic value of higher education but also to its role for qualifying people and making them able to find and maintain employment.

¹¹They emphasize that “when encouraged to see our education as an economic investment, our jobs solely as a source of income, and the size of our wallets as the measure of our social contribution, it obscures the fact that how people develop (or otherwise) depends on many factors, including the century one is born in, the place one lives, the wealth of one’s parents, the quality of schooling, and job prospects, as these all shape opportunities, ambition, and a willingness to learn” (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton 2011, p. 161).

Instrumental aspect of higher education

It seems that the qualifying function of higher education somehow prevails when thinking about the higher education as a private good. This view is mainly shared by the proponents of human capital theory and its followers. More specifically, *human capital theory* (Mincer, 1958, 1984; Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1962, 1993) implies that education has an instrumental value and the more people invest in their education, the higher returns they may expect on the labour market. In fact, the human capital perspective, associated with the work of the economists Theodore W. Schultz (1961), Jacob Mincer (1958, 1984) and Gary Becker (1962, 1993), has had a great influence on the contemporary development of higher education and the rise of knowledge-economy discourse. It suggests that the skills and knowledge that people have may be theorized as a form of capital. This theory implies that education is a form of investment in individual human capital. As such, it raises one's monetary returns from education. The human capital perspective also implies that the increase of a person's stock of education interpreted as a form of capital may be perceived as a key to economic growth. It postulates that expenditure on training and education is costly, and should be considered as an investment since it is undertaken with a view to increasing personal incomes. A common feature of the literature devoted to the human capital perspective is that it focuses on the productive potential of human beings. According to Theodore W. Schultz (1961: 2):

By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choice available to them.
It is one way free man can enhance their welfare.

Schultz (1961, p. 8) further distinguishes between two dimensions of the human resources: quantitative (e.g. working hours and number of people who are working) and qualitative (e.g. skills and knowledge) and underlines that he focuses on the latter since only the expenditures on them enhance the human capabilities to do productive work and can in fact yield a positive rate of return from the investment. He sketches a wide range of activities that may improve these capabilities, starting from health care facilities, going through formal education and the diverse forms of training such as on-the-job training and adults study programmes, ending with migration, seen as one of the ways one can find a better job whereby one could fully realize one's productive capacity.

In his article *Human Capital and Economic Growth*, Mincer (1984) discusses the influence of human capital on economic growth at individual, national and global levels. In his view, education and training are to be analyzed as economic decisions through the lens of human capital, given that the acquiring of human capital through any of these is associated with particular costs and benefits. Mincer looks at education as both an effect and a cause of income at micro-level. He also focuses on the interdependence of human capital and economic growth, claiming that, at macro-level, human capital is “both a condition and a consequence of economic growth” (p. 200). Seen as a source of new knowledge, human capital, in Mincer’s opinion, “shifts production functions upward and generates worldwide economic growth” (Mincer, 1984, p. 201).

Becker (1962) interprets the investing in human capital as imbedding of resources in people. The pursuance of such activities, in his view, influences the future income of people. Furthermore, Becker (1962) argues that the human capital perspective provides a convincing explanation of the income inequalities between people. As he puts it:

... some people may earn more than others simply because they invest more in themselves (Becker, 1962, p. 48).

In his seminal study *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* (1993), Becker perceives education and training as “the most important investments in human capital” (p. 17). This view is based on the assumption that, by providing knowledge and skills, schooling and learning, and training outside schools (e.g. on-the-job training) people’s earnings and their productivity may rise. Another major assumption of this theory is that all human capital is homogeneous, which conflicts with qualitative differences in types of education, on-the-job training, informal learning, etc. It is believed, though, that in so doing one can concentrate on more fundamental relationships (Becker, 1993, p. 136). Despite that, human capital theory acknowledges that various institutions that offer education all influence the distribution of earnings through their impact on the distribution of opportunities. More specifically, Becker (1993, p. 137) states that:

... equality of opportunity implies that all supply curves are identical, with opportunity being more unequal, the greater their dispersion.

According to this statement, an adoption of the egalitarian approach to distribution would imply that equalizing opportunity would essentially eliminate all the inequality in earnings and

investments, whereas the ‘elite’ approach would deny that this would make any essential difference.

Intrinsic aspect of higher education

Despite the enormous contribution of this theory, especially in emphasizing the importance of education in contemporary world development and in the context of knowledge economy, the human capital perspective has been criticized for several reasons. First, for looking upon human beings only as means of production, whereas they are also “the end of the exercise” (Sen, 1997, p. 1960). Second, when considering the instrumental role of human capital, the human capital framework does not take into account that the investment in education may result in a social change alongside the economic one. As Amartya Sen (1997, p. 1961) counterargues, the expansion of basic education may also contribute to the improvement of the quality of public debates. Third, although this theory does quite well in explaining why highly educated people earn more than lower educated ones, it does not explain why different people need different investments to achieve the same outcomes and also why diverse people with the same level of education may have different incomes. Fourth, this framework has been criticized for not taking into account the segregated labour markets, where people, irrespective of their level of education, are allocated to particular jobs on the grounds of race, gender, or assumptions about class or caste¹² (Unterhalter, 2009b, p. 211). Last but not least, the vision for education that the human capital theory offers seems to be very narrow since human beings act as if motivated by “economic reasons *only*” (Robeyns, 2006b, p. 72). Such an understanding of education does not take into account the wider benefits which education might have for people, which go beyond its role as a human capital. In fact, other reasons, such as studying for the sake of studying, are not at all considered in this theory.

Thus, higher education may have intrinsic values for the individual, such as the enjoyment of reading a book, being interested in politics, going to an opera concert, participating in interest clubs, learning new things which have influence on the development of the personality but have

¹²Thus, for instance, Schulz (1961, pp. 3-4) explains the differences between the earnings of non-white urban males and white males with the differences in the education they have.

no direct monetary benefits. This value may also be related to enhancing the social¹³ and cultural¹⁴ capital of people (Bourdieu, 1976; Coleman, 1988). Both of these forms of capital, however, may be considered as potential spaces of inequalities.

Higher education as a positional good

The positional dimension has to do with the question *about the quality of higher education*. It may also be seen in two aspects: an inwards and an outward. They refer to two of the dimensions of the quality of schooling¹⁵ that Fred Hirsch discusses in his book *Social Limits to Growth* (1976), namely *absolute* and *relative*. Whereas in the first dimension, the quality is added by good teachers and facilities, and receptive students, in the case of the relative dimension “quality consists of the differential over the educational level attained by others” (Hirsch, 1976, p. 5).

¹³ Social capital as a concept was first introduced by James S. Coleman (1988). It parallels the concepts of financial, physical and human capital but is embodied in the relations between persons (Coleman, 1988). Social capital refers to the social resources students bring to their education and future engagement in school or community, resulting in building of networks and relationships they can use as contacts for future opportunities. It can be formed within the family as well as outside it. It is defined as “a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors - within the structure” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). In fact, there are three forms of social capital: obligations and expectations, information-flow capability of the social structure, and norms accompanied by sanctions (Coleman, 1988). Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence, e.g. parents cannot transmit their own human capital to their children without social capital or the lack of it can constrain someone from accumulating financial capital can constrain someone from accumulating financial capital. Therefore, the lack of this type of capital in some people and its presence in others can be a potential source of inequalities.

¹⁴ Cultural capital refers to cultural practices, incl. language patterns and experiences such as visits to museums that provide knowledge of middle- and upper class culture. All individuals have some cultural capital. However, the form of capital one has is an indicator of one’s status. Cultural resources are more difficult to appropriate than material resources, since they can only be generated in a long process of socialization, in the parental family and in the educational system. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the educational systems of industrialized societies function in such a way as to legitimate class inequalities. As Bourdieu puts it there are indications that education: “is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a *social* gift treated as a *natural* one” (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 110).

¹⁵ Philip Brown (2004) applies Hirsch’s approach to the concept of employability. He talks about relative and absolute dimensions of employability.

However, in the context of the diversification of higher education that we observe nowadays in terms of the variety of fields of studies and types of degrees, and with the stratification of higher education institutions in terms of how they are ranked, this absolute dimension has become much more heterogeneous. Thus, when considering the *absolute* dimension, we have to take into account the capacity of the educational systems to structure access and labour market outcomes of education (e.g. Allmendinger, 1989; Kerckhoff, 2001) and the institutional diversity of higher education. The *relative* dimension refers to access and may arise when many people apply for universities but the number of places are limited, especially in the most prestigious higher education institutions. The *relative* dimension may be observed on the labour market – when the market of specialists with tertiary degrees is saturated. More details about the distinction of these two dimensions are given in the following two sections.

The absolute dimension

The absolute dimension may be linked with the theories that acknowledge the *institutional perspectives of education* developed in the sociology of education. These perspectives are relevant in thinking about higher education as a good in the context of higher education expansion. They are used mainly to explain inequalities in access and how people are matched to jobs. This set of studies consists mainly of comparative studies focusing on the way different characteristics of the educational system, such as stratification, standardization and diversification, determine how people are matched to jobs (Allmendinger, 1989; Kerckhoff, 2001; Kogan, Noelke, & Gebel, 2011; Maurice, Sellier, & Silvestre,¹⁶ 1986; Müller & Shavit, 1998; van de Werfhorst, 2004). However, they are not very sensitive to diverse groups. Thus, for instance, initial formulations of this institutional perspective has been criticized for being

¹⁶ Marc Maurice, François Sellier, and Jean-Jacques Silvestre (1986) may be considered pioneers in this area. Drawing on a comparison between the German and French educational system, they conclude that an educational system may be considered as a space either of qualification or of organization. They found that in Germany the vocational qualifications were used by employers to organize jobs and to allocate persons among them, while in France, education was less closely related to the workplace and vocational skills were mainly obtained on the job. More specifically: “worker placement in Germany is strongly influenced by job-related training and has relatively little to do with general education. In France, the situation is reverse. General education appears to have an independent effect on social status in France, and workers who hold professional credentials seem to be the ones who have done well in their general schooling” (Maurice, Sellier, & Silvestre, 1986, p. 5).

‘gender-blind’, and analyses of national systems from a gender perspective have tended to focus more on overall levels and patterns of female labour force participation than on gender differences in types of employment (Smyth, 2005, p. 453).

Given the specific context of higher education, in her article *Educational Systems and Labour Market Outcomes*, Jutta Allmendinger (1989) observes differences in the way the educational systems in the US, Norway and West Germany define occupational opportunities for individuals at entry into the labour market. She argues that these specificities have long-term implications for how people are matched to jobs. In other words, she claims that:

... the amount of schooling a person attains and the occupational career this person experiences are dependent on the educational environment (Allmendinger, 1989, p. 232).

Allmendinger distinguishes between two critical properties of educational systems: *standardization* and *stratification*. Whereas stratification refers to different criteria in the selection procedures within the system, standardization has to do with the degree to which the quality of education meets uniform standards nationwide. Her analysis reveals that when a person is educated in a stratified system, his or her occupational status is strongly determined by educational attainment. In contrast, the relationship between educational attainment and occupational status is less strong in unstratified systems. She finds that the educational system also shapes career trajectories, specifically, the likelihood of changing jobs. A person educated in a standardized system changes jobs less frequently than one educated in an unstandardized system.

In their comparative study of educational qualifications and occupational destinations in 13 countries, *From School to Work. A Comparative Study of Educational Qualifications and Occupational Destinations*, Walter Müller and Yossi Shavit (1998) take into consideration additional institutional factors to the already mentioned ones, such as the differentiation of the secondary education system between vocational and academic education and the relative size of the tertiary educational sector. Their study shows “considerable similarity alongside considerable variation between countries in the pattern of association between education and labour-force outcomes” (Müller & Shavit, 1998, p. 37). They document that similarities are related to the fact that education affects occupational allocation whereas the differences are due to the substantial variation in the magnitude and form of the effects of education.

It should be noted that, while the previous concepts and typologies are mainly developed to systemize structural differences at secondary education level¹⁷, other concepts have been developed to account for variability at the tertiary level (Van de Werfhorst, 2004; Shavit, Arum, & Gamoran, 2007). Furthermore, the existing typologies have been criticized for not taking into account the signals that the fields of study provide to employers in the case of higher education (Van de Werfhorst, 2004). In this regard, Herman G. Van de Werfhorst (2004) suggests three modifications of earlier typologies that might increase the transparency of competences that the universities offer to students. More specifically, information would be required: i) as to the extent of vocationally oriented tertiary schooling; ii) whether a university system is organized in a bachelor's-master's structure, and iii) whether, within a degree course, students choose minor or major subjects.

Other studies have acknowledged the importance of taking into account both the *vertical* and *horizontal* dimensions of the differentiation of higher education when analyzing the effect of education on the labour market outcomes of education (Kim & Kim, 2003; Noelke, Gebel, & Kogan, 2012). In their working paper on the returns to tertiary education in Germany and the UK, Anna Kim and Ki-Wan Kim (2003) describe the *vertical* one as accounting for the existing hierarchical structure of the tertiary educational system that is most significantly characterized by divergence into lower and higher level institutions. They distinguish it from the *horizontal*

¹⁷ Thus, for instance, Alan C. Kerckhoff (2001) notes that stratification and standardization (together with vocational specificity) are viewed as a basis for educational systems' varied "capacity to structure" students' entry into the labour force. As an additional dimension to these three, he proposes differentiation and the extent to which students have opportunities to make choices. He gives as an example the differences between the German, British and American systems. More specifically, the German system differs from the British and American ones in providing fewer opportunities for students to make choices as they pass through school, while the British system offers more options. Furthermore, Kerckhoff (2001) argues that in order to obtain an adequate comparative picture of the role of education in the process of stratification and to clearly conceptualize the education-occupation association, the transition periods that young people's trajectories follow need to be examined in greater detail. In another study, he identifies two ideal types of secondary education system (2001). The first type consists of highly standardized and stratified systems whose credentials recognize vocational specialization. In contrast, the second type refers to relatively unstandardized and unstratified systems with credentials having little vocational relevance. Following this typology, Germany maybe classified under the first type, and the US, under the second.

differentiation, which is seen as related to the existence of different fields of study¹⁸ and of different programmes in a given institution. In a similar vein, Clemens Noeke, Michael Gebel and Irena Kogan (2012) classify the field of study as a horizontal dimension of the differentiation of higher education (or its occupational specificity). However, they capture another aspect of the vertical dimension related to the degree level of education (or cumulative duration of studies). In a similar fashion, Theodore P. Gerber and Sin Yi Cheung (2008) refer to the level or quantity of education received (number of years or highest degree) as a vertical dimension of education. However, with respect to the horizontal dimension, they insist on its plural form and associate it not with the occupational specificity but with the different types or quality of education received at a particular level. More specifically, they distinguish institutional characteristics (college quality and type) from college experiences (field of specialization, academic performance, and pathway) and make an overview of how these are related to labor market outcomes and how these horizontal aspects of college education play a stratifying role.

The results of a study on institutional stratification and its capacity to structure graduate careers in Germany and Britain are also consistent with the view that differentiated employment outcomes after graduation are the result of a vertical differentiation of higher education institutions and degrees (Leuze, 2011). More specifically, this study observes that in Germany, where the higher education system is weakly stratified by types of institutions and type of degrees, the system does not provide sufficiently clear signals for sorting students into a vertically differentiated occupational structure. Britain is a quite contrasting case: its higher education system is highly stratified, which leads to a generally stronger selection by type of institution and type of degree, which in turn guarantees favourable labour market outcomes only for a small proportion of graduates.

The studies presented above highlight the importance of particular features of the educational systems and of the type of education with respect to considering the distribution of higher

¹⁸In fact, the importance of field of study for the explanation of the social inequalities in modern Western societies and of intergenerational mobility has been explored in other studies as well (see Van de Werfhorst & Kraaykamp, 2001; Van de Werfhorst, 2002). Herman Van de Werfhorst & Gerbert Kraaykamp (2001) argue that the field of study is important because it supplies four types of resources to students - cultural, economic, communicative, and technical; people invest in these sources when making educational decisions and analyse the extent to which the field-related educational resources explain social differentiation in labour market outcomes, consumption patterns and socio-political orientations.

education as a good; these features are considered important when thinking about higher education as a positional good. The vertical and horizontal dimensions, which constitute the absolute aspect of higher education as a positional good, are important to the extent that they give people different levels of freedom to live a life they have reason to value and to pursue their life goals. Therefore, their contribution should not be ignored in the debate on social justice in higher education understood as a good.

The relative dimension

In his book *Social Limits to Growth*, the economist Fred Hirsch (1976) claims that the structural characteristics of modern economic growth are neglected and not enough attention is paid to the fact that as the level of average consumption rises, an increasing portion of the consumption takes on a social as well as an individual aspect. In his view, this means that the satisfaction that individuals derive from goods and services depends increasingly not only on their own consumption but on that of others as well Hirsch (1976, p. 2). Thus, a central concept of the analysis of this kind of social congestion is the concept of social scarcity, which expresses the idea that the good things of life are restricted not only by the physical limitations on producing more of them but also by absorptive limits on their use. According to Hirsch, where social interactions are of the type “if everyone stands on tiptoe, no one sees better”, the individual action is no longer a sure means of fulfilling the individual choice: “the preferred outcome may be attainable only through collective action” (Hirsch, 1976, p. 5).

In the specific context of education, the *positional perspective* acknowledges the relative value of education. This approach postulates that the utility of expenditure on a given level of education as a means of access to the most sought after jobs will decline as more people attain that level of education.

The value to me of my education depends not only on how much I have but also on how much the man ahead of me in the job line has (Hirsch, 1976, p. 3).

Hirsch points out that there is a strong demand for access to relatively high educational qualifications because people that have them are seen to enjoy attractive professional and social opportunities. According to him, such a demand may flow through the market, due to the willingness of individuals to pay higher fees for educational services that are supplied by private

institutions without public support. This leads to broadening of the access to higher educational levels by fostering equality of educational opportunity or equality of educational outcome, which according to Hirsch, involves a number of difficulties (Hirsch, 1976, p. 5). Furthermore, Hirsch (1976) criticizes the application of the concept of equal opportunity in education for failing to take into account the sorting and screening functions that education has. In his view, education is, in fact, “a device for controlling social scarcity” (Hirsch, 1976, p. 5).

The relative dimension of education is also acknowledged in the so-called *job competition model* developed by economist Lester Thurow (1975). This model assumes that labour productivity is determined by job characteristics instead of worker characteristics. It also assumes that work-related skills are mainly acquired on-the-job and not in education. Within this theory, people are competing for ‘training slots’ and not for wages. More specifically, this model implies the existence of two queues. The first one comprises the available vacancies; the jobs to be taken by applicants. The order of this queue is determined by the complexity of the vacant jobs. The second queue consists of the potential employees, or applicants. This queue is ordered on the basis of the educational attainment of applicants. Selection and allocation on the labour market brings the two queues together, starting from the top of complex jobs and highly educated applicants. Education is one of the determinants of the relative position in this queue, and thus affects not only wages (determined by the jobs individuals obtain) but also job opportunities (the individuals with the least education are always placed behind).

Overall, these theories oppose the human capital theory and defend the view that the employers do not hire employees on the basis of the knowledge they have but use their education as a signal of people’s productive capabilities. These theories assume that the employers are in a condition of uncertainty when making decisions to recruit people and so rely on education as a form of a *signal* (Spence, 1973) or as a *filter* (Arrow, 1973) in order to assess the productive capabilities of the job candidates. In other words, by hiring people with high levels of education they have higher chances that the on-the-job training of these people, in whom they will invest, will be profitable for them.

In the model developed by Michael Spence (1973), the investment in education is a form of *signaling costs*. In this regard, individuals are assumed to select signals in such a way that they can maximize the difference between offered wages and signaling costs. In a similar vein,

Kenneth Arrow (1973) argues that more education contributes in no way to superior economic performance; it increases neither cognition nor socialization. As he puts it:

Instead, higher education serves as a screening device, in that it sorts out individuals of differing abilities, thereby conveying information to the purchasers of labor (Arrow, 1973, p. 194).

Arrow (1973) emphasizes that the filtering role of education differs from, but at the same time does not contradict, the productivity-adding role of education, assumed in the human capital theory¹⁹.

The relative aspect of education is also realized in the sociology of education, more specifically in the *credentialist theory* (Collins, 1979) which may be located in the so-called conflict tradition. This conflict tradition challenges the functionalist assumptions²⁰ that schools are ideologically

¹⁹The strength of one or both mechanisms has been compared by a number of scholars. Richard Layard and George Psacharopoulos (1974) argue in support of the human capital models. Their study outlines three predictions that are not taken into consideration in the screening hypothesis. These are the rates of return to uncompleted courses, the fact that the educational differentials rise with age, and that screening may be done by other procedures than via education, if it is one of its main functions. By disaggregating the actual years of schooling into components and using them as explanatory variables to estimate the earnings of people, Wim Groot and Hessel Oosterbeek's study (1994) also provides evidence in support of the human capital model and refutes the screening hypothesis. John G. Riley (1979) disputes this and finds that the screening interpretation of schooling as a provider of both additional skills and information indeed offers a more complete explanation of observed behaviour than the traditional human capital models. In contrast to these findings, Andrew Weiss (1995) assumes that signaling and screening models should be accepted not as competing with the human capital model but as its extension. Furthermore, he refers to signaling and screening as "sorting models" of education, arguing that they both serve to "sort" workers according to their unobserved abilities. More specifically, Weiss claims that the sorting models of education "can be best viewed as extensions of human capital models. However, while human capital theory is concerned with the role of learning in determining the return to schooling, sorting models, while allowing for learning, focus on the ways in which schooling serves as either a signal or filter for productivity differences that firms cannot reward directly" (Weiss, 1995, p. 134).

²⁰ Comparing the capacity of the functional and conflict theories to explain the principal dynamics of rising educational requirements for employment in America, in his paper *Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification*, Randall Collins (1971) provides evidence in favour of the conflict theories. Collins emphasizes that functional analysis does not provide an answer as to which ascribed groups will be able to dominate in which positions, and that to answer this question, we should examine the conditions of relative power of each group. He points out that the higher educational requirements, and the higher level of educational credentials offered by individuals competing for position in organizations, have in turn increased the demand for education by the populace (Collins, 1971). As Collins (1971, p. 1016) puts it: "As

and politically neutral and operate based on meritocracy, with each child being able to attain the highest level of his or her ability. Conflict theorists argue that inequality is based on one's position in the social system, not on merit, and that schooling privileges some children and disadvantages others. In his book *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*, Collins (1979) observes that education becomes more costly and promises less of a payoff for given levels of credentials than previously; hence students and those who pay their bills are relatively less willing to make the investment. He (1979) focuses on 'credentialism' or the increased requirements for higher level positions used by more advantaged individuals to further their status. According to the *credentialist theory*, the rapid expansion of educational qualifications, faster than the number of jobs, has led to 'credential inflation'. Collins (1979) sees the solution of this situation in returning schools to a situation where they must support themselves by their own intrinsic products rather than by the currency value of the degrees they offer.

In general, there are many studies compare different mechanisms for explaining different labour market outcomes of education across countries or between different settings of the same country (e.g. private/public sector or industries). Thus, Rolf K. W. Van der Velden and Maarten H. J. Wolbers (2007, p. 69) argue that, although it is theoretically useful to distinguish the different mechanisms through which employers sort and select employees, it is probably more fruitful to specify the conditions under which one or the other mechanism prevails than to claim that only one mechanism explains all. They make useful distinction between human capital and the job competition models. According to this distinction, whereas the first one predicts strong effects of level of education on wages and no effect on employment opportunities, the second one predicts strong effects of level of education on all socio-economic outcomes, wages included. Applying the theoretical assumptions of both mechanisms, using the Netherlands as a case study, they discovered evidence that human capital factors mattered more in private than in the public sector.

In a similar fashion, in his paper *Credential inflation and educational strategies: A comparison of the United States and the Netherlands*, Herman G. Van de Werfhorst (2009) explores how

the struggle for mass educational opportunities enters new phases in universities of today and perhaps in the graduate schools of the future, we may expect a further upgrading of educational requirements for employment".

different mechanisms relate to structural settings on the labour market and how this is translated into setting variation in the labour market behaviour of the employees and their employers in the Netherlands. He observes that, on the one hand, economists have paid much attention to comparing mechanisms for ‘the education effect’ largely by comparing human capital in terms of positional good (or ‘screening’) explanations. However:

... these studies have not aimed at explaining the cross-national variations in the usefulness of such mechanisms. On the other hand, sociologists have carefully studied cross-national variation in the strength of the effect of schooling on labour market outcomes, but they have ignored the differential mechanisms underlying this relationship ... (Van de Werfhorst, 2009, p. 271)

Van de Werfhorst argues that countries vary as to how well some mechanism or other explains the effect on education there, but in order the usefulness of one mechanism vs. another to be hypothesized, it is important to investigate the conditions under which it becomes likely that employers will behave in a way corresponding to the behavioural models of the competing theories. In this paper, the hypothesis of the impact of the credential inflation on educational decision making was tested in the particular contexts of the Netherlands and the United States. More specifically, this study demonstrates that credential inflation between two generations increased the likelihood of making a transition into tertiary education in the Netherlands, and into high school completion and 4-year university degrees in the United States. Based on this finding, it is assumed that education functions as a positional good, and if education loses its value, people will need more of it in order to reach the same social class as their parents. This study also provides evidence that the cross-national variation in the US may be explained by the theory that education functions as a positional good. However, this is less relevant for the Netherlands, where in the strong vocational sector, evidence was found that the educational system functions in line with the human capital approach. The same study also reveals that various industries in the Netherlands differ in the extent to which overschooling is rewarded in them.

I should mention here that, in an earlier article, Herman Van de Werfhorst and Robert Andersen (2005) explore the relationship between credential inflation, parental education and educational decisions in the US but this time in the light of the relative risk aversion theory. They argue that, if qualifications lose part of their labour market value, children will need more education to reach the same class positions as their parents. More specifically, they compare the labour market value of specific educational transitions for each generation compared with the parents’ generation via

the ‘intergenerational inflation factor’ to test the mechanism of ‘relative risk aversion’. Similarly to Van de Werfhorst’s study (2009), differences in mechanisms were found to exist between different transitions. Their results contradict this theory with regard to the transition into tertiary education and completion of university, where they found that children were more likely to invest in education if it increased in value. They found support for the theory of relative risk aversion only as regards the transition to postgraduate degree.

Another study, in addition to the characteristics of the educational system, includes factors related to the demand side of education, such as employment legislation and the structural effect on macro-economic conditions (Wolbers, 2007). It does so to explain the differences in labour market entry patterns among school leavers in 12 European countries. The results of this research demonstrate that these factors really do affect cross-national differences in labour market entry patterns.

Overall, whereas the absolute aspect of higher education as a positional good takes into consideration the diversity within higher education in terms of quality, different types of institution, fields of studies or types of degree, the relative aspect of higher education takes into consideration factors outside the educational system: structure of the student body, graduate body, employers’ perspectives, the labour market, etc.

Higher education as a public good

The public dimension has to do with the society and the question *about the contribution of higher education for the society as a whole*. As Zajda, Majhanovich and Rust (2006) have noted, the nexus between social justice and education indicates the problematic relationship between society and the State. Brennan and Naidoo (2008) suggest that we could think in two ways with respect to this question: on one hand, higher education could *import* social justice agendas from the wider society, and on the other, higher education could play an *export* role for social justice across the rest of the society.

Import aspect of higher education as a public good

Overall, the discussion on public goods also occupies a place, though a somewhat peripheral one, in the debates about justice (Miller, 1999, p. 10). Following Simon Marginson (2007), I assume that public goods are those:

... that (1) have a significant element of non-rivalry and/or non-excludability, and (2) goods that are made broadly available across populations. Goods without attributes (1) or (2) are private goods (Marginson, 2007, p. 315).

Applied to the specific context of higher education, higher education may be perceived as a public good when it is accessible to growing numbers of people and when measures have been undertaken to reduce inequalities in access to higher education (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2014). In other words, the extent to which higher education is accomplished as a public good in a given country depends on its accessibility and functions. At the same time, Marginson's definition implies that, under particular conditions, one dimension of higher education may prevail over another. Marginson also (2007) emphasizes that public and private goods are heterogeneous and that a distinction between public and private goods does not in itself solve distributional issues. Marginson (2011a) suggests that the greater enemy of the public good in universities is not the economic market but rather the status hierarchy and competition between universities and between nations, which contribute strongly to the self-interest of some universities. Taking into account the differences in prestige and quality between higher education institutions, the use of aggregate targets (such as the ET 2020 benchmark that, by 2020, the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40 percent) as a way to decrease educational inequalities may sidestep the question of the status (or quality) of particular student places. In the same vein, Walker and Boni (2013) also recognize status hierarchy as one of the challenges to higher education as a public good.

Export aspect of higher education as a public good

Brennan and Naidoo (2008) emphasize that much of the higher education research literature looks inwards towards higher education itself and assesses if the higher education staff and student body are socially representative. However, the export role is also important and should not be neglected from a social justice perspective. It should be mentioned that some studies have

addressed this export aspect of higher education and have justified it as necessary with regard to social justice. Thus, Walker (2012a) proposes a way for re-imagining university work so that the professionals might get committed to justice and become what she calls “public-good professionals”. Her study focuses on the other-regarding role in favour of the disadvantaged that professionals could play after their graduation. Thus, as a result of a study implemented in South Africa, Walker generates a Professional Capabilities Index, based on the assumption “that professional education has the potential to form agents who understand and respond to the plights of others” (Walker, 2012a, p. 823). This study suggests that:

... the quality of professional education in universities ought to be a resource for capability development and expansion, which then enables the poor and vulnerable – supported and empowered in part by professionals and their public service – to be able to achieve valuable goals and to have a dignified and secure life (Walker, 2012a, p. 820).

Expanding this study on higher education in South Africa, Vaughan and Walker (2012) focus on the role higher education may play to develop ‘pro-poor’ values in students who might, after university, go on to work for social justice and transformation in the wider society. Their approach consists of enquiry and collective scrutiny of evidence rather than transmission approaches to pedagogy, a climate of open discussion between students holding diverse points of view, and skillful teaching. In their opinion, in this way students might potentially arrive at a kind of Rawlsian ‘overlapping consensus’ about worthwhile values, even though they may not agree on everything. However, Vaughan and Walker (2012) acknowledge that due to various external influences, individuals will all have different tendencies, interests and values - something that the capability approach envisages happening. Thus, they show that some students inherently cared more about social justice than others.

This perspective is further developed by Melanie Walker and Monica Mclean (2013), who in their recent book *Professional Education, Capabilities and the Public Good: The Role of Universities in Promoting Human Development*, focus on how university-based professional education in South Africa might contribute to the public good, in particular to poverty-reduction, and thus to achieving more justice and less inequality. More specifically, using a theoretical framework drawn from the human development and the capabilities approach, they propose the term ‘public-good professionals’ to convey the concept of professionals with the values, knowledge and skills needed to provide services to the public that expand the opportunities of

people to lead better lives and achieve what their clients have reason to value.

Overall, this export aspect of higher education is related to the question what university students do (e.g. being volunteers in certain forms of social activities) or higher education graduates could do (e.g. via their own labour and engagement) to enhance social justice in society.

At the centre of this three-faceted model of higher education as a good, I place individuals, and in particular their well-being and agency freedom. All of the aspects of education discussed above intersect in different ways with this freedom and thus shape its scope in different time and country settings. In developing this model, my view is also consistent with Brennan and Naidoo (2008) who argue that the internal processes of higher education have implications for the shape and cohesion of societies and for the quality of life of individuals. In other words, my opinion is in line with their view that inward processes influence outward processes. At the same time, they share the concern that, even if participation is made more just and equitable, there still might remain important questions about higher education's contributions to society in other respects – who benefits and who pays the costs.

In the next subsection of the chapter, I focus on two main aspects of the distribution of education as a good – equality and equity, which have a special relevance for justice. Following The OECD report *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Special Features: Equity, Innovation, Labour Market, Internalisation* (2008), which distinguishes equity *in* from equity *through* higher education, I use this distinction to further discuss these two main aspects of the distribution and highlight their multi-faceted nature.

2.4. Equality and equity *in* higher education

Equality has long been of concern to philosophers and political and social theorists. In philosophy, it refers to the principle of the equal distribution of goods to different people. A central question relevant to equality is the evaluative space or metrics in justice. It is well-known that, in each theory of justice, especially of distributive justice, equality is sought in some 'space' that is seen as having a central role in that theory, and priority over other spaces - whether it be primary goods, resources, happiness, satisfaction, capabilities or other things. In what follows I refer mostly to equality in distribution, and only in some cases to social equality, which is a matter of how people regard one another and how they conduct their social relations (Miller,

1999). In contrast to the literature on equality in education, with some exceptions (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007; Goastellec, 2008b; Lucas & Beresford, 2010; Unterhalter, 2009a), it seems that there is less conceptual writing on the nature of equity in education. Moreover, equity, as a term, appears more frequently in policy texts, where, however, its meaning is not always explicitly defined.

Equality refers to the equality of distribution of goods and services to different groups, but it ignores the systemic and historical forms of exclusion that operate within society (Patton, Shahjahan, & Osei-Kofi, 2010). In this sense, equity plays the role of a correcting principle for unforeseen consequences of applying the principle of equality in a way that ignores certain structural characteristics of the whole society in question²¹.

In the relevant literature and in different policy reports and documents, there have been identified different ways of implementing the principle of equity in access to higher education in practice as well as many challenges that occur and make difficult the realization of equity in practice. In the following subsections, I focus on three axes on which are to be situated the terms used in discussing equality and equity – in some cases, these contradict each other, but they may also be mutually complementary. The axes in question are: equality of educational opportunities vs. equality of educational outcomes; and equity as fairness vs. equity as inclusion. Equity may be analyzed for a particular moment in time, but it may also be studied as a dynamic term. The final subsection discusses the main challenges facing the realization in practice of the principle of equity.

2.4.1. Equality of educational opportunities vs. equality of educational outcomes

In the context of education, equality has been understood as a leading principle ensuring social justice in education. A central question relevant to equality in education is found to be how to

²¹ An illuminating example of the difference between equality and equity are the two parts of Rawlsian second principle, including *equality of opportunity* to all and the *difference principle*. They emerge from the assumption that although equality is an important part of justice, it is not sufficient for achieving justice in society. Thus, within the Rawlsian conceptualization of justice, inequalities are justified only where the institutions are so arranged that they raise the level of those who are worst-off.

equalize access to, and participation within, different levels of formal education for different social groups. However, this is very difficult to achieve in practice since, as Philip Altbach reminds us, “access already means inequality” (2010, p. 3).

In her article *Conceptualizing social justice in education: mapping the territory*, Sharon Gewirtz (1998) outlines two dominant notions of distributive justice in the liberal tradition: a ‘weak’ version of justice as *equality of opportunity* and a ‘strong’ version of justice as *equality of outcome*. One of the main differences between the two conceptualizations of equality in the context of education is that their proponents hold this equalization should be implemented in different ways. Whereas the first view allows ‘soft’ forms of support for certain social groups through scholarships, preparatory courses, active advertising campaigns and incentives for universities, the second view advocates ‘hard’ forms of support, such as quotas and affirmative actions, applied to the access to higher education of disadvantaged groups (Boyadjieva, 2010b).

Both notions of equality have certain disadvantages and have been criticized for different reasons. Equality of opportunity has been criticized because equal consideration for all “may demand very unequal treatment in favour of the disadvantaged” (Sen, 1992 p. 1). At the same time, equality of outcomes may obscure the answer to the question how people end up with this outcome; also, it does not take into account differences in people’s ability to convert the resources that they have into actual outcomes.

Another perspective which has emerged recently is related to *equality of condition*. It refers to “the belief that people should be as equal as possible in relation to the central conditions of their lives”, “about ensuring that everyone has roughly equal prospects for a good life”, and “about equalizing what might be called people’s ‘real options’, which involves the *equal enabling and empowerment* of individuals” (Lynch & Baker, 2005 p. 132). Kathleen Lynch and John Baker (2005) have recognized five key dimensions along which it is vital to pursue equality of condition so that people can pursue a good life. More specifically, these are: resources; respect and recognition; love, care and solidarity; power; and working and learning.

Overall, a central problem with understanding of equality within political philosophy is that it does not explain why inequalities exist in the first place. It just offers a way of thinking about them in normative terms or of generating ideas for practical engagement with assessing and

remedying them. In contrast, in a broader view social sciences have also been concerned with problems of social equality and inequality, mostly in the case of social stratification theories.

A distinction within the area of social stratification is also commonly made between *inequality of opportunity* and *inequality of condition* (Breen & Jonsson, 2005, p. 223-225). Inequality of opportunity originates from the liberal goal that a person's chances to get ahead (attain an education, get a good job) should be unrelated to ascribed characteristics such as race, sex, or class (or socioeconomic) origin. By contrast, inequality of condition refers to "the distribution of differential rewards and living conditions, either in the simple form of distributions of scarce goods or in relation to different inputs (such as effort and time) or rights (such as citizenship or employment)" (Breen & Jonsson, 2005, p. 223). As Breen and Jonsson (2005 p. 224) emphasize that, in the social sciences, studies of inequality of opportunity are typically about attainments of educational qualifications and social positions (occupations, social class, etc.) and how these attainments are associated with ascribed characteristics. By contrast, studies of inequality of condition are concerned with income differences or differential rewards in the labor market or in the larger distributional system, including the welfare state.

2.4.2. Equity as fairness vs. inclusion

In the Oxford English Dictionary, equity is defined as "the quality of being fair and impartial" in a sense of "*equity of treatment*"²². Seen in the context of education however, equity "refers to fairness in the distribution of educational resources and outcomes" (Levin, Cornelisz, & Hanisch-Cerda, 2013, p. 517).

The OECD report *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Special Features: Equity, Innovation, Labour Market, Internalisation* (2008) reveals that equity in education has two dimensions closely intertwined with each other: *fairness* and *inclusion*. The fairness dimension "implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential"²³ whereas

²²See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/equity?q=equity>.

²³Such an understanding is applied in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in which equity in education is defined "as providing all students, regardless of gender, family background or socio-economic status, with similar opportunities to benefit from education" (OECD, 2013b, p. 27). According to this view, the weaker the impact of a student's

the inclusion dimension “implies ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic” (OECD, 2008 p. 13). More specifically, this view on equity is contextualized in the particular case of higher education in the following way:

*Equitable tertiary systems are those that ensure that access to, participation in and outcomes of tertiary education are based only on individuals’ innate ability and study effort. They ensure that educational potential at tertiary level is not the result of personal and social circumstances, including of factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, ethnic origin, immigrant status, place of residence, age, or disability*²⁴(OECD, 2008, p. 14).

In general, this report adheres to the view that equity *in* tertiary education involves not only equity within tertiary systems but also the mechanisms of tertiary education policy that seek to *redress* the effects of past unequal educational opportunities and mechanisms aimed at providing *equal opportunities in the labour market* upon completion of tertiary education. Given this, the general equity objective *in* tertiary education is the achievement of a student population that closely reflects the composition of society as a whole (OECD, 2008).

The report attempts to distinguish between *equity of access* and *equity of outcomes*, and between *equality of opportunities* and equity. Whereas *equity of access* relates to *equality of opportunities* to enter tertiary education and to access programmes at different levels and with distinct qualities, the *equity in outcomes* refers to opportunities to progress and complete tertiary studies and also to achieve particular returns on tertiary education. However, it seems that in most of the OECD countries, there is little emphasis on equity of outcomes and the equity policies have traditionally stressed equity of access (OECD, 2008, p. 35; 66).

Regarding the second distinction introduced by the OECD (2008), *equality of opportunities* relates to the opportunities to access tertiary education and the subsequent treatment the individual receives within tertiary education system. By contrast, *equity* refers to the conditions

socioeconomic status on his or her performance, the more equitable the school system. This definition does not imply that everyone should have the same results, nor does it imply teaching the same material or providing the same resources to all students (ibid.). Thus, in order to assess to what extent a given education system is equitable, this programme analyses the performance differences between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students, immigrant and non-immigrant students, or between those attending rural vs. urban schools (OECD, 2013b, p. 28).

²⁴Note: The italics are in the original text.

for acquiring operational skills that ensure the individual's employability and the success or failure of tertiary education to provide these skills.

Equity concerns are also an integral part of the Bologna Process under the form of the 'social dimension'. Social dimension was mentioned for first time at the first ministerial follow-up meeting in Prague (2001) and was recognized as a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA (Bergen Communiqué, 2005). Two years later, the aspiration was expressed that the "student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations" (London Communiqué, 2007, 2.18). Reaffirmed at that time was "the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background and was decided that the efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity should be continued" (London Communiqué 2007, 2.18).

In the Leuven Communiqué (2009) the following view on the social dimension was specified.

9. The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. We therefore emphasize the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies.

This view was also reaffirmed by Bucharest Communiqué 2012, which adheres to the view that quality higher education should be provided for all and which sees the widening access to higher education as a precondition for societal progress and economic development:

We will step up our efforts towards underrepresented groups to develop the **social dimension** of higher education, reduce inequalities and provide adequate student support services, counselling and guidance, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning. We encourage the use of peer learning on the social dimension and aim to monitor progress in this area.

Social dimension is so broad term that it can hardly be understood in an unanimous way. In this respect, a Eurydice's report (2010, p. 27) reveals that it is understood very differently from one country to another. This makes really difficult its operationalization, monitoring and especially the comparison between countries. In relation to this, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Latvia are the only countries that do not use monitoring of the social dimension in higher education as a policy

instrument that could accompany the measures that have been implemented to stimulate participation (Eurydice, 2010, p. 32). Most probably this is due to the fact that in many countries, the responsibility for the organization and implementation of many of these measures is delegated to higher education institutions and, as a consequence, collection of information and reports at national level is often lacking (Eurydice, 2010, p. 33). Nevertheless, this problem needs further investigation.

At the same time, very few countries have linked their policy on the social dimension to the Bologna commitment of raising the participation of underrepresented groups to the point where the higher education population mirrors the overall societal distribution (Eurydice, 2010, p. 27). In that sense, it seems that it is more common for countries to take measures to increase overall participation in higher education and to hope that in doing so the numbers of students from under-represented groups will also increase (Eurydice, 2010, p. 30). The same report reveals that the most common national measures to widen participation are the provision of targeted financial support and the development of alternative access routes and/or admission procedures. However, it is also not clear what kind of instruments is acceptable for achieving social justice in higher education and what kind of instruments will be most appropriate at each stage, for each country, and for specific groups that are underrepresented in different countries.

The Europe 2020 strategy also has equity implications for access to higher education but in the sense of inclusion. However, these implications are subordinated to the economic growth imperative. One of the targets is that by 2020, 40 percent of the people aged 30-34 should have a higher education.

2.4.3. Equity as a dynamic term

Equity, Elaine Unterhalter (2009a) suggests, might be thought of as equality turned into action, into a process of making. In her opinion, this active dimension is somehow neglected in academic literature. Similarly to the idea of social justice, equity has also evolved through history. Studying the changing nature of the term equity in policy documents in the British context, Unterhalter (2009a) identifies that it appears there in three different forms: *equity from below*, *equity from above* and *equity from the middle*. Each of these entails different ways of the implementation of equity in respect to education, which should be seen as mutually reinforcing, not excluding each

other. More specifically, *equity from below* refers to the idea of “equity as participation among equals” and entails that it may be implemented via dialogue and discussion on a particular issue, and not on the basis of majority rule. By contrast, *equity from above* refers namely to the regulation aspect of equity and indicates that “there are rules that have been decided as fair and reasonable by some widely recognised body of opinion” (Unterhalter, 2009a, p. 419). The third type, *equity from the middle*, often refers to the term efficiency. In the context of education, it “is associated with the movement of ideas, time, money, skill, organization or artefacts that facilitates ‘investments’ in the learning of children or adults and the professional development of teachers” (Unterhalter, 2009a, p. 421). Overall, by distinguishing these three ways of thinking about the implementation of equity in education, her study outlines how equity may be associated with particular forms of social arrangements which support the freedoms and forms of equality associated with capabilities.

The changing nature of the term equity has also been noted by other scholars, who explore it in the context of higher education expansion. Thus, in her article *Globalization and Implementation of an Equity Norm in Higher Education: Admission Processes and Funding Framework Under Scrutiny* Gaële Goastellec (2008b) has described the gradual change in the admission norms from a principle of ‘inherited merit’, through the norm of equality of rights (formal equality), and to a principle of *equality of opportunity*. Goastellec (2008b) also emphasizes that equity inaccess has become an ‘international standard’ as a consequence of demographic, economic, and political factors²⁵. She outlines that the equity norm has been implemented via two main instruments: the admission processes and funding policies²⁶. Although these have been applied differently in

²⁵ In addition, there has been “a growing appreciation of the complexity of social identities” which “is complemented by significant national specificity in respect of the social categories which are used to define social diversity” (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007, p. 137). In this regard, two questions that are gaining in central importance are: who are the main players in the identification of the identities and who plays a decisive role in this identification? (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007, p. 141)

²⁶ It is possible to consider other aspects of the education systems, where we may look at how social justice has been pursued and/or imperiled. Thus, Sally Power & Chris Taylor (2013, p. 469) identify funding, provision and decision-making in education as such aspects because they map the three dimensions of social justice proposed by Nansy Fraser’s account of justice: the economic, cultural and political. More specifically, they recognize funding as a key factor in the pursuit of economic justice in education; provision as a key element in promoting cultural justice in education; and decision-making as a key process in achieving political justice in education.

different countries, there has been a clear tendency for legitimization of *equality of opportunities* as an international norm that could bring not only enlarged access to higher education but widening access to higher education for all social groups. Furthermore, the admission processes, and more specifically the admission policies, are recognized as being those elements of higher education systems where two of the main values of contemporary higher education—its quality and social justice—are most clearly intertwined (Boyadjieva, 2010).

As regards access and funding policies, Heinz-Dieter Meyer (2013) suggests that they too have been changing over time. Following Meyer, it is possible to identify three periods of higher education access implemented so far, which correspond to different models of funding: *oligarchic*, *socio-democratic* and *neoliberal*. The oligarchic is chronologically the oldest model and dates from the end of WWII, when higher education was still an elite institution²⁷ (Trow 1974, 2010). At that time, only those who could fund their higher education studies privately had access. As the modernization and industrialization of countries required qualified people, the social-democratic model was introduced, in which students who were financially ineligible to attend were sponsored via redistributive schemes by the general taxpayer. However, at the dawn of the 21st century, when the knowledge-economy was on the rise, and when higher education was massified and entering its universal phase, a threat emerged that a continuation of tax-supported higher education access would break the public offers. The response to this new condition was the introduction of the neo-liberal model, in which the funding of higher education relies on the private market, with an emphasis on loans, sometimes complemented by merit-based components. According to Meyer, this shift has changed the role that higher education plays in society. More specifically, the withdrawal of the government from enabling access, whereby students and families are left to the vagaries of financial markets, suggests that “there is *no public interest* in enabling lower income groups to attend higher education” (Meyer, 2013, p. 18-19). All this raises concerns regarding fairness and injustice (especially in comparison with the social-

Making these connections, they explore how shifts between the public and private spheres can tackle one kind of injustice but create other kinds.

²⁷ According to Martin Trow’s (1974) framework on the development of higher education, there are three phases in this development: elite, mass and universal. A higher education system that has less than 15 percent of students out of the relevant age group is an elite system; between 15 percent and 50 percent, it can be accepted as a mass one; above 50 percent, the system can be accepted as a universal one (See also Trow, 1976, 2000, 2010).

democratic era), related mainly to rising costs, growing indebtedness of students and, last but not least, the lack of good jobs for graduates.

2.4.4. Challenges to the realization of equity in practice

Although equity has become a constituent part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through the social dimension, the Bologna Process, seems to contain contradictions as regards achieving equity without deteriorating the quality of education. If access to higher education were based on abilities, there is the risk it might not reflect the diversity of our populations, and vice versa; thus, it might fail to contribute to a better, more socially cohesive society.

In this regard, the stratification/hierarchical differences between higher education institutions are a potential threat to the implementation of the idea of equity, especially when it is defined as fairness. In the last few decades, the university ranking systems have become increasingly important²⁸. The rankings of Shanghai Jai Tong University and *Times Higher Education* are the most widely used internationally. Both²⁹ of these rankings emphasize research productivity and quality. Thus, even if there is equity in terms of adequate student representation of the population as a whole, there is a possibility this representation might be absorbed only by low-status higher education institutions. In this context, Simon Marginson (2011b) argues that a central problem in

²⁸These rankings have no official status but the idea that a wider public should be able to make judgments about the relative merits of educational institutions on the basis of published information has gained in importance (Turner, 2005, p. 343). Historically, rankings first appeared in the 1980s, when in the context of massification of higher education, employers and policy-makers began to raise the issue of quality (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011, p. 2). Typically, rankings are based on some combination of the criteria of institutional performance, institutional characteristics and other factors. However, a recent study on different league tables identified vast differences between these tables in terms of what they measure, how they measure it and how they implicitly define “quality” (Usher & Savino, 2006; Usher & Savino, 2007, p. 14).

²⁹Both rankings have been criticized for not providing information as to the quality of teaching (See Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Despite these concerns, other authors (Taylor & Braddock, 2007) supply evidence that the Jiao Tong system, although not perfect, is a better indicator of university excellence than the Times Higher.

In the European Union, there is growing recognition of the global rankings and of the need to improve them so they may be used for enhancing transparency of the quality of universities, information that will serve different groups such as students, parents, policymakers, etc. In view of this, a new university ranking system called U-Multirank was officially launched in the beginning of 2013. This project is bringing a new and broader approach to the assessment of universities throughout the world.

relation to *equity as fairness* is that it may sidestep “the question of status (or quality) of particular student places” which is left outside the focus of policy. It might thus turn out that ‘fairness’ at the bottom level should be advanced at the cost of “suppressing the meaning of differences in participation, and disguising the means whereby actual social advantage and disadvantage are reproduced” (ibid., p.32).

At the same time, Marginson acknowledges the dual role of status in regard to *equity as fairness* in higher education which may also spread its research role across the society as a whole. As a way out of this contradiction, Marginson suggests following the route of *equity as inclusion*, which would entail focusing on the uses people make of higher education - what they learn, its results for their personal formation, the labour market outcomes - and, based on these ideas, devising reforms that better address participation and thus generally contribute to the enhancement of individual and social freedoms.

In the recent book *Fairness in Access to Higher Education in a Global Perspective: Reconciling Excellence, Efficiency, and Justice*, its editors focus attention on the new challenge posed by the crisis trend in traditional models of higher education access. They argue that this crisis goes beyond issues of economic effectiveness or policy adjustment and is a ‘crisis of justice’ (Meyer John, Chankseliani, & Uribe, 2013). As they put it:

When large proportions of eligible young people are barred from accessing a public good that is increasingly essential to having full careers and leading full lives (or when they have access only under unacceptably ruinous conditions), then this constitutes a violation of basic feelings of fairness and justice (Meyer John, Chankseliani, & Uribe, 2013, p. 1).

Despite this, they observe that the alternatives are yet limited. To address the limitations of the contemporary discourse on adhoc reasoning about the most pressing current problems, such as the emphasis put either on economic development, equity, excellence or other aspects, or researchers’ neglect of the new settings related to the universalization of higher education in many countries, the authors call for a new discourse based on *a new way of reasoning* about these problems, a way that should have a normative basis, allow comparisons between alternatives, and be sensitive to the multiple dimensions of the problems.

Last but not least, an additional challenge that higher education faces in terms of realization of equity is that, in most countries, knowledge is lacking about the extent to which equity in tertiary

education represents a problem, because there is a lack of critical data, such as on the socio-economic background of students in tertiary education (OECD, 2008, p. 21). In this context, very few countries have defined specific goals that might improve the participation of weakly represented groups (Eurydice, 2010), and Bulgaria is one of the few countries that do not monitor the social composition of its student body (Eurydice, 2012).

2.5. Equality and equity *through* higher education

As evident from the previous section, the large amount of conceptual writing that focuses on equity and equality *in* higher education actually addresses access to and participation in higher education. However, the question arises whether greater equity at the point of entry into higher education necessarily provides greater equity at exit? Thus, although the issue of equity of outcomes³⁰ (equity *through* higher education) has been recognized as important in the debates about social justice in relation to higher education (e.g. OECD, 2008), there is as yet little conceptual writing about this issue, which has generally been underresearched. This is why in the following subsections, I try to explain why it is important to understand the outcomes of higher education in a social justice perspective. To do so, I first discuss equality and equity of the employment outcomes of higher education and then focus special attention on the term ‘employability’ as encompassing significant social justice issues.

2.5.1. Equality and equity of the employment outcomes of higher education

Some authors have already indicated the multifaceted nature of the issue of inequalities. Thus, Gaële Goastellec (2010, p. xiii) emphasizes that, alongside inequalities in access, there are also inequalities in success. In this regard, my view is also consistent with that of Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (2009, p. 116), who point out that:

A university which is effective in terms of its role in the promotion of social justice needs to ensure that measures permeate the whole breadth of university activity: from access through to the curriculum and to careers guidance.

³⁰ Here, I do not have in mind the outcomes associated with the performance of students during their studies.

In line with these perspectives, and following Leonard Holmes (2013, p. 538), I assume that the way in which higher education institutions help prepare students for their post-graduation lives is “a legitimate concern for a variety of stakeholders, particularly in relation to policy interventions and to institutional practice” and as such is just as important from a social justice perspective as is equity of access to higher education. Thus, credentials acquired through higher education seem to be increasingly central to the determination of life chances in most developed countries. In this sense, my opinion is also consistent with Brennan and Naidoo (2008), who emphasize that the degree of social equity in the acquisition of credentials becomes an important indicator of social justice.

While many different aspects of post-graduation lives may be studied, in this subsection I focus specifically on employment, which is undoubtedly an important part of post-graduation.

It seems that, in the context of current developments in higher education, such as its worldwide massification and the crowding graduate labour market, the emphasis on the employment outcomes of higher education is growing and there are increasing concerns about the distribution and equity of graduates’ economic opportunities (Tomlinson, 2012). Thus, Holmes (2013) has noted that governments and higher institutions that espouse a concern for greater social equity will have further concern for the employment outcomes of higher education. In the same vein, Gerbrand Tholen (2012) emphasizes that government strategies to increase participation or fairness need to examine the competition for graduate jobs in a social framework.

These concerns have to do with the greater investments in higher education made by governments, largely on the basis of a human capital investment rationale, and with the growing burden on students (and their families), who draw loans to finance their studies, which they must pay back after graduation. In the light of these trends, both governments and individuals, but also employers and teaching and support staff, will become concerned with the employment outcomes, and especially with the economic and social benefits of higher education in relation to the funding invested. This growing emphasis on the employment outcomes envisaged by Holmes (2013) may also be seen as part of the ‘crisis of justice’ that I have just discussed in relation to the access to higher education.

As regards equity of outcomes (equity *through* higher education) it is worth noting that the concept is often understood in very narrow terms as related to the *social mobility* effects of

tertiary education (OECD, 2008). In turn, social mobility in increasingly knowledge-driven economies is seen as powerfully linked to equitable access to higher education (Kwiek, 2015). From my perspective, however, ensuring the possibility that tertiary education policy should affect social mobility is not enough for enhancing social justice. Thus, my view is in line with that of Marina Elias Andreu and John Brennan (2012), who, taking the UK as an example, point out that, comparing the education and occupation of graduates with those of their parents, it is possible to register upward social mobility of higher education graduates, yet, the authors argue, the achieved mobility may not go along with equity when the occupations held by working class graduates are compared with the occupations held by middle class graduates. One of the reasons for this lies in the process of self-selection of students and the fact that, when hierarchical differences exist between institutions, students are guided by their preferences to ‘fit in’ in the higher education institution, course or degree, and not so much by their prospects to have a good job after graduation.

As noted by Phillip *Brown*, Hugh *Lauder* and David *Ashton* in their book *The Global Auction. The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs and Incomes* (2011), the study of social mobility highlights a crisis in the neo-liberal ‘opportunity bargain’ instead of showing a route to a fairer society. In this regard, in a more recent paper, Philip Brown (2013) discusses the two aspects of social mobility: absolute and relative. He expresses concerns regarding the lack of impact of various measures in education such as the widened access to higher education or the current policies for ‘relative’ mobility, which he designates as ‘fallacy of fairness’. In Brown’s view, ‘fallacy of fairness’ results from the limitations of the methodological individualism that fails to recognize what Fred Hirsch in his book *Social Limits of Growth* terms an ‘adding up’ problem, referring to the idea that “what each of us can achieve, all cannot” (Hirsch, 1976, p. 5). In view of this, Brown (2013) defines the experiences of many working-class and middle-class people in the beginning of the twenty-first century as *social congestion*, instead of defining it as intergenerational social mobility. However, it might be added that social congestion may be a result of different developments cross-nationally, so it is useful to have more information about the routes of expansion of higher education in terms of gender, fields of study, etc., and about the trends on the labour market.

Brown (2013) also discusses the issue of social mobility from a social justice perspective, arguing that the question of justice should not be reduced to the question of fair access but should adopt a

wider definition of social justice that takes into account inequalities in class position along with inequalities in access to such positions, which raises question about wider issues of quality of life and the role of education. As he puts it:

Social justice is as much about how societies distribute rewards to those in different occupational ‘destinations’, as how societies organise the competition for a livelihood. This takes on added significance with widening income inequalities *within* occupational categories, such as lawyers, engineers, and managers, along with those traditionally found *between* occupational categories (Brown, 2013, p. 691).

Concerning inequalities, recent studies provide evidence of growing inequalities in post-graduation employment outcomes. These inequalities may be seen as resulting from the processes that accompany higher education development nowadays, such as diversification and stratification of higher education. In this sense, a recent study on the school-to-work transitions in several post-communist countries highlights that higher education differentiation has introduced new forms of social (labour market) inequality (Kogan, Noelke, & Gebel, 2011). The results of the study reveal a clear status hierarchy in terms of the occupational status that may be gained by graduates from tertiary programmes of different durations.

Overall, there is growing labour market uncertainty, accompanied by increasing standardization and routinization of work (Brown Lauder, & Ashton, 2011) and growing emphasis on graduate employability³¹. The emphasis on employability emerges precisely as a response to trends such as educational expansion and transformation of the employment opportunities of graduates, and reflects the fact that higher education credentials no longer guarantee career development as they did in previous periods. However, these credentials could increase the chances of graduates to obtain and maintain employment in comparison with people without such credentials.

Given that, it is worth mentioning the major views on graduate employability. More specifically, in the following subsection I will critically discuss the main definitions of employability and try to argue its importance as an indicator for evaluating the current developments in higher education and the labour market in a social justice perspective.

³¹ As regards employability, J. Hillage and E. Pollard (1998) have pointed out the current interest in it has been driven by the changing nature of public employment policy, where increasing emphasis is placed on skills-based solutions to economic competition and work-based solutions to social deprivation.

2.5.2. Graduate employability

Main approaches to, and definitions of, employability

Although widely used and dating back a century ago, the concept of employability has not been explicitly defined so far. It appears as a policy term and is at the core of the processes of the shift from ‘job protection’ to ‘security through employability’, and “putting the unemployed back to work” (Gazier, 2001). As Michael Tomlinson has outlined in his book *Higher Education and Graduate Employability*, in the context of changes taking place in graduate labour and the traditional modes of career progression, employability has become “an organizing principle of contemporary professional work based on flexible conditions, weaker contractual arrangement for work, portfolio careers and changing social and psychological contracts” (Tomlinson, 2009, p. 10). Given this, measures to support the employability agenda differ over time and across countries³² and there is a plurality of possible definitions of employability (ibid.). In this sense, Louise Morley (2001) has argued that employability is a socially decontextualized signifier insofar as it overlooks how social structures such as gender, race, social class and disability interact with labour market opportunities. In a similar vein, Bernard Gazier (1998, p. 298) points out that it is “a fuzzy notion, often ill-defined and sometimes not defined at all”. Thus, in the debate about employability, there is generally nomenclature about its meaning (Gazier, 1998, 2001³³; Tomlinson, 2012).

Above all, graduate employability has already been recognized as encompassing significant equity issues, though the literature on this topic is scarce. As Michael Tomlinson (2012) notes,

³² Ronald McQuaid and Colin Lindsay (2005) also share the view that employability implicitly assumes specific types of demand that may vary across space, time and employers.

³³ Thus, on the basis of historical studies of the term, Gazier (2001) distinguishes seven different definitions of employability. A common feature of most of these definitions is that they are somewhat one-sided and, despite their variety, mainly capture the supply side of the problem. This drawback seems to be overcome in only one of the versions of the concept of employability discussed by Gazier, which he calls *interactive employability*. According to the author, this concept first emerged in North America and then spread internationally since the end of the 1980s. Similarly to the *initiative* one, this concept keeps a focus on the individual, but in contrast to it, *interactive employability* also recognizes that employability has a relative side. It also takes into consideration the demand side and thus acknowledges that employability depends also on the opportunities, institutions and rules that govern the labour market.

wider structural changes have potentially reinforced positional differences and differential outcomes between graduates, not least between those from different class-cultural backgrounds. In a similar vein, in their book *Higher Education and Social Justice*, Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (2009) identify that the term ‘employability’ is used to mask basic inequalities between graduates and highlight a range of loosely related factors that impede the progress of certain groups on the labour market. More specifically, the authors stress that:

In the modern economy, personal skills and qualities, which are often a euphemism for social class, are treated as resources that rival qualifications and effectively are recognized as a mechanism through which middle-class privileges can be maintained (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009, p. 96).

In addition to this, employability discourse has been criticized by Marie-Pierre Moreau and Carole Leathwood (2006), who argue that it, in fact, emphasizes individual responsibility while neglecting social inequalities and thereby has negative consequences for the ‘non-traditional’ graduates.

Many different approaches to employability can be identified in the relevant literature. One of these recognizes employability as a complex notion which refers not to just one but to a multiple characteristic of the individual (Yorke, 2006). According to this conceptualization, three different aspects of employability may be distinguished:

- employability as demonstrated by the graduate actually obtaining a job;
- employability as the student being developed by his or her experience of higher education (i.e. it is a curricular and perhaps extra-curricular process); and
- employability in terms of the possession of relevant *achievements* (and, implicitly, potential).

The full definition that Yorke draws conceptualizes employability as:

... a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2006, p. 9).

This definition highlights an important point concerning the variety of benefits that may be gained via employability which, beyond the private benefits, also includes social ones.

Undoubtedly, it is not possible to maximize the benefits for all interested parties, but this definition suggests implications for a wider range of benefits.

In his research on graduate employability, Michael Tomlinson distinguishes three approaches used in understanding graduate employability (2009, pp. 27-47). The first of them tends to view employability in absolute terms. It concerns the *supply-side* of the graduate market and tends to focus on the supply of human capital and graduate skills entering the economy. The second one looks at employability primarily in relation to the *demand-side* of the graduate labour market. It focuses on the problem of positional competition of jobs, the power play between individuals and groups in the pursuit of labour market returns, and the changing role of credentials in this process. The third one relates to *subjective dimensions of employability*, which tend to be underexplored in the studies of employability. It focuses on exploring types of orientations, attitudes and goals that students have regarding their future work and career.

In contrast to Tomlinson, Holmes (2013) distinguishes three main approaches to employability: *possessive*, *positional* and *processual*. Specifically, in the possessive approach, graduate skills and attributes are treated as if they can be possessed and used. One of the problems with this approach is that it actually provides no way of explaining differences in employment outcomes between graduates from different socio-demographic groups. In other words, inequalities between different ethnic groups or people of different social backgrounds cannot be evaluated using it. The positional approach overcomes this drawback. It views higher education as a system that is so structured as to reinforce existing patterns of distribution of advantages and disadvantages in society, and thus reinforce social positioning and status. However, this approach does not take into account the biographical trajectories of students and graduates into, through, and out of, higher education. Holmes criticizes the possessive and positional approaches and argues in favour of the processual approach, particularly in terms of identity project, as providing positive guidance on how the curriculum might be reformed. In his view, in contrast to the other two approaches, the third one takes sufficient account of the interactional nature of the education-employment trajectories by which individuals gain, or fail to gain, desired employment outcomes. These trajectories may be strongly influenced by the social background or by other factors lying outside the control and influence of the individual. Furthermore, Holmes highlights that the trajectories themselves may be diverse.

Taking into account these classifications and previous research on employability, I outline three dimensions of graduate employability which correspond to different definitions of graduate employability. These dimensions try to reflect the multi-faceted nature of the term, observed by Yorke (2006), while going beyond the idea that employability is simply a characteristic of the individual. More specifically, I focus on employability defined in *absolute* (Hillage & Pollard, 1998) and *relative* terms (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003, 2004), as well as through the *identity* perspective (Holmes, 2001; Tomlinson, 2009; Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011).

Employability – absolute dimension

J. Hillage and E. Pollard (1998: 1) define that employability:

... is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required.

This view corresponds closely to the human capital theory (Becker, 1993; Mincer, 1958, 1984; Schultz, 1961). According to Hillage and Pollard, individual employability comprises four components: *assets in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes the individuals possess, the way individuals use and deploy those assets, the way they present them to employers, and the context* (e.g. personal circumstances and the labour market environment) within which they see work. This definition focuses mainly on the supply side of the problem and largely equates employability and employment. Furthermore, it does not take into account the plurality of types of employment in terms of quality and prestige. Thus, this understanding of employability includes the case when people are employed, but in jobs that are below their level of skill, low paid, undesirable or unsustainable.

Hillard and Pollard's definition has been criticized for the possibility it entails that, when used in a narrow sense, it may hollow out the concept of 'employability'. As an attempt to overcome this drawback, as well as the definition's focus predominantly on the supply-side factors, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) propose a framework of employability which broadens this definition by incorporating the demand-side factors. More specifically, this broader framework is built around individual factors (such as different skills and attributes and demographic characteristics),

personal circumstances (such as household circumstances and access to resources) and external factors (such as demand factors and enabling support factors).

Employability – relative dimension

J. Hillage and E. Pollard's definition of employability has been also criticized by Philip Brown, Anthony Hesketh and Sara Williams, adherents of the understanding of employability in relative terms. In their paper *Employability in a Knowledge-driven Economy* (2003), they argue that such an interpretation represents a classical example of 'blaming the victim'. Thus, they envisage the possibility that people may be unemployed even though they are employable³⁴. Borrowing their idea from Fred Hirsch (1976), they claim that employability has a relative dimension as well. In the book *The Mismanagement of Talent: Employability and Jobs in the Knowledge Economy*, Philip Brown, Anthony Hesketh and Sara Williams (2004) point out that all policy statements on employability have failed to grasp this duality (see also Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003). They define the employability of the individuals as:

... *the relative chances of getting and maintaining different kinds of employment*³⁵(Brown, Hesketh, & Williams 2004, p. 25).

This understanding of employability corresponds closely to the positional theory (Hirsch, 1976) but also to the conflict theory (Collins, 1979). The relative dimension of employability could be described by the metaphor the British economist Fred Hirsch uses in his book *Social Limits of Growth* (1976, p. 5): "if everyone stands on tiptoe, no one sees better". Thus, in contrast to the previous definition, this one recognizes that individuals' employability depends, among other things, on the employability of others.

Employability as an identity development process

The 'graduate identity' approach focuses on the way graduates construct and develop their employability and looks at employability in a dynamic perspective. It was proposed by Len Holmes (2001) who suggested that more emphasis should be placed upon work experience as

³⁴ Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003) emphasize that the high participation rates in higher education has weakened the differentiating power of knowledge in the legitimization of labour market and created the possibility that graduates might be employable but unemployed due to the oversupply of suitably qualified candidates.

³⁵Italics in the original text.

providing students with the opportunity to engage in the practices of the occupational arena in an explicit and intentional manner. This approach also requires drawing attention to the identities within the occupational arena, particularly to those that might be associated with being a graduate - managerial positions being the most obvious case. Within this approach, students are encouraged to consider what it would be like to be employable and employed in such a position, how one conducts oneself, and so on, as the basis for rehearsing their claim upon such an identity.

The study by Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) also shares some aspects of the graduate identity approach. More specifically, it focuses, on one hand, on the demand side and on the other, on the individuals (university graduates) and how they understand, manage and experience the competition for a livelihood (tough-entry jobs), taking as a starting point the relationship between employability and self-identity.³⁶ In the course of their study, they also investigate how different graduates manage their employability. They identify two ideal types of university graduates: *players* and *purists*³⁷. While the purists view employability as winning a competition advantage in a meritocratic race, where differences in individual achievement reflected innate capabilities, efforts and ambition, the players understand employability as a positional game (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2004, p. 9, 115-145). The analysis of these two types suggests that the increasing congestion on the elite labour market will lead more graduates to adopt player tactics (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2004, p. 229).

³⁶ Brown, Hesketh and Williams introduce the concept of ‘personal capital’, claiming that it has become increasingly important at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In their view, personal capital depends on a combination of hard and soft currencies. The first ones include credentials, work experience, sporting or musical achievements, etc. The second ones include interpersonal skills, charisma, and appearance and accent. Brown and his colleagues underscore that the emphasis on the person rather than individual reflects how the recruitment process has been “personalized” (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003, p. 121).

³⁷ In the course of the study (which lasted two years) fifteen leading private and public sector organizations, ten policy stakeholders and sixty graduates were interviewed. Reinterviews were conducted with approximately half of the graduates. The sample included only graduates who had applied for a fast-track training programme and was not representative of all graduates entering the labour market. Some of the organizations were chosen as case studies. These organizations allowed an access to their assessment centers. The research was enriched with data that had tracked recent changes, in the surveyed period, in occupational structure and skill requirements in both the United States and Great Britain.

Another study³⁸ that looks at the problem of employability through the identity perspective is Michael Tomlinson's (2009), which applies to UK context. It finds that students are clearly aware that the job market they will be entering has been changing. At the same time, the author finds that students understand their employability as involving a 'relative' competition for jobs amongst similarly qualified graduates. He argues that the agency aspect of identity has been underestimated so far in research on employability. Taking into consideration this aspect, Tomlinson distinguishes two types of undergraduates according to their orientations to the future work and careers – those of a *careerist* and a *ritualistic* orientation. The careerists are aware of the problem both of absolute and relative employability and see the labour market as enabling. For them it can provide genuine opportunities for self-realization and personal development. The second group seems to be more passive and is trying to gain some control over the direction of their future lives. "Their approach is characterized by a 'do all you need attitude', as opposed to 'do all you can' of their careerist counterparts" (Tomlinson, 2009, p. 167).

However, as Lee Harvey (2001) observes, graduate employability is a result of the employability development opportunities offered by the higher education institutions but also has to do with the graduates' experience and their extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, in his opinion the employers are those who convert the 'employability' of the graduate into employment. In this regard, he suggests that when the employers recruit in a rational way, they take into account nine main factors: the type of higher education institution, the mode of study, student location and mobility, subject of study, graduates' previous work experience, age, ethnicity, gender, and social class. However, it is also acknowledged in literature that one of the main problems, to which hardly any solution seems to be offered, and over which higher education institutions have no control:

... is the 'intuitive', 'irrational' 'prejudiced' or 'convenience' models of graduate recruitment (Harvey, 2000, p. 107).

Sue Cranmer (2006), however, disputes these findings by demonstrating that there is no confirmation that the efforts to develop employability skills in classrooms have had a significant independent effect on graduate labour market outcomes. Furthermore, the UK data in her study

³⁸ It was based on detailed semi-structured interviews with 52 final-year students and 21 academics in higher education, from a range of academic departments in a major British university.

show that this finding could well reflect a degree of ‘mismatch’ among some graduates between the skills acquired at university and those required in employment. On the basis of these results, Cranmer (2006) suggests that the universities should redirect some of their resources from classroom-based enhancing graduate employability initiatives, seeking to develop employability skills, to increasing employment-based training and experience, and/or employer involvement in courses that were found to positively affect immediate graduate prospects on the labour market³⁹.

These different perspectives on defining employability have led to focusing on different factors of the phenomenon and to outlining different policy implications.

All approaches to employability discussed above have enormously enriched the debate about employment outcomes. However, in my opinion they miss an important point: it is possible that, in different settings, employability could be explained by different approaches. Studies (van de Werfhorst, 2011a, 2011b; van der Velden & Wolbers, 2007) have demonstrated that variations in the mechanisms explaining the impact of education may exist not only between countries but also in the same country, depending on institutional settings such as public/private sectors or different industries. In a similar vein, comparing the cases of the Netherlands and Great Britain, Tholen (2012) provides evidence that the institutional context, such as the concrete educational system of higher education, has a great impact on the way students think about the competition for jobs and their own employability⁴⁰. Tholen’s study implies that students act within an educational context (which is partly nationally organized). This context does not merely provide information about what is, or will be, of value in the graduate labour market but helps to define the general rules of competition. These rules shape an intersubjective framework on how to understand the competition for jobs (Tholen, 2012, p. 14). Furthermore, as Tholen (2013) points out, the

³⁹ To a great extent Geoff Mason and his colleagues (2009) reached similar results, again referring to the UK case. However, they also found strong positive effects of student’s work experience on their labour market outcomes, which in the authors’ view should serve as a reminder that many relevant employability skills are probably best learned at workplaces rather than in class room settings.

⁴⁰ More specifically, this study reveals that Dutch students tend to define the transition between education and work as an ongoing trajectory. At the same time, British students feel that employability is constructed as a relative competition. In the British context, employability is seen as depending on the efforts of others. Thus, British students’ employability strategies are geared towards what they understand employers to be valuing. Since it is often unclear what that is, ambiguity becomes an essential part of employability.

conditions shaped by institutional structures are mirrored in how students understand, and act on, the labour market.

The discussed approaches to employability have undoubtedly enriched our discussion of the topic. However, I argue that they may benefit by going beyond supply and demand approaches and adopting a broader, context-sensitive approach which acknowledges the extent to which *employability is embedded in particular settings*. Thus, they should also take into account:

- the factors at stake in different contexts (social, institutional, personal and environmental);
- the plurality of aspects of employability;

Approaches should also be oriented to the people's well-being and their freedom to choose the outcomes they have reason to value. Last but not least, they should be agency oriented. In fact, none of the approaches presented above envisage the possibility that students and graduates may act to bring about a change in the employment conditions as such, or contribute by their labour to the well-being of others.

Graduate employability in policy documents

As mentioned previously, employability emerged as a policy term. It was recognized as an important factor for achieving the Lisbon Strategy goal that, by 2010, EU should become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". The importance of employability is also acknowledged in the new Europe 2020 strategy. Thus, in 2012 the Council of the European Union approved the introduction of a new benchmark related to employability. The definition of employability used in this connection is:

... the combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or enter employment, to stay in employment and to progress during their career - is a complex concept, involving not only each individual's characteristics, skills, attitudes and motivation, but also other external factors which lie beyond the scope of education and training policy, such as labour market regulations, demography, the structure of the economy and the overall economic situation (Council of the European Union, 2012).

However, this definition represents the concept only in absolute terms. It does not recognize the positional dimension of employability or its identity dimension. It is worth noting that the OECD also advocates measures aimed at enhancing employability via different labour market policies.

Graduate employability has been high on the agenda of the Bologna Process as well, which began in 1999. By and large, one of the main rationales of the Bologna Process is that structural reform and various other measures should contribute to closer relationships between higher education and the world of work (Teichler, 2011). Thus, the adoption of a system of easily readable degrees and the adoption of two-cycle systems was one of the first steps of the Bologna Process for promoting employability of higher education graduates. Furthermore, the Ministerial Conference in London (2007) recognized, on one hand, the need for data on graduate employability and, on the other, the need to find ways to improve employability in relation to each of these cycles as well as in the context of lifelong learning.

In the recent Bucharest Communiqué (2012), this need is further specified and the view is expressed that employability should be enhanced in order to serve Europe's needs. The communiqué states:

We aim to enhance the employability and personal and professional development of graduates throughout their careers. We will achieve this by improving cooperation between employers, students and higher education institutions, especially in the development of study programmes that help increase the innovation, entrepreneurial and research potential of graduates.

According to Ulrich Teichler, on the one hand, the term 'employability', as used in the Bologna Process, creates the impression that higher education should be subordinated to the currently presumed 'demands' of the employment system (2011, p. 32) and, on the other, it is currently creating confusion in the debates accompanying the Bologna Process rather than stimulating creative considerations (Teichler, 2004/2009, p. 293). Another criticism voiced in the debate on 'employability' is that, in the context of the Bologna Process, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the issue of European convergence versus European variety in the curricular concepts as to the required and desirable competencies related to the views on professions, professionalism, and professional identity (ibid.). Teichler outlines two main voices that are often heard in relation to the functions of higher education according to the Bologna Process. As he puts it:

On the one hand, we hear that higher education should have a close "match" to the current visible "demands" formulated by the employers or inferred from the trends

on the labour market. On the other, there are arguments that the Bologna Process in its emphasis on “employability” and the “professional relevance of Bachelor programmes” is an instrument of destruction of the traditional values of higher education, according to which certain discrepancies between job requirements and the enhancement of competences through higher education are creative for the knowledge system and for the world of work (Teichler, 2011, p. 32).

On the basis of this overview of the definitions of graduate employability and the identified gaps in them, I assume that graduate employability may be understood as a multi-dimensional concept definable as *not simply related to graduates’ abilities to find employment but also to graduates’ abilities to find employment of specific quality*. These abilities are seen to have three aspects: *absolute, relative* and *dynamic*. The first aspect is connected with graduates’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, identities and values. In contrast, the position aspect refers to the more general social conditions and the position of graduates on the labour market. Furthermore, this aspect reflects the state of the labour market, which depends on the development of the economy and the state of higher education (structure of higher education institutions, level of massification, nature of the graduate body) and is linked with the question of quality of graduate employment. The third aspect is related to the dynamic nature of graduate employability, which means that graduates should be able at any time to increase their employability. Therefore, in order to understand graduate employability, we should regard it as *embedded in different institutional arrangements* such as higher education system, labour market and political regimes, all of which are usually nationally specific. A missing aspect of these conceptualizations of graduate employability is that of *agency* and the possibility of students and graduates to act and bring about changes in the employment conditions as such, or to contribute to the well-being of others.

2.6. Conclusion

The first chapter has made a short overview of the meanings of the term ‘social justice’. It has highlighted that there is a lack of clarity about what social justice actually mean and how it may be pursued. Along with this, the overview of definitions of social justice revealed that it is a complex and multi-faceted concept, the meanings of which may differ in different contexts, and the nature of which may transform over time. More specifically, social justice may be seen as: i) an attribute of the individual or the state; ii) an idea that is concerned with fairness of distribution of resources and opportunities in a society; iii) a dynamic concept – its meanings change over

time and space; iv) a relational concept rooted in human relationships; and v) a concept which encompasses the active role of human beings in formulating the demands of justice and how it may be enhanced. Among the many discussed definitions, the one chosen is that *social justice is about distribution of goods*. Also discussed was the need for a bottom-up approach to justice that takes into account its plurality.

Within this chapter, a model for perceiving higher education was proposed. This model adheres to a multi-dimensional view of higher education, implying it should be understood as a good which comprises three dimensions – *private*, *public* and *positional*. Each of these dimensions intersects with the terrain of freedom, and one dimension may prevail over another, depending on the settings. This is why the view shared in this thesis is that *social justice in education is country-specific* and thus can only be understood within specific contexts of interpretation and enactments (Gewirtz, 2006). From this perspective, approaches that are sensitive to diverse settings and are freedom-oriented are needed to evaluate whether a given distribution of higher education is just under concrete conditions, and respectively to find out how the distribution of higher education as a good may be made more just, even while acknowledging the full complexity of this good.

It has also been discussed how the concept of social justice translates in the context of higher education through the introduction of the concepts of *equality* and *equity*, used as means of framing and understanding the complexity of working towards justice in education in general and higher education in particular. For this purpose, I have focused on three axes along which can be situated around which the discussions of equality and equity may be subsumed: equality of educational opportunities *vs.* equality of educational outcomes, equity as fairness *vs.* equity as inclusion, and equity as analyzed at a particular moment *vs.* equity as a dynamic term.

The chapter has also highlighted that, although the issues of *equality* and *equity* of outcomes (equity through higher education) have been recognized as important in the debates about social justice in relation to higher education, there is a lack of conceptual writings about them. In order to fill this gap, I have tried to explain why it is important to understand the outcomes of higher education in a social justice perspective. To do so, I first discussed equality and equity of the employment outcomes of higher education and then I paid special attention to the term ‘employability’ as encompassing significant social justice issues.

As a result of the overview of different definitions of, and approaches to, graduate employability, the term was defined as *not simply related to graduates' abilities to find employment but also to graduates' abilities to find employment of specific quality*. Three main aspects of these abilities were identified: i) an *absolute* - connected with graduates' knowledge, skills, attitudes, identities and values; ii) a *relative* - referring to the more general social conditions and the position of graduates on the labour market. This dimension reflects the state of the labour market, which depends on the development of the economy and the state of higher education (structure of higher education institutions, level of massification, nature of the graduate body) and is linked with the question of the quality of graduate employment); and iii) *identity* - related to the dynamic nature of graduate employability, which means that graduates should be able at any time to increase their employability. In addition, the need for a context-sensitive approach that might explain the differences in graduate employability across different settings, was discussed.

After the literature review of the main concepts and the discussions surrounding them, presented in Chapter 2, the thesis continues with the theoretical framework which I have chosen as a useful to evaluate the inequalities in access and graduate employability in the context of higher education expansion in Bulgaria. More specifically, this is the framework of the capability approach. The next chapter discussed in detail its potential to address some of the gaps in the literature identified so far and to provide a convincing guide in the pursuit of social justice and its enhancement.

CHAPTER THREE. THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 discusses how social justice in access and outcomes of higher education may be conceptualized and evaluated in a dynamic perspective. I do so by introducing the theoretical framework of the capability approach as a main theoretical framework for the study. Among all its benefits, the capability approach offers a route for enhancement of social justice. More specifically, the present chapter is organized as follows.

I start with a discussion of the relevance of the approach and touch upon the main reasons why this approach has been chosen as an appropriate theoretical framework for the present study. In so doing, Section 3.2. tries to shed more light on the potential of this approach in studying social justice in access and labour market outcomes of higher education, not only in a static, but also in a dynamic and comparative, perspective.

Then, I discuss two of the interpretations of the approach derived from the Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's understandings of capabilities. More specifically, Section 3.3. is devoted to Sen's account of justice. It makes an overview of the main concepts and claims within this approach as regards justice, and highlights that the capability approach does not provide a clear answer as to what is the exact meaning of justice, since its meaning may vary in different societies, contexts or time spans. Rather, it shows us a guide as to how to identify remediable injustices and how to enhance justice. While Sen and Nussbaum are both concerned with capabilities as being important for social justice, Nussbaum's account of the approach differs significantly from Sen's. Her account is discussed in detail in Section 3.5. Nussbaum's main contribution is that she (2000) identifies a list of *central human capabilities*, setting them in the context of a type of *political liberalism* that makes them specifically political goals.

The chapter then focuses on some of the critics of this framework. These critics come from outside and inside the capability approach literature. More specifically, Section 3.6. discusses four major lines of criticism. First, the capability approach has been criticized for being too

individualistic. Second, it has been criticized for not taking into account the structures of living together. Third, for not being adequately developed as a theory. Fourth, it has critics for the insufficient justification of the need for a list of ten central human capabilities.

Finally, I make an overview of the studies carried out in the sphere of education and the labour market via a social justice perspective which have applied the capability approach (Section 3.7). The section identifies an asymmetry in these studies in favour of the studies which have applied the approach in education.

3.2. Relevance of the approach

The capability approach is a social justice normative theoretical framework which was first introduced⁴¹, as such, by the Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, and then developed, both theoretically and empirically, in relation to poverty, education, gender inequalities, and human development by the political philosopher Martha Nussbaum and by a number of other scholars (David Crocker, Elaine Unterhalter, Hans-Uwe Otto, Ingrid Robeyns, Melanie Walker, Sabine Alkire, and many others). At the heart of this approach are the freedoms and the opportunities that people have to choose a life they have reason to value. The capability approach focuses on what information one should look at if one is to judge how well someone's life is going or has gone, as the relevant information is that of human functionings and capabilities to function.

This framework will be applied in this thesis to the extent that it provides a helpful analytical tool that broadens our understanding about social justice in higher education, which can be used in evaluating the current trends in higher education and the labour market and which allows us to think about how social justice in higher education could be enhanced. In view of seven main considerations the capability approach⁴² perspective is introduced in the thesis as an analytical

⁴¹ The roots of the capability approach can be found in Aristotle; concepts for the reason, well-being and how people live their lives. At the same time it involves, to some extent, a return to the integrated approach to economic and social development championed particularly by Adam Smith mainly in two of his books: *Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Sen, 2007, p. 99).

⁴² There are two main ways of interpretation of this approach: a narrow and a broad one (See Alkire, Qizilbash, & Comim, 2008). Whereas the narrow interpretation sees the approach primarily as identifying capability and functionings as the primary informational focus for certain

tool which may help us in analyzing the current developments of higher education and the labour market in regards to access and outcomes of higher education.

First, it offers a normative framework for conceptualizing, measuring and evaluating phenomena like well-being, poverty, development and inequalities (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009). Furthermore, it allows development and justice to be evaluated in a dynamic perspective. Amartya Sen (1999) frames the objective of development as an ‘expansion of capabilities’ and, at the same time, claims that the capability approach follows a comparative route of identifying how justice would be advanced (Sen, 2009). This route is especially important since it allows evaluation of higher education development and, in particular, of its expansion in a wider perspective, and to see if this development leads to expansion of the capabilities of people to access higher education. Thus, this perspective could broaden our understanding of how both inequalities in access to higher education or in labour market outcomes of higher education may be evaluated over time as inequalities of capabilities. *Second*, given that within the capability approach justice is understood as related to human lives and the freedoms that persons can respectively exercise (Sen, 2009, p. xi), it allows study of access to higher education and an important aspect of post-graduation lives such as employment. *Third*, it is ‘people-centered’ (Drèze & Sen, 2002) which allows the adoption of a ‘bottom-up’ approach, as used in this project. *Fourth*, this framework is very sensitive to the diversity of groups and settings (Unterhalter, Vaughan, & Walker, 2007) which is especially important in the context of massification, diversification and stratification processes in higher education, which have reached different levels in different countries. It also allows us to capture the qualitative aspect of inequalities in access and outcomes of higher education. Thus, overall, this approach allows us to take into account not only individual-level characteristics in evaluation of the inequalities but also the institutional and macro-level features of the contexts where these inequalities are analyzed. *Fifth*, it offers a wider vision of how education may be understood. Given this, it allows capture and exploration of all three aspects of higher education which I have identified in Chapter 2: private, public and positional. *Sixth*, it possesses the advantage that it can be supplemented with additional social theories related to the particular topic of interest (Robeyns, 2005, 2006b).

exercises, the broad interpretation views the capability approach as providing a more extensive and demanding evaluative framework (eg. by introducing human rights or plural principles beyond the expansion of capabilities – principles which embody other values or concerns such as equity, sustainability or responsibility).

Last but not least, the capability approach “offers a language not only to identify moments of equity and the persistence of normalizing and alienating practices, but also a practical framework for acting towards, and for judging equality” (Walker, 2006a, p. 142). Given this advantage, despite the strong interest and sensitivity inequalities of disciplines like sociology, the capability approach goes a step further, when it comes to the practical engagement with diagnosing injustice and inequalities, public reasoning and with finding solutions for their redressing (Holmwood, 2013). Therefore, it can be also useful for developing policy recommendations which may have not only theoretical and empirical, but also practical, importance, although the capability approach “does not, on its own, propose any specific formula for policy decisions (Sen, 2009, p. 232). It may also be helpful in generating ideas for social innovations directed to enhancing people’s individual freedom and for providing structural opportunities which may contribute to the enhancing of social justice at the entry and exit of higher education.

Bearing in mind these considerations, I proceed with a more detailed discussion of the main interpretations of the approach, by Sen and Nussbaum. Both accounts have the potential to compete with some of the dominant modern theories of justice in contemporary political philosophy (eg. Rawlsian theory of justice). In the following two sections I present points of departure from these theories, their main concepts and lines of reasoning about justice and respectively their visions of how it may be evaluated and pursued.

3.3. Amartya Sen’s idea of justice

3.3.1. Points of departure

Sen’s concern with the problems of injustice is an integral part of his framework of the capability approach and his engagement with problems of poverty, inequalities and development. The most complete interpretation of his idea of justice under the guise of a theory may be found in his book *The Idea of Justice* (2009). In this book Sen broadens the focus of this approach from merely an evaluative framework of development and well-being, to the point where the people’s well-being may be improved and they can live in more just societies (Deneulin, 2014).

Sen’s point of departure is that we do not live in an ideal world but some of the injustices may be remedied. This view implies that a theory of justice has to be concerned with the primary engagement with justice in practice. Thus, the central questions which Sen raises are how justice

could be enhanced and respectively how identifiable injustices may be reduced. Part of the solutions of these injustices seems to lie in their diagnosis. As Sen (2009, p. 5) puts it:

The requirements of a theory of justice include bringing reason into the play in the diagnosis of justice and injustice.

From that perspective a key importance in Sen's approach to justice is attached to 'the reason' and its use in public discussions. This perspective postulates that every feeling of injustice could act as a signal but this signal should be closely scrutinized, critically evaluated and assessed to see if the evaluation for it is impartial and objective enough. In other words, the basis of the application of this approach includes a critical assessment of the grounds on which judgments of justice are based.

Sen's account of justice may be classified as one that is based on the theoretical traditions in philosophy in the Enlightenment. Despite that, it is influenced not only by the European traditions but also by some aspects from the early Indian jurisprudence and, in particular, by the distinction which is made in it between *niti* and *nyaya*. Whereas *niti* relates to "organizational propriety as well as behavioural correctness", *nyaya* is concerned with the lives that people are actually able to lead (Sen, 2009, p. xv). Using this distinction, and emphasizing the importance of reasoning for the enhancement of justice, Sen identifies two different lines of reasoning in the Enlightenment period about how justice may be achieved.

The first one is based on the idea of establishing a hypothetical social compact which aims at contributing towards the achievement of justice in society. This approach, termed by Sen "transcendental institutionalism", is concentrated on identifying the perfectly just institutions. The major contributors to this approach of thinking about justice are Thomas Hobbes, John-Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. Later on, thinkers such as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin and Robert Nozick also follow this line of reasoning in their accounts of justice. In its essence, this line of reasoning is *arrangement-focused*. It implies the identification of the right behaviour or right institutions. In this sense it corresponds to the understanding of justice as *niti*.

In strong contrast to this line of reasoning, the second one adheres to the idea that justice may be achieved on the base of making comparisons between different ways in which people's lives may be led, and thus ascertaining which one is more or less just. In its nature it implies making

realization-focused comparisons. Among the theorists who adopted such comparative approaches are Adam Smith, the Marquis de Condorcet, Jeremy Bentham, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Karl Marx. Sen also adds Kenneth Arrow to this group because of his contribution in developing the social choice theory proposed by Condorcet. This theory, in Sen's view, can make a valuable contribution to addressing questions about the enhancement of justice and the removal of injustice in the world. Namely in this alternative tradition, which Sen calls "comparative", he positions his own account of justice. This perspective to justice is closely related to the idea of justice as *nyaya*.

More specifically, the "comparative" approach concentrates on ranking alternative social arrangements instead of focusing exclusively on the identification of a fully-just society. Thus, it is also concerned with human behaviour, rather than assuming that once institutions are perfectly arranged, and that perfect behaviour has been identified, people will simply follow it accordingly. In Sen's view the comparative questions are inescapable for any theory of justice that tries to give some kind of guidance to public policy or personal behaviour. Therefore, a theory of justice should allow it:

... to be able to compare different distributions of capabilities in judging the advantages that different persons have (Sen, 2010, p. 244).

Sen insists on the comparative route to justice because of the possibility, even having just institutions, of observing injustices at individual level and in people's everyday lives. Despite that, he acknowledges the importance of institutions in influencing people's lives, claiming that:

... they [institutions] are part and parcel of the actual world as well, but the realized activity goes well beyond the organizational picture, and includes the lives that people manage – or do not manage – to live (Sen, 2009, p. 18).

Within Sen's perspective the institutions are only means to justice. Thus, they could play an important role in enhancing people's ability to scrutinize and critically assess their values and priorities. But they should not be regarded as the ends of justice. As he puts it:

... we have to seek institutions that *promote* justice, rather than treating the institutions as themselves manifestations of justice, ... (Sen, 2009, p. 82).

Overall, Sen's comparative approach to justice could contribute to identifying spaces of injustice and for engagement in their removal. In contrast to Nussbaum, who endorses a list of ten central

capabilities that should guide the rankings of social arrangements, Sen does not design a list⁴³. Instead, he claims that the correctness of the rankings in assessing the comparative merits of capabilities or primary goods can be generated with a wide agreement based on public reasoning. He also argues that it is much more important than the question whether the generated ranking would necessarily form a complete ordering (Sen, 2010, p. 246).

3.3.2. Informational base

A central question in Sen's approach to justice is his concern about equality and, in particular, the proper space in which it should be evaluated. As is well-known in each theory of justice, equality is sought in some 'space', a space that is seen as having a central role in that theory and that has priority over other spaces. As Sen also acknowledges:

The relative advantages and disadvantages that people have, compared with each other, can be seen in many different perspectives, involving different concentrations, eg. liberties, rights, incomes, wealths, resources, primary goods, utilities, capabilities, and so on, and the question of inequality assessment turns on the selection of the space in which inequality is to be assessed (Sen, 1992, p. 88).

However, even being concerned with equality, Sen's interpretation does not aim to explain inequalities⁴⁴; it just tries to open a space in which they can be evaluated. In his attempt to outline such a space, he criticizes other approaches to thinking about well-being and justice in welfare economics, political economy and philosophy. It should be underlined that Sen's approach to

⁴³ Although Sen does not endorse a list, his interpretation of the capability approach has been translated into quantitative indicators to measure progress in the real world used for the calculation of the Human Development Index (HDI) (See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>). HDI has been criticised for not providing information on capabilities but on functionings. Sen (2009, p. 239) himself writes that 'We cannot reduce all the things we have reason to value into one homogenous magnitude'. Nonetheless, it is not as narrow as GDP per capita, since it includes information on three domains of human development - health, education and income and has been an alternative to GDP per capita for guiding policy for more than two decades. In this period several attempts to improve the HDI have been made. Thus, the Oxford Poverty and Human development Initiative is trying to increase the data availability on the missing dimensions of human development ([www. ophi.org.uk](http://www.ophi.org.uk)). Furthermore, UNDP introduced an Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI) as a measure of the level of human development of people in a society that accounts for inequality in each dimension of the index. (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/ihdi/>).

⁴⁴ The lack of potential of the capability approach to explain inequalities leads to the necessity of its supplementation with additional social theories (Robeyns 2005). Robeyns (2006b) explains this with the underspecified nature of the capability approach, which requires this framework to be supplemented in particular with additional social theories related to the topic one is analysing.

justice is, at its core, a liberal one and freedom is at the core of its informational base. Thus, in Sen's view (1999, 2009) the appropriate evaluative space in which equality should be assessed is neither that of primary goods (Rawls) or resources (Dworkin), nor happiness and utilities (Benthan), but that of the substantive freedoms – the capabilities – to choose a life one has reason to value. In this sense, capabilities are determined by the space of possibilities open to an individual – not in terms of some prior end such as utility or initial conditions such as equality of primary goods, resources or utilities.

Despite that, Sen (2009) justifies the relevance of the capabilities as an informational focus on a theory on justice. In his view, justice does not demand equality of capabilities only, since Sen considers that other spaces of evaluating equality also play an important role for justice and should not be fully neglected. In this sense, Sen acknowledges the multiple dimensions in which equality matters, which are not reducible to equality in one space only, be that economic advantage, resources, utilities and achieved quality of life or capabilities. Nonetheless, he argues that by looking at people's capabilities we could unfold a space of inequality which may be hidden if we concentrate only on other informational focuses. In other words, he justifies the importance of people's capability as a dimension in the idea of justice.

More specifically, in his book *Inequalities re-examined*, Sen (1992, p. 87) argues that equality⁴⁵ of freedom to pursue our ends cannot be generated by equality in the distribution of primary goods. Interpersonal variations in the transformation of primary goods (and resources more generally) into respective capabilities to pursue our ends and objectives should be examined as well. Thus, according to Sen, primary goods are very important but they cannot adequately account for inter-individual differences in people's abilities to convert these primary goods into what people are able to be and do in their lives (Robeyns, 2009, pp. 109-112). In other words,

⁴⁵ Sen (1992, pp. 90-91) points out that equality between persons can be defined either in terms of attainments, or in terms of the shortfalls from maximal values that each can respectively attain. While for 'achievement equality' of achievements, the actual levels of achievement are compared (in the case of freedoms, attainment equality compares the level of alternative actual achievements from which the person can choose), for 'shortfall equality', the shortfalls of actual achievements from the respective maximal achievements are compared (correspondingly, in the case of freedoms, the differences in shortfalls from the respective maximal freedoms to achieve are taken into account). Shortfall equality takes us in the direction of equal use of the respective potentials. In contrast to it, attainment equality is concerned with equal absolute levels of achievement (no matter what the maximal potentials are).

Sen's account of justice advocates that we should focus not only on people's lives and the ways they are led, but also on the freedom which people really have to choose between different ways of life.

In essence, the capability approach is based on a view of living seen as a combination of various 'doings and beings' (called 'functionings'), with quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings (Sen, 1993, p. 31). This conceptualization emphasizes the *quality aspect* of life which may cover the full spectrum of its dimensions – family, health, employment, education, leisure, etc. More specifically, the concept of 'functionings' reflects the various things that a person may value being or doing. Such things vary in complexity, from being a very simple one, like being well-nourished, to a more complex one like being happy (Sen, 1992, p. 39). In contrast, a person's 'capability' refers to the alternative combinations that are feasible for a person to achieve. Capability⁴⁶ is thus seen by Sen as a kind of freedom, and, more specifically, refers to:

... the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles) (Sen, 1999, p. 75).

... our ability to achieve various combinations of functionings that we can compare and judge against each other in terms of what we have reason to value (Sen, 2009, p. 233).

The difference between a functioning and capability is like one between an opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, between potential and outcome (Walker, 2006b, p. 165). Thus, functionings and capabilities give two different perspectives in which a person's position in a social arrangement can be judged: (1) the actual achievement, and (2) the freedom to achieve. Achievement, in Sen's view, is concerned with what we manage to accomplish whereas freedom is concerned with the real opportunity to accomplish what we value (Sen, 1992, p. 31). Although Sen gives priority to the capability instead of functionings as an evaluative space he stresses that there is no difference, as far as the evaluative space is concerned, between focusing on functioning or on capabilities⁴⁷. As Sen (1992, p. 50) simply puts it:

⁴⁶ The capabilities also should be distinguished from the commodities (that is, the goods, services or other resources to which people have access).

⁴⁷ This problem of measurement of capabilities is noted by Ingrid Robeyns (2003) who tried in her study to evaluate gender inequalities in the space of capabilities but concluded that "given that we have little direct information about people's capability levels, we could start by taking

... a functioning combination is a point in such a space, whereas capability is a set of such points.

In other words, Sen's particular approach to equality involves judging individual advantage by the freedom to achieve, incorporating (but going beyond) actual achievements (Sen, 1992, p. 129).

Sen also discusses the idea of 'basic capabilities', intending to separate out the ability to satisfy certain elementary and crucially-important functionings to certain levels eg. the ability to be well-nourished and well-sheltered (1992, p. 45), but even in the case of basic capabilities he does not make attempts to endorse a universal list. This idea is linked with Sen's analysis on poverty that is associated, not only with low income, but also with deprivation of basic capabilities. Deprivation of elementary capabilities may be reflected in such failures like premature mortality and widespread illiteracy (1999, p. 20). In his understanding of the basic⁴⁸ capabilities he refers to a certain minimum that should be met so that people could live a decent life, whereas in Nussbaum's interpretation it seems that the basic capabilities should be developed most likely via some form of education or upbringing. Nonetheless, Sen emphasizes that in contexts other than in developing countries, these centrally-important capabilities may be completely different (Sen, 1992, 1999). Thus, he gives the massive unemployment in Europe in more affluent societies as an example of deprivation which is not well-reflected in the income distribution statistics.

There are at least four issues that are central for understanding the informational base of capability as a substantive freedom in Sen's account of justice.

First, it is *the possibility of misinterpretation*. As has been noted by David Crocker and Ingrid Robeyns (2009), the term "freedom" is often misunderstood within the capability approach framework. They explain that it is partly due to the fact that Sen equates capabilities and freedoms without specifying what kind of freedoms he is referring to, although he insists that "freedom" means different things to different people. It opens a space for a misunderstanding that

group inequality in achieved functionings as indicative of inequalities in capabilities. This could later be refined and adapted in the face of new evidence or compelling arguments." (p. 85).

⁴⁸ In her attempt to operationalize the capability for poverty reduction, and closely following Sen's work on poverty, Alkire (2002, p. 163) defines basic capability as 'a capability to enjoy a functioning that is defined at a general level and refers to a basic need, in other words a *capability to meet a basic need* (a capability to avoid malnourishment; a capability to be educated, and so on).'

the capabilities as freedoms refer exclusively to the “free market”, which is not exactly what Sen means by capability. Sen argues that people have reason to value the freedom or liberty to produce, buy and sell in the market but, via the capability approach lens, market may be conceptualized as a means for development, but not as an end in itself.

Second, it is the *internal plurality* with which the concept of freedom is loaded. Two aspects of freedom can be distinguished: *opportunity* and *process* (Sen, 1999, 2009). The opportunity aspect entails that freedom is valuable because more freedom gives people more opportunity to pursue their objectives and also to influence the world. This aspect of freedom refers to the ability of people to achieve what they value, no matter what the process is through which that achievement comes about. In contrast, the second aspect may attach importance to the process of choice itself. The opportunity aspect of freedom also may be seen in two aspects: in terms of taking note of the way the person reaches what he values (whether through his own choice or through the dictates of others) or in terms of what a person ends up with. In the first case we look at the outcome in a broader way, as a ‘comprehensive outcome’, whereas in the second case we take into account only the ‘culmination outcome’ (See Sen, 2009, pp. 228-230). Given this clarification of different nuances of freedom, it is important to clarify that the concept of capability refers to the broader view in which the opportunity aspect of freedom may be seen i.e. by taking note of the way a person reaches the culmination situation. Thus, Sen suggests evaluating justice, not in terms of what people achieve or what they are, but in terms of the freedom which they actually have to lead their life in the way they value. As Sen puts it:

The focus of the capability approach is thus not just on what a person actually ends up doing, but also on what she is in fact able to do, whether or not she chooses to make use of that opportunity (Sen, 2009, p. 235).

The idea of capability ... is oriented towards freedom and opportunities, that is the actual ability of people to choose to live different kinds of lives within their reach, rather than confining attention only to what may be described as the culmination – or aftermath - of choice (Sen, 2009, p. 235).

This second issue may be illustrated with one of the examples Sen gives to show the limitation of interpersonal comparisons based only on the information for functionings. The example is of two 15-year-old girls, both of whom failed an exam, but who achieved these outcomes in different ways. In the first case, the girl had the chance to choose whether to prepare herself for the exam or not, but she preferred to spend her leisure time with friends, while the second girl, despite her

interest in the subject, had no supportive culture in school, expressed by long periods of teacher absence. In her free time she had to do housework and to take care of her family members, so she had no chance to prepare herself for the exam and she received poor results in it. In other words, their grades may provide misleading information if we look at them only in terms of culmination outcomes. The capability approach, though, goes a step further and considers the outcome in a comprehensive way. In this way, we may say that the first girl had more capability to choose than the second one⁴⁹.

Focusing on the opportunity aspect of freedom only, Sen's capability approach is salient to the process aspect of freedom which, in Sen's opinion, also has its place in justice. In this regard he claims that:

A theory of justice – or more generally an adequate theory of normative social choice – has to be alive to both fairness of the processes involved and to the equity and efficiency of the substantive opportunities that people can enjoy (Sen, 2009, p. 296).

Third, is the need for *critical scrutiny and reasoning*. Freedom is justified as an informational basis only if people's perceptions of the lives they may value living passes through critical scrutiny and reasoning. In fact, Sen does not advocate capabilities that we value as such, but only these capabilities we have reason to value. Thus, capability should be seen as a combination between freedom and rationality and should not be understood in the much narrower sense of skills (Walker, 2006b). As Unterhalter compactly puts it:

... the capability approach is more than simply a proposal to focus on people's capabilities; it also entails a critical engagement with all social, cultural, and other factors that shape people's preferences, expectations, and perceptions, and thus influence which choices are made from the freedoms that we have (Unterhalter, 2007, p. 100).

Fourth, it is the *duality of capability*. Capability is not only freedom but also entails "a kind of power" and, as such, it implies not only advantages but also obligations⁵⁰. Given this specificity

⁴⁹ Another example that is given very often is about two hungry men – the first one had used his freedom to choose to fast because of religious reasons while the other had nothing to eat because he had no money to buy anything, so he had had no freedom to choose whether to eat or not. So, it is very clear that the ways in which both people reached hunger are not the same. This example shows us that if we only look at the functionings our conclusions will be biased.

⁵⁰ This understanding is in a strong contrast with happiness as an informational basis of justice since, as Sen (2008, p. 336) puts it: "happiness does not generate obligation in the way that capability inescapably must do".

of capability, it is possible, in certain situations, for people to engage in actions to reduce injustices which are motivated from reasoning from the obligation of effective power which people realize that they have, rather than from the commitment made in some social contract (Sen, 2008).

Finally, it is important to clarify that the capability perspective entails that choosing a lifestyle is not the same as having that lifestyle, no matter how it is chosen. The combination of all the capabilities that a person has, constructs her own specific capability set. Overall, a person's capability set depends on a variety of factors, "including personal characteristics and social arrangements" (Sen 1999, p. 33). It points to the importance of human diversity and the idea of conversion of goods into functionings which shape the capability space. Given this importance, and their crucial role in understanding the approach, the next subsection discusses these ideas in more detail.

3.3.3. Human diversity

The main reason for comparing capabilities instead of functionings has its roots in human diversity. Actually, different people need different things to achieve the same level of functionings. Sen (1992) accepts human beings as diverse, but not only in one way:

One variation relates to the differences in ends and objectives. But there is another important diversity – variations in our ability to convert resources into actual freedoms. Variations related to sex, age, genetic endowments, and many other features, give us very divergent powers to build freedom in our lives even when we have the same bundle of primary goods (Sen, 1992, pp. 85-86).

Following David Crocker and Ingrid Robeyns (2009), I consider two possible ways in which the capability approach takes account of human diversity. The first one is by its focus on the plurality of functionings and capabilities as an important evaluative space. It may be illustrated with an example of two women: a pregnant woman and a non-pregnant one. Both women need different amounts and kinds of food to be healthy. In this example we can see Sen's critiques of the theory of justice by John Rawls. According to Sen, primary goods cannot adequately account for inter-individual differences in people's abilities to convert these primary goods into what people are able to be and do in their lives (Robeyns, 2009, pp. 109-112). In Sen's view, primary goods are means through which one could pursue one's life plan. That is why he claims that we should focus on the actual capabilities that people have. This leads us to the second way in which the

capability approach takes into account the human diversity that Crocker and Robeyns discuss in their joint article *Capability and Agency* (2009). They claim that it happens by the explicit focus on personal and socio-environmental factors that make possible the conversion of commodities into functionings⁵¹ (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009, p. 68).

In order to further outline the second way in which the capability approach takes into account human diversity, I use the distinction between *means*, *ends* and *conversion factors*. The means⁵² are all possible goods and services, while ends are capabilities and functionings. In contrast, conversion factors influence how a person can be, or is, free to convert the characteristics of the good or service into functioning. More specifically, the relation between a good and the achievement of certain beings and doings may be influenced by different types of conversion factors: *personal*, *social* and *environmental* conversion factors (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009). Whereas personal conversion factors are these which are internal⁵³ to the individual, such as metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills and experience; the social and environmental conversion factors are external to the individual. In the case of the social ones, these are the factors of the society in which one lives. In the case of the environmental ones, they emerge from the physical or built environment in which a person lives. Public policies, social norms, discrimination practices, societal hierarchies, or power relations related to class, gender, race or caste are all examples of social conversion factors. Some examples of environmental conversion factors could include some aspects of geographical location such as the climate, pollution, etc. or some aspects of the built environment like the means of communication and transportation; stability of building, roads, etc.

⁵¹ Thus in *Development as freedom* (1999, pp. 70-71) Sen identifies five distinct sources of variations of contingent circumstances that should be taken into account when making interpersonal comparisons of people's well-being which would otherwise be hidden if we rely solely on the metrics of income for evaluations of well-being. These are: personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, variations in social climate, differences in relational perspectives and distribution within the family.

⁵² The often-given example is of a bicycle. We might be not interested in it as a good of a certain shape or colour, but because it could take us to places where we want to go, and in a faster way than if we were walking. These characteristics of a good enable a functioning. In this example, the bike enables the functioning of mobility, to be able to move oneself freely and more rapidly than walking (Robeyns, 2005).

⁵³ As Sen (1992, p. xi) emphasises, our diversity is deeply rooted in our 'internal characteristics' and 'external circumstances'.

These three types of factors play a role in the conversion from characteristics of the good to the individual functioning. The variety of conversion factors shows that it is not sufficient to know how many goods a person owns or can use, to be able to assess the well-being that he or she can achieve; rather, we need to know much more about the person and the circumstances in which he or she is living (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009). In this regard, Robeyns also emphasizes that:

The capability approach not only advocates an evaluation of people's capability sets, but insists also that we need to scrutinize the context in which economic production and social interactions take place, and whether the circumstances in which people choose from their opportunity sets are enabling and just (Robeyns, 2005, p. 99).

This is very important for this research, given the trends of massification, diversification and stratification which accompanied higher education expansion in different countries. By taking into account the conversion factors, the capability approach allows us to consider, not only individual level characteristics in evaluation of inequalities, but also the institutional and macro-level features of the contexts where these inequalities are analyzed. Given this, by emphasizing the role of conversion factors, the capability approach offers a bridge between two of the main concepts in the sociology of education: *agency* and *structure*. In so saying, agency is one of the most important concepts in this framework and deserves special attention. This is why the section continues with the distinction between agency and well-being as it is understood in the capability approach.

3.3.4. Agency and well-being

Although, to a great extent, agency and well-being may be perceived as complementary, these two concepts and their distinction are central for understanding the capability approach. In fact, one of the lines of distinction between these concepts is hidden in the different implications for goals and valuations which these concepts have. This difference can be clearly seen in *Well-being, agency and freedom: The Dewey lectures 1984*, in which Sen (1985) claims that:

... the well-being aspect of a person is important in assessing a person's *advantage*, whereas the agency aspect is important in assessing what a person can do in line with his or her conception of *the good*. The ability to do more good need not be to the person's advantage. (Sen, 1985, p. 206)

Another line of distinction relates to the fact that these concepts characterize the internal *plurality* of capability space. In the capability approach the individual advantage can be assessed in at least four different spaces: *well-being achievement*, *well-being freedom*, *agency achievement*, and

agency freedom. In his book *Inequality reexamined* (1992) Sen tries to describe agency and well-being, stressing namely their freedom and achievement aspects. As he puts it:

The well-being of a person can be seen in terms of quality (the ‘well-ness’, as it were) of the person’s being. Living may be seen as consisting of a set of interrelated ‘functionings’, consisting of beings and doings. A person’s achievement in this respect can be seen as the vector of his or her functionings (Sen, 1992, p. 39).

In contrast to this view, he points out that:

A person’s agency achievement refers to the realization of goals and values she has reason to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being. A person as an agent need not be guided only by her own well-being, and agency achievement refers to the person’s success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives (Sen, 1992, p. 56).

Although both concepts are independent of each other, the pursuit of well-being can be one of the important goals of the agent (Sen, 1992). Furthermore, it is possible that well-being and agency, in terms of freedom and achievements, may not go hand-in-hand and in the same direction. In this sense, in certain cases, certain conflicts between these concepts are not excluded⁵⁴. Actually, *the agent*, as has been depicted in *Development as freedom* (1999), is someone who acts and brings about change⁵⁵. Although the concept of agency is often misunderstood and criticized, Alkire and Deneulin (2009, p. 27) argue that this very idea “of enabling people to become agents in their life and in their communities” is one of the central goals of human development.

So much attention has been paid to agency because it broadens our understanding of well-being and how it could be enhanced. As Sen puts it in his book *The Idea of Justice* (2009, p. 288) “taking note of agency achievements or agency freedom shifts the focus away from seeing a person as just a vehicle of well-being, ignoring the importance of the person’s own judgments

⁵⁴ Such tensions could arise from increasing the agency freedom that may cause negative consequences for the achieved well-being, eg. When someone involuntarily witnesses a crime which s/he would like to prevent. Such opposite processes and conflicts are possible even in the scope of well-being only. Eg. When someone, because of his increased (high) well-being freedom, chooses to use it to pursue non-well-being objectives (it corresponds in this case with more agency freedom), it may result in reducing the achievement of well-being.

⁵⁵ Crocker and Robeyns (2009, pp. 76-79) find out that, after 1992, Sen goes beyond this descriptive account of agency, supplementing it with an explicitly normative one which proposes human agency as something that we have reason to value, realize in our lives, and exercise it jointly in our groups and institutions. According to this normative account the agency could be self-regarding or other-regarding. Both authors even call this perspective “agency-oriented” capability approach.

and priorities, with which the agency concerns are linked”. Such understanding of agency stresses people’s active role and their capacity to change and transform reality in accordance with their conception of *the good* which has passed reasoned scrutiny.

In contrast to capability which refers to the opportunity aspect of freedom, “agency relates to personal process freedoms” (Alkire, Qizilbash, & Comim, 2008, p. 4). More specifically, the concept of agency takes into account the possibility that people can help, not only to improve their individual well-being, but also other people’s well-being. But this raises the question as to the basis of these judgments, and the choices of how the agent could set his/her goals (are all goals positive ones) and how s/he achieves them (what resources and ways s/he will choose). In this respect Crocker and Robeyns (2009, p. 75) pay attention to the fact that it is not enough to ask what it means for an individual’s life to go well or for a group to be doing well, and which capabilities are important, but also who should decide these questions, how they should do so, and who should ask to effect change.

3.3.5. Distributive rule

Instead of specifying a definite distributive rule, Sen demonstrates the difficulty of solving disputes for the justness of a particular distribution with an example. He presents a hypothetical situation of three children quarrelling over a flute. Each child has their own argument for taking the flute. One of them could play it. The second one made it whereas the third one had no toys. In contemplating what the just distribution of the flute is, Sen actually argues that this problem should be a subject of public reasoning, in which the alternatives may be compared. As Sen (2009) emphasizes:

An engagement with contrary arguments does not, however, imply that we must expect to be able to settle the conflicting reasons in all cases and arrive at agreed position on every issue. Complete resolution is neither a requirement of a person’s own rationality, nor is it a condition of reasonable social choice, including a reason-based theory of justice (Sen, 2009, p. 392).

In other words, in Sen’s view, there is no single principle for just distribution but instead he insists on scrutiny and reasoning about the principles. In the end, it is possible that only one principle may survive reasoning but quite often there may be a plurality of competing principles. It reveals a situation where: “there can exist several distinct reasons of justice, each of which survives critical scrutiny, but yields divergent conclusions” (2009, p. X) even without leading to

any transcendental identification of a perfectly just institution or a society. Thus, Sen does not claim that ‘reasoned’ or ‘critical’ scrutiny would solve all disputes or yield agreement on all decisional problems for which the idea of justice is relevant, but he insists on using such scrutiny “as far as we reasonably can” (p. 401).

This means that it is possible that, after reasoning, we may not reach a decision because there may be different moral frameworks between which there may be disagreement about which distribution could be considered as a just one. But Sen’s approach allows for the possibility to rely on partial rankings and on limited agreement in such cases. The approach of human development may be given as an illuminating example of “this general strategy of making do with what can be very widely accepted, without expecting that this strategy will solve every decisional problem we face” (Sen, 2008, p. 340).

A key role in the implementation of public reasoning within a public discussion is that it requires a democratic environment. For Sen, though, democracy should not be understood merely in narrow terms of elections and ballots, but in a broader perspective as ‘government by discussion’. In other words, democracy is closely linked with Sen’s way of pursuing a more just world and thus for exercising justice.

At the same time, Sen (2009) argues for the relevance of distant perspectives when engaging in public reasoning that may go beyond the boundary of a state or a region. More specifically, he takes into account the relevance of:

- other people’s *interests* for the sake of avoiding bias and for being fair to others and
- other people’s *perspectives* to broaden our own investigation of relevant principles, for the sake of avoiding under-scrutinized parochialism of values and presumptions of the local community.

Following Adam Smith’s approach for ensuring impartiality, which Sen calls “open” impartiality, consisting of taking into account voices from near and far, Sen aims at overcoming the possibility of:

... neglecting many challenging counter-arguments that might not have come up in local political debates, or been accommodated in the discourses confined to the local culture, but which are eminently worth-considering, in an impartial perspective (Sen, 2009, p. 403).

Sen contrasts it to the Rawlsian approach for ensuring impartiality, according to which only the citizens should participate in taking decisions as to how institutions should be arranged. In Sen's view it narrows down the process of reasoning by not taking into account important arguments which may be crucial for taking decisions. Sen calls this a closed way of ensuring impartiality. Given this, scrutiny from a distance can be very useful to avoid local parochialism in the sense of bringing a new question into a debate, or for providing counter-arguments or just for reconsidering our understanding, and may change our point of view. However, it does not mean that all voices from abroad should be taken into account. The point is that we should not neglect other voices.

Overall, Sen's approach to justice does not give us a clear answer as to what is the exact meaning of justice since its meaning may vary in different societies, contexts or timespans. Rather, it shows us a way to search for it so that we could make the world less unjust. Sen's approach to justice suggests we critically engage in scrutiny and impartial reasoning about justice first, in order to identify manifestations of injustice, and then we rank the alternatives to find a way to remedy it. In his view, it is the way to live in a more just society, even if it is not the ideal one.

3.4. Nussbaum's capabilities approach

3.4.1. Points of departure

Nussbaum (2011, p. 19) claims that her version of the capability approach could work in constructing a theory on 'basic' social justice. More specifically, in her interpretation of the capability approach, which is rather political, she uses the idea of "capabilities as the core of an account of minimal social justice and constitutional law" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 71). In developing her account of a theory of justice, Nussbaum adds three new notions: those of *human dignity*, *the threshold* and *political liberalism*. The main principle in her theory of justice is of "*each person as an end*" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 35).

Thus, one of the main characteristics of Nussbaum's version of the capability approach is that it focuses on the protection of areas of freedom which are so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity. Nussbaum (2000) identifies a list of *central human capabilities*, setting them in the context of a type of *political liberalism* that makes them specifically political goals. She argues (2000) that the capabilities can be the object of an *overlapping consensus*

among people who, otherwise, have very different comprehensive conceptions of good.

3.4.2. Human dignity, threshold and political liberalism

Despite the central role which human dignity plays in Nussbaum's account of justice, it is a very vague concept. In this regard, the above-mentioned three notions in Nussbaum's interpretation of the approach "are seen as interconnected, deriving illumination and clarity from one another" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 29). The idea Nussbaum has in mind is that some living conditions deliver a life which is worthy of the human dignity they possess, and others do not. More specifically, the notion of human dignity is closely related to the idea of active striving (Nussbaum 2011). It is thus, in Nussbaum's understanding, a close relative to the concept of basic capability, which is inherent in the person that exerts a claim that should be developed. From her perspective, although people seen as citizens should have equal dignity, it does not mean that all the centrally-important capabilities should be equalized (Nussbaum, 2011). Furthermore, Nussbaum (2011, p. 31) states that "treating people as equals may not entail equalizing the living conditions of all". Given this, the main question Nussbaum's approach to social justice asks is "What does a life worthy of human dignity require?" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 32). In her opinion, the answer to this question is a threshold level of ten central capabilities. More specifically, a basic claim of her account of social justice is:

... respect for human dignity requires that citizens be placed above an ample (specified) threshold of capability in all ten of those areas (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 36).

In this sense, Nussbaum (2011) develops a 'partial theory of justice' which does not purport to solve all distributional problems; it just specifies a rather ample social minimum⁵⁶.

Other theories of justice, though, hold that an ample minimum is not enough. An illuminating example of this is John Rawls's theory of justice, in which the inequalities may be justified only where they raise the level of the worst-off. In contrast, Nussbaum's version of the capabilities approach so far "does not make any commitment about how inequalities above the threshold may be handled" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 41). Despite that, according to Nussbaum, the threshold requires equality in some cases. The answer, in her view, is that each capability should be

⁵⁶ It is a matter for each nation to set a threshold taking into account its own history and traditions (Nussbaum, 2011).

investigated separately in terms of what respect for equal human dignity requires. Nussbaum (2000: 71) also argues that:

If people are systematically falling below the threshold in any of these core areas, this should be seen as a situation both unjust and tragic, in need of urgent attention – even if in other respects things are going well.

Thus, for instance, if inequality of distribution of political entitlements occurs, it may be seen as an insult to the dignity of the unequal (Nussbaum, 2011). We can agree with Nussbaum (2011), who emphasizes that if some children in a nation have educational opportunities manifestly unequal to those of other children, even though all get above a minimum, this seems to raise an issue of basic fairness.

Another important characteristic, interrelated with the notions of human dignity and the threshold, is that Nussbaum's version of the capability approach develops the Rawlsian idea of political liberalism. In this regard, the capability approach should be seen as a political doctrine only and as one that aspires to be the object of an overlapping consensus in a pluralistic society (Nussbaum, 2011). In this regard, Nussbaum's capabilities approach may be seen as representing the basic political principle on which an overlapping consensus in a given society could hold. In such a way, her interpretation differs from Rawls' theory of justice which is based on two principles of justice (equality of opportunity and difference principle) which are the basic political principles on which this consensus holds.

3.4.3. Broadening the concept of capabilities

Another feature of Nussbaum's version of the capability approach is that she also broadens the concept of capability in two ways, by which she takes the plurality of the capability space. First, she distinguishes between three types of capabilities: 'basic', 'internal' and 'combined' (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011). Nussbaum (2011, pp. 20-25) defines 'basic capabilities' as the innate faculties of the person that make later development and training possible. The second type – 'internal capabilities' - are these trained or developed traits and abilities (such as skills, self-confidence, etc.) developed, in most cases, through interaction with the social, economic, familial, and political environment. The third type – 'combined capabilities' - are the set of opportunities between which a person can choose or act. These are not just abilities residing inside a person, but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal

abilities and the political, social and economic environment. In this sense, ‘internal capabilities’ are seen as important but a distinct part of the combined capabilities⁵⁷. Nussbaum’s ‘combined’ capabilities are the equivalent of what Sen terms ‘substantive freedom’ and capability.

Second, Nussbaum endorses a universal, cross-cultural list of ten central human functional capabilities providing the basis of constitutional guarantees. These ten capabilities may be regarded namely as combined capabilities. As has already been mentioned, the roots of her interpretation are in the concept of human dignity, which is central to her version of the capability approach. In this sense, this list is oriented to the threshold of capabilities that should be provided for each human being in relation to their dignity. One of the peculiarities of Nussbaum’s interpretation of the approach is the conviction that:

... a society that does not guarantee the active cultivation of these central capabilities, cannot be considered a just society, whatever its level of affluence (Boni & Walker, 2013, p. 4).

However, as regards agency freedom and well-being freedom, Nussbaum states (2011, p. 201) that if we have a sufficiently-refined conception of well-being, there is no need for a distinction between them. This statement has its roots in Nussbaum’s account of the capabilities, which is rather political. In comparison to her, Sen’s use is a more comprehensive one.

3.4.4. Nussbaum’s list of ten central capabilities

Nussbaum (2003, p. 36) argues in favour of formulating a definitive list of the most-central capabilities, even if it is “tentative and revisable”, as the only way the capability approach could provide useful guidance on the pursuit of equality, and could represent “a set of basic entitlements without which no society can lay claim to justice”. More specifically, this list comprises the capabilities: *life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination, and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and control over one’s environment* (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011, pp. 33-34). In her view, these capabilities are essential for a person to

⁵⁷ The distinction between internal and combined capabilities reflects “two overlapping but distinct” tasks of a decent society (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 21). For instance, people may be internally free to exercise a religion but, because of the government which does not protect the free exercise of a religion, they may not have the opportunity to do so in the sense of combined capability. The opposite is also true - to have a society which does well in creating context but does not provide good internal capabilities for its citizens via providing good educational opportunities, for instance.

flourish and live a life that goes beyond economic participation, but which includes a wider vision of flourishing incorporating human development, social context, environment and personal interactions (Walker, 2003).

Although this list cannot be reduced to only a few of them or some weights put on all of the capabilities, two of them stand out as of special importance, since they both organize and suffuse all the others, making their pursuit truly human: practical reason and affiliation (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 82). This list is also open for additions and corrections. However, there is no clarity as to who should do the revision (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 13).

Overall, Nussbaum's capabilities approach does not provide a complete theory of justice. The list of ten central capabilities which Nussbaum endorses could only give us the basis for determining a decent social minimum in a variety of areas. She argues that the structure of social and political institutions should be chosen, at least in part, with a view to promoting at least a threshold level of these human capabilities. But the provision of a threshold level of capabilities, exigent though that goal is, may not suffice for justice. From this perspective, Nussbaum (2000, p. 81) defends the view that what government can aim to deliver is the social basis of these capabilities.

3.5. Critiques of the capability approach

The capability approach, in both of its interpretation, bears a lot of criticism. This criticism arises within the approach but it is mostly made by opponents of the approach. More specifically, four major lines of criticism are highlighted in this section. First, it has been criticized for being too individualistic. Second, for not taking into account the structures of living together. Third, for not being adequately specified as a theory. Fourth, criticism around whether a list of central capabilities should be endorsed or not. All these lines of criticism will be discussed in more details in the next sections.

3.5.1. It is too individualistic

In her attempt to address some of these critiques, Ingrid Robeyns (2005) first draws a distinction⁵⁸ between ethical individualism on the one hand and ontological and methodological

⁵⁸ In brief, Robeyns (2005) emphasizes that whereas ethical individualism postulates that individuals, and only individuals, are the units of moral concern, explanatory or methodological individualism presumes that everything can be explained only by reference to individuals and

individualism on the other. Using this distinction, she concludes that the capability approach does not rely on ontological individualism, while it does embrace ethical individualism. In other words, although on a theoretical level the capability approach focuses on individuals as a moral concern, it does account for social relations and the constraints and opportunities of societal structures and institutions on individuals by recognizing the social and environmental factors that influence the conversions of commodities into functionings. Sen (2009) himself emphasizes that the capability approach does not assume a detachment between individual thought, choice and action and society. Moreover, he claims that:

... its concern with people's ability to live the kind of lives they have reason to value brings in social influences both in terms of what they value (for example, 'taking part in the life of the community') and what influences operate on their values (for example, the relevance of public reasoning in individual assessment) (Sen, 2009, p. 244).

An additional argument against the criticism that the capability approach should not be identified as methodological individualism is the importance Sen places on the relevance of the distance perspectives in public reasoning and, in particular, on the application of the idea of the 'impartial spectator', borrowed from Adam Smith, which implies taking into account voices from people far and near. However, although the individual should take these perspectives into account, the individual herself is the one who reasons. In other words, it is not that the capability approach does not focus on groups such as women and does not acknowledge the importance of the social structures and institutions and includes them in its conceptual framework of the approach, but that they are included only in the sense that they are the means to the well-being of people. Furthermore, it acknowledges that one-and-the-same person may belong to different groups. As Sen (2009, p. 247) simply puts it:

Individual human beings with their various plural identities, multiple affiliations and diverse associations are quintessentially social creatures with different types of societal interactions. Proposals to see a person merely as a member of one social group tend to be based on an inadequate understanding of the breadth and complexity of any society in the world.

Robeyns emphasizes that the capability approach could also engage more intensively in a dialogue with disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, etc. In such a way, these aspects of the

their properties. In contrast to these two, Robeyns underscores that, ontological individualism postulates that a society is built from individuals only, and hence is nothing more than the sum of individuals and their properties.

approach would become more explicit.

3.5.2. It fails to take into account the structures of living together

The capabilities approach has also been criticized because it fails to take into account that the structures of living together are constitutive of individual capabilities and of people's value judgments and the socio-historical agency of people (Deneulin, 2008). More specifically, Severine Deneulin's study (2008) provides a strong rationale to include the social structures explicitly in the informational basis of quality of life and development. Thus, Deneulin claims that the choice of individuals is dependent upon the particular socio-historical structures in which they find themselves, rather than upon a choice that inheres in their inner self. The capability approach, as she puts it:

... will have to place not individual agency as central to addressing deprivations but rather socio-historical agency (what individuals can do in the socio-historical reality in which they are living) as central, and this unavoidably entails a careful consideration of the particular structures of living together that constitute this socio-historical agency (Deneulin, 2008, p. 121).

A similar reservation has been expressed by Hartley Dean (2009), who criticizes the capabilities approach for obscuring or neglecting the constitutive nature of human interdependency and that collective and social freedoms matter for equality.⁵⁹ However, as has been noted by Walker (2010), Sen does not separate individual flourishing from social conditions. Furthermore, Sen (1999) distinguishes five instrumental freedoms (political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security) as the conditions for capability formation. As Sen (1999, p. 38) puts it, these instrumental freedoms may:

... contribute directly or indirectly, to the overall freedom people have to live the way they would like to live.

⁵⁹ In addition to this critique, Dean also criticizes the capabilities approach for not taking into account the problematic nature of the public realm and the exploitative nature of capitalism (Dean, 2009). More specifically, Dean sees an ambiguity in the capability approach as regards two of its aspects: "who is to determine what constitutes good reason?" and what constitutes 'the public' which, in his opinion, are essential for specifying the process of 'public reasoning'. This ambiguity hides a possibility of emerging problems of oppression, conflicts and inequalities. Furthermore, the concept of capability "does not of itself address the systemic impediments to human freedom that are associated with the capitalist mode of production" (Dean, 2009, pp. 272-3).

On her side, Walker (2010, p. 158) suggests that we may look at these instrumental freedoms as capability ‘inputs’ which require attention, not only to capability development in classrooms, but how this articulates with just institutions and justice in broader social conditions. In other words, we may disagree that the capability approach is blind to human interdependency and needs further elaboration.

3.5.3. It is not adequately specified as a theory

One of the critiques of the capability approach states that this framework is not specified adequately as a theory and it does not produce a public criterion of social justice (Pogge, 2002, 2010). Following Elizabeth Anderson (2010), I present the advantages of the approach in comparison to subjective and resourcist approaches: (1) the capability metric is superior to any subjective metric because only an objective metric, such as capability, can justify the demand for a public criterion of justice for the basic structure of society and could avoid adaptive preferences⁶⁰; (2) it is superior to resource metrics, in focusing on the ends of justice rather than just the means, responding to forms of social discrimination that are neither constituted nor remedied by resource distributions, offering remedies to those whose just claims cannot be satisfied by standardized resource packages, and is properly sensitive to individual variations in functioning that have democratic import, and is well-suited to guide the just delivery of public services, especially in health and education.

These advantages clearly show that the capability approach does quite well in terms of identifying the informational basis of justice. However, as regards the distributive rule that the theory introduces and people who would like to apply the capability approach should use, there are certain unclarities. They emerge mainly because the approach is very sensitive to human

⁶⁰ The concept of ‘adaptive preferences’ is used to show that people’s desires may adjust to the circumstances where they live. If these circumstances are systematically and constantly bad it may result in lowering people’s expectations and may deform their ability to make objective choices. It often leads to paradoxical situations in which a poor and a rich person give the same levels of satisfaction. If we only rely on these subjective answers and we do not take into consideration objective information (eg. for the real opportunities that people have) we can draw very biased conclusions about how well people live. This concept is used by Sen and Nussbaum as one of the main arguments for the criticism of the utilitarian approach to justice. More specifically, they argue that the metrics of happiness and satisfaction may not adequately and objectively guide the assessment of the well-being of people.

diversity. Thus, when it comes to Sen's account on justice, basically the individuals should be left to choose how to take advantage of the opportunities which are open to them. But before that the social arrangement within which people could choose should be generated with wide agreement based on public reasoning. As Sen simply puts it:

When we try to determine how justice can be advanced, there is a basic need for public reasoning, involving arguments coming from different quarters and divergent perspectives (Sen, 2009, p. 392).

In contrast, Nussbaum's account on justice, as she calls it 'basic' justice theory, seems to be closer in specifying a distributing rule than Sen, by endorsing a list of central capabilities and by requiring the structure of social and political institutions to be chosen, at least in part, with a view to promoting at least a threshold level of these human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011).

3.5.4. It lacks sufficient justification for a list

Most of Nussbaum's capabilities are criticized for being at such a high level of generality that undemocratic local decision-making can lead to problematic lists (Robeyns, 2005, p. 106). Furthermore, elsewhere, Ingrid Robeyns (2003, p. 68) also disagrees with Nussbaum's claim that Sen should endorse one definite list of capabilities. In her view, each application of the capability approach will require its own list and they can be very diverse (eg. policy-oriented, theoretical, empirical, etc.). As an attempt to overcome this problem, Robeyns proposes a methodology to select relevant capabilities for the study of gender inequality, including four steps: unconstrained brainstorming, engagement with the existing socio-economic literature and debates on a particular topic, comparison between this list and other lists, and for this list to be discussed at seminars and conferences, in informal discussions, and in feminist activist networks. This methodology also takes into account the arguments in anti-feminist literature (Robeyns, 2003, p. 87). In the selection of the capabilities in her study, Robeyns chooses five principles that could guide her in identifying the capabilities appropriate for assessing gender inequality: of explicit formulation, of methodological justification, of sensitivity to context, of different levels of generality, and of exhaustion and non reduction. A similar strategy of choosing criteria for selection of capabilities is adopted by Sabine Alkire in her study on poverty (2002); Lorella Terzi in identifying basic functionings and capabilities in education (2007); and Melanie Walker in selecting capabilities for gender equality in education (2006b, 2007). It seems that there is a big

overlap in the used criteria, but, at the same time, some of them are adapted depending on the subject of the study.

Notwithstanding the differences in the interpretations of how the capability approach framework can be developed as a theory for social justice and their accompanying critiques, both versions of the capability approach undoubtedly make a valuable contribution to the development of the idea of justice by positioning capability as one of its dimensions. This suggests that the framework of the capability approach could be useful and may be applied in many fields, such as education and the labour market.

3.6. The potential of the capability approach in studying social justice in education and the labour market outcomes of education

This section discusses how the capability approach has been applied so far in studying social justice in education and the labour market. In fact, there is a growing literature on studying education via the capability approach lens and very scarce literature in studying graduate employability. Given this, the following subsections discuss these literatures and use them as a starting-point for the analysis of the present thesis.

3.6.1. Advantages in comparison to other approaches that focus on education

In general, the capability approach goes beyond the narrow human capital perspective⁶¹ which accepts education only as investment, but acknowledges its intrinsic value and adopts a broader

⁶¹ Although human capital and human capabilities perspectives focus on humanity, both of them use different yardsticks of assessment of different achievements (Sen, 2007). Thus, Sen articulates the role of human capabilities in three ways: (1) their *direct* relevance to the well-being and freedom of people; (2) their *indirect* role through influencing social change; and (3) their *indirect* role through influencing economic production (Sen, 1999, pp. 296–297). Whereas human capital is considered to fit into the third category, the concept of human capability incorporates all three categories. Furthermore, Sen (2007) underlines that the acknowledgement of the role of human qualities in promoting and sustaining economic growth does not tell us anything about reasons why economic growth is sought in the first place. Instead, Sen calls for focus on the expansion of human freedom to live the kinds of lives that people have reason to value. In such cases the role of economic growth in expanding these opportunities has to be integrated into that more foundational understanding of the process of development as the expansion of human capability to lead more worthwhile and freer lives. In such a way the

vision of human development. Thus, the notion of capability in Sen's view implies a larger scope of benefits from education than only improving economic production, and includes influencing social change and enhancing well-being and freedom of individuals and peoples. Thus, whereas the human capital perspective focuses on education as a means for increasing production possibilities, the human capability perspective focuses on the impact that education may have on expanding human ability to lead valuable lives and to enhance the substantive choices people have. For instance, an educated person may not only be more efficient in commodity production but may also benefit from education in reading, communicating, in being able to choose in a more informed way, etc. (See Sen, 1999, pp. 292-297). Despite that, the perspectives of accumulation of human capital and the expansion of human capabilities should not be accepted as rivals but as "related" since, as Sen (1997, p. 1959) puts it:

... both are concerned with the role of human beings, and in particular with the actual abilities that they achieve and acquire.

In fact, many scholars have investigated the potential of these two perspectives in relation to education and have provided evidence in favour of the human capabilities model. Thus, Robeyns (2006) compares these two models of education with the rights discourse and concludes that, although all three models have disadvantages when it comes to educational policy, the ultimate goal should be to expand people's capabilities, including the capability of education. In this case, rights may be seen as one of the possible instruments in reaching that goal. But, in all cases, human capabilities and human rights models go beyond the solely instrumental role of education which human capital entails. In a similar vein, Walker (2012c) identifies the capability approach as a superior one to the human capital model. In her opinion, if the capabilities approach were applied in education it would contribute to a rich human understanding and concern in which economic opportunities are the means to the end of good lives rather than the end in itself.

Similarly, in their article *Social justice, capabilities and the quality of education in low income countries*, Leon Tikly and Angeline M. Barrett (2011) criticize human capital and human rights approaches as failing to address the complexity of the issue of education quality. As a way to go beyond the narrow understanding of these two approaches to it, Tikly and Barrett develop an

capabilities approach offers a much more comprehensive, broader and inclusive perspective on human development (See ul Haq, 2003) that has greater demands on education and the role it might play in the development of people.

overall understanding of how education quality can be understood in relation to the extent to which it fosters key capabilities that individuals, communities and society in general have reason to value. Their understanding is based mainly on the ideas of Nancy Fraser, Amyarta Sen, Martha Nussbaum and other scholars on social justice and capabilities. Thus, by drawing on research among disadvantaged learners in Africa, Tikly and Barrett contribute to the conceptualization of the relationship between quality education and social justice, and propose the social justice approach as useful when thinking about education quality. More specifically, their understanding of how education quality can be evaluated from a social justice perspective includes three inter-related dimensions – *inclusion*, *relevance* and *democracy*. Whereas the first dimension refers to “the access that different individuals and groups have to a good quality education and the opportunities they have for achieving desired outcomes” (ibid: 9), the second one “is concerned with the extent to which learning outcomes are meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global context” (ibid: 10). By contrast, the democracy dimension considers how decisions about education quality are governed and the nature of participation in debates at the local, national and global levels. Together with the value of a social justice approach for conceptualization of quality of education, the authors also acknowledge the importance that such an approach gives to the context, changing nature of social justice and public debate which could also contribute to the defining of good quality education and how it can be evaluated. They further argue that:

Education quality is a political issue and as such participation in deciding about what are the valued outcomes of education and valued processes to support these should be a matter of debate (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 6).

Although Sen undoubtedly acknowledges the importance of education, his work on the capability approach has been also criticized since he has not explored educational thought in itself deeply (Saito, 2003) and that, in general, education appears undertheorized in his writings (Unterhalter, 2003a). More specifically, Unterhalter (2003a) criticizes Sen’s writings on the capability approach in relation to education to the extent that they do not distinguish between education and schooling and fail to take account the complex settings in which schooling takes place. Thus, schooling may not always entail an enhancement of capabilities and substantive freedom.

Despite that, many researchers engaged themselves in developing further links between capability and education in the last decade, for either theoretical or practical reasons (Unterhalter,

2013a). Thus, as a result, education does not appear to be an undertheorized concept within capability approach literature any more. Overall, this body of literature has explored the potential of the capabilities approach in the evaluation of the learning opportunities, processes and outcomes of education but also for conceptualization, measurement and evaluation of inequalities or social justice in education (eg. Saito, 2003; Walker, 2006b; Otto & Ziegler, 2006; Terzi, 2007; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007; Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2010, Otto & Ziegler, 2010)⁶².

3.6.2. The role of education via the capability approach lens

Following Unterhalter and Walker (2007, p. 239), I agree that utilizing the capability approach in education may illuminate thinking about questions of justice and the distribution of schooling, gender equality, redressing poverty, politics, the link between school and the labour market, policy making, education measurement, institution building, and management.

More specifically, in the capability approach perspective, education can play a role as a means, an end and a conversion factor. It conceives education as one of the dimensions of human life and human development in which it is important for its own sake, but at the same time it takes into account its potential to contribute to the expansion and equality of capabilities in other spheres of life (Unterhalter, Vaughan, & Walker, 2007).

Education fulfils three main roles in the capability approach framework and in Sen's work in particular: *instrumental social role, instrumental process role and empowering and distributive role* (Unterhalter, 2009b, pp. 207-227). For instance, literacy can play an instrumental social role by fostering public debate and dialogue about social and political arrangements. Education may also enhance our capacity to participate in decision-making processes at the household, community or national level and thus it also plays an instrumental process role. Education also plays a crucial role in empowering the disadvantaged, marginalized and excluded groups so they could gain access to centers of power which, without education, they would not have any chance of doing. Unterhalter (2009b) adds to them the redistributive effects that education may have within families, between social groups and households, and the overall interpersonal impact linked with the agency aspect of education and the benefits that the individual may gain by

⁶² In the following overview, though, I have not covered the growing body of literature which is devoted to the role of education for children's capabilities since they go beyond the scope of this thesis.

helping others and contributing to society as a whole.

Education is also recognized as important in forming human values. Thus, Vaughan and Walker (2012) focus on this particular aspect of education. They argue that, instead of seeing education as imposing or transferring a set of external values, it is possible to envisage that an education can enable an individual to learn, realize and clarify what is valuable to them; to form their own significant values.

The contribution of education to the expansion of capabilities may be also examined by the four-dimensional framework which Pedro Flores-Crespo (2007) has recently proposed, including philosophical, pedagogical, institutional and policy issues dimensions. The philosophical dimension refers to the reconciliation of intrinsic and instrumental aims of education and focuses on the capacity of education to promote personal autonomy and human agency. The pedagogical one refers to the possibility that pedagogies can be more inclusive and raises concerns as to how knowledge is provided. The institutional focuses on the question of how the institutional arrangements and educational processes of the education systems could enlarge students' capabilities. The last dimension, recognized by Flores-Crespo, refers to the policy issues. It focuses on evaluation of policies in terms of their effect on students' freedoms and outcomes and on improving public policies in a direction of creating conditions which could enable expansion of students' capabilities.

Despite many scholars' focus on the positive effect of education on enhancing capability, others have noted that, under certain conditions, education could also diminish students' capabilities (Flores-Crespo, 2007; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). In this sense, Walker and Unterhalter (2007) point out that the positive and negative experiences of formal education at schools, colleges, and universities may also affect choices that people make and determine how they navigate their future. Such experiences may include curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and the culture of the school, particularly whether or not all students are equally valued and respected.

Education is also an inseparable component in almost all capabilities from the Nussbaum's list if it is accepted in its widest sense. Furthermore, as has been noted by Nussbaum (2011), the importance of education has been at the heart of the capabilities approach since its inception. Despite that, Nussbaum (2006) identifies three capabilities that are linked to education which, in her opinion, are crucial for the health of democracy. These are: (1) capacities for critical thinking,

(2) to see themselves as not simply citizens of some local region or group, but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings, and (3) for narrative imagination. She emphasizes that science and technology are important but their extension in education should not be at the expense of limiting the other parts of a liberal education such as the arts and humanities. Otherwise it may lead to producing nations of smart engineers who have little capacity for empathetic imagining and for critical thinking. Furthermore, in her book *Not for profit: why democracies needs humanities*, Nussbaum (2010) emphasizes that we are facing a ‘world-wide crisis in education’ which is largely unnoticed but represents a serious threat to democracy. More specifically, in contrast to the economic crisis since 2008, this one is caused by the cutting of humanities and the arts from the curricula in all levels of education in virtually every nation in the world, and their being substituted by the cultivation of useful and highly-applied skills suited to profit-making. As Nussbaum puts it:

Thirsty for national profit, nations, and their systems of education, are heedlessly discarding skills that are needed to keep democracies alive. If this trend continues, nations all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticise tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 2).

This view suggests that the role that education may play at macro-level for economic growth and for democracy may not go hand-in-hand but in quite different directions. This view seems supported by Unterhalter and Carpentier (2010), who argue that we are facing a node of problems which may be better seen as a ‘tetralemma’. This ‘tetralemma’ pulls higher education in different directions: economic growth, equity, democracy and sustainability, which are often associated with conflicting agendas. This view is important to keep in mind. It suggests that while we are searching for, and aiming at, social justice, it is possible to lose something and that it is important to be aware of such consequences and try to deal with that and find the harmony between these conflicting agendas.

Although both Sen and Nussbaum acknowledge the importance of education, their interpretations differ and from this perspective the way they are linked with the problems of social justice in education also differ. Whereas Sen’s work has tended to be used in general discussion of policy and critiques of theories regarding education and the economy, Nussbaum’s concerns are directed to the content and process of education (Unterhalter, Vaughan, & Walker, 2007). Both

interpretations, though, have been criticized for lacking “the sense of history and struggle in the formation of learner identities in pedagogical spaces in the face of dominant education norms and values and learning practices permeated by power, history, language, and contradiction” (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 246).

According to Lorella Terzi (2007), at least three important reasons why the provision of education becomes a matter of justice from the capability approach perspective are worth-mentioning: (1) the capability to be educated relates to the need for education in order to avoid harm or disadvantage to the individual; (2) it is fundamental and foundational to different and future capabilities; (3) unequal opportunities or access to education and its fundamental enabling conditions would constitute an unacceptable inequality. Terzi emphasizes that the capability approach requires focusing on the contribution that the capability to be educated makes to the formation and expansion of human capabilities, and hence to the contribution it makes to the opportunities people have for leading flourishing lives.

However, when it comes to practice and public policy, education is a complex area because, as well as imparting skills and specific capacities, it also has the potential to have a significant impact on what is valuable to an individual and therefore what goals and other-regarding commitments they might form (Vaughan & Walker, 2012). Furthermore, as Vaughan and Walker (2012, p. 503) put it:

If education affects what you value, it affects your agency goals and therefore the nature or ‘shape’ of your capability set.

In this regard, Vaughan and Walker (2012) advocate that those who are advantaged should learn what it means to be part of a just society and what the implications are for treating people with respect and dignity as full human beings whose presence matters, and to learn through their education to be capable of treating others with respect.

Last but not least, the capability approach offers a freedoms-focused and equality-oriented approach for both practicing and evaluating education and social justice in all education sectors and in diverse contexts (Unterhalter & Walker, 2007, p. 251). From that perspective, I move to the studies which have tried to explore social justice in the higher education sector via the capability approach lens.

3.6.3. The capability approach and social justice in higher education

Within the extensive literature that exploits the potential of the capability approach in exploring problems of inequalities and social justice in education there can be identified a growing body of studies on the capability approach and equality and social justice in higher education. This literature addresses a number of issues which emerge in the context of higher education expansion which may be loosely grouped in two categories, which are interrelated:

- studies which focus on inequalities in relation to participation in higher education. They mainly address problems related to access, pedagogy in higher education, evaluation of teaching and learning in higher education, graduate identity formation and human development (Walker 2003, 2006a, 2008; Flores-Crespo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2010; Unterhalter, 2013b; Wang, 2013; Wilson-Strydom, 2014).
- studies which focus on how higher education could contribute to social justice in society (Boni & Gasper, 2012; Walker, 2012a; Bozalek, 2013; Walker & Boni, 2013; Walker & Mclean, 2013).

The *first group* of studies looks at the inequalities in higher education via the capability approach lens and analyzes different features in the higher education sector and, more generally, social arrangements which constrain people's freedom to promote or achieve what they value being or doing. As Nussbaum has emphasized (2010), no system of education is doing a good job if its benefits reach only the wealthy elites. She continues that:

The distribution of access to quality education is an urgent issue in all modern democracies (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 11).

Notwithstanding the worldwide expansion of higher education, there are different patterns of participation in higher education, according to which, the opportunities for lower socio-economic groups to participate in higher education are virtually non-existent in poor countries in comparison to the rich one (see Unterhalter, 2013b). Furthermore, these inequalities are accompanied by inequalities in the status of higher education institutions ranked nationally and internationally by League tables and inequalities in resources. Unterhalter (2013b) criticizes the arguments which have often been used for the justification of these inequalities (namely for stimulating competition, acknowledging students' diverse needs, and for the national or family desert) for not being 'historically neutral'. As she puts it:

Tolerating a wide variety of HEIs without working towards improving equity and democracy or reflecting together on processes for change, resourcing and the sustainability of organizations, actually hollows out the higher education product and only partially supports expansion (Unterhalter, 2013b, p. 50).

It seems that, despite the expansion of higher education, we are going into a vicious cycle in which the global inequalities in higher education seem to be exacerbated by already-existing inequalities and poverty in different nations but, at the same time, global inequalities in higher education exacerbate inequalities in income, income and health. In this regard, my opinion is in line with Unterhalter (2013b), who suggests a wider engagement with these injustices because they “offend, in some intrinsic way, the very nature of a higher education project” (p. 50).

Li Wang (2013) also addresses the problems of inequalities in access to higher education, but on a national level. She analyses the forms of social exclusion in access to higher education in China. Using Sen’s interpretation of the capability approach, Wang identifies economic handicaps, unequal admission systems across regions, the urban-rural disparities in quality education and the alternatives to the normal admission system as different forms of capability deprivations. All these forms have different causes and different effects and seem to require different types of solutions to be tackled. A vicious cycle may also be seen in the institutional arrangements of the higher education system in China where “social stratification is perpetuated in the HE selection mechanisms which, in return, reinforce the privilege of the advantaged groups” (Wang, 2013, p. 105).

Other scholars study what the widening participation in higher education might imply for the capabilities of students from diverse social classes. In this sense, higher education expansion can be seriously questioned if it does not lead to widening capabilities i.e. students to be “with a rich capacity for critical thinking, able to make reflexive and informed choices about what makes a good life for each of them” (Walker, 2008, p. 267). This concern may be clearly seen in the work of Melanie Walker in the area of pedagogy in higher education:

As more and more students enter higher education and it shifts from elite to mass provision in many countries, the moral role of higher education regarding citizenship and democratic life is then foregrounded (Walker, 2006a, pp. 4-5).

In a similar vein, a study demonstrates that, notwithstanding that higher education has a positive impact on valuable personal and professional achievements, after graduation “being academically trained, employed, and relatively well-paid does not necessarily imply *development*” (Flores-

Crespo, 2007, p. 52).

Specifically, in her paper *Widening participation; widening capability*, Walker (2008) emphasizes that widening participation ought to be conceptualized as widening capability as a matter of full justice, arguing that all students should be educated to be critical and active participants in democratic life, including those students who are the first in their families both to access university and to participate in, and benefit from, higher education. Following Walker (2006a, p. 142) the advantages of the capability approach, as a framework for evaluating equality in higher education, may be summarized as: (1) that higher education has intrinsic and instrumental value; (2) it addresses both recognition and redistribution, (3) it foregrounds agency as a measure for individual dis/advantage in and through higher education; (4) it locates individual agency and social and institutional arrangements on the same plane; and (5) it focuses on the capabilities needed to achieve educational/pedagogical rights.

Walker (2012b) claims that a curriculum grounded in human development dimensions, capabilities and functioning achievements can form rich human beings, and sees graduate formation as a space where we might “advance justice or reduce injustice in the world” (Sen, 2009, p. 337). Furthermore Walker argues that:

A university education provides knowledge for new ways of understanding oneself and the world beyond the university (Walker, 2012b, p. 457).

Overall, this first group of studies suggests that, in the context of expansion of higher education, widening the capabilities of students should be better addressed. The contributions in this group also suggest that the link between higher education and human development should be reconsidered and the barriers to even human development should be overcome.

The *second group* of studies is closely-linked to the first one but goes beyond the view that pedagogy and different policies could reduce the inequalities in capabilities within higher education and advance the human development of students, and focuses on how higher education could contribute more broadly to social justice in society.

Specifically, in her paper *Widening participation; widening capability* Walker (2008) suggests asking how higher education contributes to the formation of a society which is free, fair and equal in the way it provides for each individual to realize their fullest potential to choose and lead a good life.

In a similar vein, Alejandra Boni and Des Gasper (2012) put an emphasis on quality and suggest a rethink of what characterizes a good university nowadays, through a broader framework of human development. They propose a list of values for a human-development orientation, not only in the area of teaching, but also in research, social engagement, university governance and university environment. In particular, these values represent dimensions of university work which can serve as an evaluation framework which may be further operationalized as indicators and used in practice in the evaluation and steering of universities' work. More specifically, these dimensions are well-being, participation and empowerment, equity and diversity, and sustainability. These human development values, and the capability approach as such with its main concepts, offer an opportunity to 're-imagine a different vision of the universities' in the new century as well as to reconsider the role of universities for the human development often understood only as human capital formation and preparing people as part of the workforce (Boni & Walker, 2013, p. 5). More specifically, Melanie Walker and Alejandra Boni (2013, p. 22) argue that the human development and capabilities perspective (ul Haq, 2003; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999, 2009) "foregrounds *both* economy *and* society" whereas its aims are "human well-being, equality, justice (local and global) and the sustainability of democratic societies".

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, Walker (2012a) proposes a way that university work could be re-imagined in a way that professionals can become committed to justice. She calls these professionals 'public-good professionals'. Her study focuses on the other-regarding role that professionals could play after their graduation, in favour of the disadvantaged. This perspective is further developed by Melanie Walker and Monica Mclean (2013) who, in their recent book *Professional Education, Capabilities and the Public Good: The role of universities in promoting human development*, focus on how university-based professional education in South Africa might contribute to the public good, in particular to poverty-reduction and thus for more justice and less inequality. More specifically, using a theoretical framework drawn from the human development and the capabilities approach, they propose the term 'public-good professionals' to convey the concept of professionals with the values, knowledge and skills to provide services to the public which expand the opportunities to lead better lives (capabilities) and the achievements (functionings) that their clients have reason to value.

The potential of the capability approach to place human flourishing rather than employability as a primary goal of social justice in higher education has been explored by Vivianne Bozalek (2013).

In her study, the capability approach is used for endorsing a list of graduate attributes which were identified as important for students to develop at the end of their studies, which resonated with the ethos of the University of the Western Cape used as a case study. This list was designed through a focus on human flourishing, a concern for the social good, and investigation of the needs of students and staff and collaborative deliberation on what would be appropriate attributes for the graduates of that university. More specifically, the list includes three central graduate attributes related to 1. scholarship, 2. critical citizenship and the social good and 3. lifelong learning and a set of skills and abilities that should be developed throughout higher education studies.

The above-discussed studies have demonstrated the rich body of research which has used the potential of the capability approach to examine and engage with a wide range of social justice issues in access, participation, pedagogy or outside university at national and global level. Furthermore, it acknowledges the public dimension of education and the possibility that higher education may contribute to enhancing social justice. Thus, to a great extent, this body of literature takes into account the export role of higher education for social justice across the rest of society - a role which, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, according to Brennan and Naidoo (2008) is overlooked in the studies on social justice in higher education. This line of thinking goes beyond the instrumental view of education which associates it only with private benefits and raising the employability of graduates seen in very narrow terms. To this moment though, this body of literature has been mainly conceptual and has relied predominantly on data collected via qualitative methods. None of the studies, although covering a wide range of countries, has focused on Central and Eastern European countries.

3.6.4. Capabilities, labour market and social justice

The capability approach is also applied in relation to the labour market. The studies which apply the capability approach in this sphere look at the problem of unemployment, the predicaments and facilitators in the transition from education to work and the role that education may play in overcoming the problems that people experience on the labour market. In general, these studies focus predominantly on young people or other vulnerable groups on the labour market and reject the reductions of humans to their employability and the narrowness of the human capital approach (eg. Bonvin & Farvaque, 2006; Otto, 2012; Schneider & Otto, 2009). Overall, they use

the approach to conceptualize and analyze the existing problems on the labour market, to emphasize the quality of work as well as for critiques on the current employment and social integration policies. They do so by adopting a wider and social justice perspective. However, this branch of studies is not so developed empirically.

“Making Capabilities Work” (WorkAble) (2009-2012) may be accepted as the first empirical project to pursue a justice-theory perspective on a European level using the capability approach framework in two of its interpretation: Sen and Nussbaum’s (Otto, 2012). This EU-funded project has brought together partners from different disciplines working in ten different European countries. This joint project was provoked by the high youth unemployment rates in Europe and targeted vulnerable youth in general. It should be noted that the capabilities for work and education were among the three main benchmarks in the project. By combining quantitative and qualitative studies, this joint contribution has made a significant step to a fundamental change in the currently mostly-insufficient attempts within the human capital approach to use the labour market to ensure desired lifestyle forms and a secure income for young people (Otto, 2015)⁶³.

In this regard, it is worth noting that, within the capability approach perspective, the massive unemployment in affluent societies in Europe can be seen as an example of capability deprivation that may not be well-reflected in the income distribution statistics. As Sen (1999, p. 21) puts it:

... unemployment is not merely a deficiency of income that can be made up through transfers by the state (at heavy fiscal cost that can itself be a very serious burden); it is also a source of far-reaching debilitating effects on individual freedom, initiative and skills. Among the manifold effects, unemployment contributes to the “social exclusion” of some groups, and it leads to losses of self-reliance, self-confidence and psychological and physical health.

Furthermore, according to Sen (2000), unemployment could be seen as a major cause of social exclusion, both when a person is unemployed and in the cases when people are subjected to unequal inclusion in an exploitative occupation because of lack of alternative employment opportunities and the general threat of unemployment (Sen, 2000)⁶⁴.

⁶³ More information for the project and its results is available at: <http://www.workable-eu.org/about-workable>.

⁶⁴ Sen (2000, p. 30) gives an example with a tied labourer in a backward rural economy who may suffer particularly from unequal inclusion (and the lack of freedom to go elsewhere), but the same person—once liberated from tied servitude—may have to encounter conditions of sweated

Schneider and Otto (2009) consider that, in the context of the struggle against unemployment, the concept of employability defines the adaptation to potential intervention perspectives and the qualification of jobseekers toward their (re)integration in the first labour market. In this respect, the potential of the capability approach in conceptualizing, broadening and criticizing the concept of employability, or the policy discourse to it, have also been widely discussed (Bonvin & Farvaque, 2006; Bonvin, 2009; Bonvin & Galster, 2010; Schneider & Otto, 2009).

Jean Michel Bonvin and Nicholas Farvaque (2006) pay special attention to the capability for work. Using Sen's interpretation of the approach, they define the capability for work as "the real freedom to choose the work one has reason to value" (p. 126). According to them, this specific capability implies *either capability not to work if one chooses to* (via a valuable exit option); or *capability to participate effectively in the definition of the work content, organisation, conditions, modes of remuneration*, etc. (the voice option) (see also Bonvin, 2009). In this regard, the two types of freedom which have been discussed earlier, opportunity freedom and process freedom, are recognized as essential to assess the extent of 'capability for work' enjoyed by workers on the labour market and by unemployed people or job-seekers in the field of social integration policies (Bonvin & Galster, 2010). Whereas opportunity freedom is associated with the available opportunities with regard to the labour market, process freedom refers to the ability to actively participate in the design of one job's and/or social integration policies⁶⁵ (Bonvin & Galster, 2010).

Although opportunity and process aspects of freedom are essential, according to the authors, even if their provision is guaranteed, it still hides the risk for inequalities and will not ensure the enhancement of capability for work for everyone. This risk arises from the possibility that some

labour and exploitative working conditions, because of lack of alternative employment opportunities and the general threat of unemployment.

⁶⁵ These different types of freedom imply different things on the supply and the demand side. Specifically, on the supply side, the opportunity freedom implies enhancement of human capital but also interdiction of discriminatory practices, so that everyone is guaranteed the same access to existing opportunities on the labour market. On the demand side, the opportunity freedom requires that valuable opportunities are to be created on the labour market. Otherwise, if only opportunities of poor quality are available it does not enhance this aspect of freedom and keep it as formal. In other words, this aspect of freedom in the demand side entails the promotion of quality of jobs via public action. Seen through capability approach lenses, the development of all people's opportunity freedom requires the combination of adequate individual and social conversion factors (Bonvin & Galster, 2010).

people may not be willing or able to negotiate or deliberate about the content of public action or norms. To deal with this risk, the authors use Sen's distinction on direct and indirect aspects of real freedom and thus propose the concept of *passive empowerment*, which may complement the opportunity and process aspect of freedom when addressing the enhancement of capability for work. In particular passive empowerment is associated with the idea that all people are entitled to rights, even though they are not actively involved in their definition and/or implementation. Furthermore, in their opinion, the presence of passive unconditional rights is very important, because otherwise "it implies that people unable to successfully negotiate their professional or life-course transitions risk being significantly penalised in terms of capability for work and for life in general" (p. 81).

Following Jean Michel Bonvin and Deborah Galster (2010, p. 75), three essential components, which could contribute to the enhancement of one's capability for work and which may be used as an yardstick for assessment of the normative foundations of various meanings given to the concept employability in activation programmes, could be summarized as: (1) developing opportunity freedom via mobilization of a wide configuration of (supply and demand) factors and actors (market actors, the State and the cooperative sector); (2) promoting process freedom, i.e. reflexivity in collective decision-making and in its implementation, rather than top-down imposition of institutional and hierarchical views; (3) securing a whole range of unconditional rights to passive empowerment. Using this yardstick they criticize the employability policies and the extent to which they address these three challenges. Thus, they scrutinize the concept of employability in all of the meanings which they recognize as existing in the contemporary context for not being capability-friendly and, in particular, for failing to secure passive empowerment. More specifically, they identify three meanings of employability: *initiative*, *interactive* and *embedded*. Whereas the initiative employability focuses on the supply side and individual responsibility, the interactive employability focuses on the necessity to act both on the supply and demand side and to jointly mobilize individual and collective responsibility. In contrast the embedded employability is associated with corporate responsibility in promotion of employability (Bonvin & Galster, 2010).

As a result of their assessment, they conclude that 'interactive employability' and 'embedded employability' are in line with the capability approach, at least in the first two components that could enhance the capability for work of people. However, they both fail the third test, namely to

address passive empowerment. By contrast, the ‘initiative employability’ does not address any of the challenges imposed by the capability approach.

In addition, the notion of capability of work has been used for critiques of the current transformations and for generating ideas on how the Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) can be improved (Bonvin, 2009), so that they could address employment quality and to enhance the beneficiaries’ capabilities or real freedom to choose .

To sum up, focusing on capability for work instead of employability allows one to go beyond the information on achieved employment rates and the narrow view on improving the employability of job-seekers, but, at the same time, it implies much more complex engagement in shaping the social context in order to make it more professionally and socially inclusive. It also incorporates the notion that people could act and bring about change in this context. This focus includes actions to be adopted for enhancing employability of people but also requires setting-up of capability-friendly institutions and last-but-not-least encompasses a wider view of people’s well-being in which employment, and valuable employment in particular, could be only one dimension.

3.6.5. The capability approach and graduate employability

Although the potential of the capability approach in conceptualizing and broadening the concept of employability has been widely discussed, there is a scarce body of literature which uses this approach to explore this concept in regards to higher education graduates (eg. Bergström, 2012; Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011; Hinchliffe, 2013). It seems that, in the context of higher education expansion and economic crisis, the problems of “youth precariousness” (Schultheis, 2009) begin to affect the career prospects of higher education graduates and their status on the labour market. Despite that, this problem does not receive enough attention. That is most likely due to the fact that employability is understood mainly as obtaining a job, and the employment rates among graduates are compared only with the employment rates of groups with a lower level of education. But, as emphasized by Hinchliffe (2013) recently, graduates are also under personal economic pressure to find employment as soon as possible after graduation and the short-term focus on ‘getting a job’, not an occupation, may also imply that their well-being may be less well-served.

In their study in the UK, Geoffrey Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly (2011) explore the perceptions and expectations of 105 employers in East Anglia on the employability of graduates, and construct a conceptual model of graduate identity consisting of four main strands: social engagement, performance, values and intellect. This model goes beyond the idea that employers form their decisions solely by assessing graduates' skills. Furthermore, the authors suggest that student employability could be promoted indirectly through the promotion of graduate identity and well-being rather than directly through employability skills.

In contrast, Gunilla Bergström's study (2012), conducted within the WorkAble project, focuses on perceptions of "less employable"⁶⁶ young graduates in Sweden. The study explores whether they appreciate their education as a capability-enhancing experience and, if not, what aspects they define as constraining. As a result of the study, drawing on nine interviews with less-employable graduates, five university employees, four employers, one union representative and four officials at the employment office and document analyses, Bergström identifies a variety of constraining conversion factors related to their professional realization going beyond the personal characteristics, including shortcomings in the educational system in providing measures to facilitate the graduate's transition between education and work; lack of knowledge on the part of employers about the skills acquired through the graduate's specific education; and low confidence in the employment office services. This study also found a tendency for an increased importance of social networks, which may act as an enabling factor for employment options for people who have access to them and as a constraining one when people do not have access to them.

Despite being so far relatively limited, the body of literature on graduate employability which uses the capability approach highlights the fact that even within the group of the highly-qualified there might be vulnerable groups, and that graduates are also experiencing problems in the labour market. These problems seem to be hidden when they are analyzed using other approaches and are neglected in the majorities of studies on graduate employability. Although making undoubtedly valuable contributions, the studies on graduate employability which use the capability approach are predominantly based on small-scale surveys and have focused on the problem within one country. This is why it will be interesting whether this approach is applied

⁶⁶ Bergström (2012) defines them as the graduates who are not yet employed in a job corresponding to their educational qualifications within a reasonable time after graduation.

using large-scale studies and covering more than one country. Last but not least, studies on graduate employability using the capability approach have not been carried out in Central and Eastern European countries.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the theoretical framework of the capability approach in both of its interpretations. In brief, Sen's version of the approach could be accepted as a general framework focusing on information about individual advantages judged in terms of opportunity, rather than on a specific design for how a society or institutions should be organized. In this sense, the capability perspective points to the central relevance of the inequalities of capabilities in the assessment of social justice. In contrast, Nussbaum's account of justice implies that the structure of social and political institutions should be chosen with a view to promoting at least a threshold level of human capabilities. She endorses a list of ten central capabilities which could only give the basis for determining a decent social minimum in a variety of areas. Thus, although both approaches have valuable contributions in the evaluation and the advancement of justice, Sen's approach is oriented towards justice at the individual level whereas Nussbaum's approach focuses on the assessment of the extent to which the state has provided a threshold of central capabilities. Given this, the rest of the thesis is limited to operationalization and application of Sen's account of justice.

As a result of the discussion, we have seen at least three main ways in which Sen's interpretation of the capability approach could be beneficial in evaluating the inequalities in access to, and in the labour market outcomes of, higher education and in pursuing social justice in higher education.

First, the capability approach broadens our understanding of how higher education may be understood. This understanding goes beyond the narrow human capital agenda in which human lives are viewed only as means to economic gain, but looks at people and their well-being as an end. Thus, it allows us to take into account all three aspects of higher education as a good which have been outlined in Chapter 2 – higher education as a private good, as a public good and as a positional good.

Second, the capability approach offers a framework for how equality in access and labour market outcomes of higher education could be measured, namely by focusing on the capabilities people have to achieve what they have reason to value. Thus, it allows us to capture the qualitative side of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education.

Third, the capability approach provides a framework to engage in reducing unfairness/inequity in higher education, namely via public reasoning. Thus, it does not predetermine any particular recipe for fairness or equity in access or outcomes of higher education. It does not advocate either soft or hard measures about enhancing fairness or equity in higher education. Rather, it implies that the measures should be subject to public debate and scrutiny.

On the base of the discussion on the main concepts and potential of the capability approach in the study of higher education and in the labour market, the present chapter has provided solid evidence for the relevance and usefulness of the capability approach for evaluating the inequalities *in access to* and *in labour market outcomes of higher education*, namely in the space of capabilities. Given this, I further conceptualize how access to and outcomes of higher education will be used in this study.

Firstly, I conceptualize ‘*being able to access higher education*’ (or ‘*having the freedom to access higher education*’) as a *capability* which people have to access higher education and distinguish it from ‘*being enrolled/accepted in a tertiary programme*’, which may be conceptualized via the capability approach lens as a *functioning*. To define the capability people have to access a tertiary programme, the present study uses information about the plurality of alternative outcomes which this access entails.

Secondly, I conceptualize employability of graduates as a *capability* and define it as ‘*being able to be employed*’ (or ‘*having the freedom to be employed*’). Seen as a capability, graduate employability is in line with my working definition which views graduate employability as *not simply related to graduates’ abilities to find employment but also to graduates’ abilities to find employment of specific quality*. It allows us to take into account the fact that graduate employability has an *absolute aspect* that refers to skillsets and valuesets developed as a segment of higher education studies, in most cases, in interaction with the familial and educational environment. It also accounts for its *relative aspect*, which refers to opportunities provided for graduates’ employment by the economic development and needs of the country, the quality of

jobs, employment protection legislation, as well as the state of the economy and the state of higher education (incl. higher education institutions, level of massification, structure of graduate body, etc.). From this perspective, I assume that graduate employability is embedded in different institutional arrangements such as the higher education system, the labour market and political regimes that are usually nationally-specific. The way I conceptualize graduate employability focuses on the plurality of options for employment which may be qualitatively different. I differentiate it from *'being employed'*, which I conceptualize as a *functioning*.

Such a conceptualization also allows us to take into account the dynamic nature of graduate employability, which means that graduates should be able, at any time, to increase their employability. Last but not least, the present chapter has highlighted that a conceptualization of graduate employability as a capability allows us to take into account the agency aspect of graduate employability. This aspect refers to the possibility for students and graduates to act and bring about a change in employment conditions or to contribute to the well-being of others.

In both capability spaces: *'being able to access higher education'* and *'being able to be employed'* I put in the centre what people have reason to value. Thus, I am also concerned, not so much with the choice itself and how people take decisions, but whether there are factors which are constraining this choice and whether the opportunities people have are valuable enough and of the same quality. In this regard, the present research is particularly interested in the patterns and trends of differences between the functionings achieved by people with different socio-economic background. Nonetheless, more attention will be paid to how these functionings may be measured in the methodological part of the thesis.

Given these conceptualizations, the thesis continues with an examination of the existing research that explores the dynamics of inequalities in access and in labour market outcomes in the context of educational expansion.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE EFFECT OF EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION ON THE LEVELS OF INEQUALITIES: THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed how social justice may be thought in relation to higher education and has suggested a working definition for social justice and how higher education is conceptualized in the thesis. The aim of the present chapter is to make an overview of the existing theories and previous research related to the dynamics of inequalities. I do so in order to derive hypotheses about the influence of higher education on the level of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education which will be tested in the thesis.

I begin with a presentation of the existing research on inequalities which has explored the dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education in the context of educational expansion. The overview reveals that these studies are not unanimous about the direction of the change of the inequalities and what the impact of the expansion of higher education is on the level of these inequalities. Two strands of studies are identified. Whereas the *first group of studies* provides evidence for a decrease of inequalities of educational opportunity that may due to social origin of students, the *second group* suggests stability and persistence of the effect on socio-economic background on school success, despite schooling expansion.

Then, I look at the studies which focus on the dynamics of inequities in access to higher education in the context of educational expansion. It turned out that there is a very limited body of literature on this issue, which somehow has neglected certain countries, especially these from Central and Eastern Europe. Similarly to the inequalities in access to higher education, it seems that despite the higher educational expansion there has not been provided an unambiguous answer to the question if the expansion of higher education reduced inequity in higher education or not.

In the final subsection, I focus on the existing studies on the dynamics of the labour market outcomes of higher education. The overview has identified that there is a lack of studies on

Bulgaria and has identified the need of taking into account both horizontal and vertical aspects of diversification which have resulted a growing inequality within the group of higher education graduates when evaluating the influence of higher education expansion on graduate employability.

4.2. Dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education

In this section it will be paid attention to the dynamics of inequalities. More specifically, I discuss different hypotheses which have been developed to explain the dynamics of inequalities which are due to the socio-economic background of people and on the existing research on dynamics of inequalities. By focusing mainly on studies which were elaborated in the 1990s and the first decade of 21st century, within this project there have been identified a number of studies which develop or test different hypotheses and theories relating overall educational expansion to the dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education across countries. However, it seems that they are not unanimous about the direction of the change of the inequalities. These studies, in most cases comparative, may be divided in two main groups.

4.2.1. Studies which provide evidence for a decrease of inequalities

The *first group of studies* observes a decrease of inequalities of educational opportunity that may be due to the social origin of students (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Boudon, 1974; Ganzeboom & Nieuwebeerta, 1999; Breen, Luijkx, Müller, & Pollak, 2009; Ballarino, Bernardi, Requena, & Schadee, 2009).

The *modernization hypothesis* is among the first hypotheses that try to theorise the change of educational inequalities in the context of the educational expansion. It can be placed in the functionalist sociological tradition. This hypothesis postulates that under the influence of industrialization ascriptive rules of social mobility become weaker in favour of achievement rules (Blau & Duncan, 1967). This will translate into a labour selection mechanism that favours the workers that have optimum preparation for the job, and not the ones that have the best origin. It is criticized because it does not take into account the historical, institutional and political peculiarities of nations that also have influence on class differences (Müller & Karle, 1993). It has also been questioned by cultural reproduction theory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) which suggests that the influence of the social background will not decline with the modernization.

Despite that this hypothesis has been widely tested (see Sieben & de Graaf, 2001, Van Doorn, Pop, & Wolbers, 2011, etc.).

Raymond Boudon's study on (1974) inequality of educational opportunity also identifies that it declines steadily over time. But at the same time according to him one of the paradoxes produced by the empirical research on social mobility is that despite the decrease in inequality of opportunity during the two decades after the WWII in all Western societies, this decrease had no impact on the structure of intergenerational mobility, although educational attainment is a determinant of status (Boudon, 1976, p. 1175).

Raymond Boudon (1974) assumes that both socioeconomic background and school achievement affect the educational outcomes. He distinguishes between "primary" and "secondary" effects (Boudon, 1974). Primary effects are those, whether genetic or cultural, that create class differentials in "demonstrated ability" early in children's educational careers and in this way condition the options subsequently open to them. Secondary effects are those that later operate through the choices that children, together perhaps with their parents, actually make among the options they have available (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002). This perspective is known as *rational choice theory*. It may be classified as a micro-level explanation of inequalities. It focuses on the assumption that there are certain costs and rewards involved in the individual decisions that students do within the classroom or in school. According to rational choice theory if benefits outweigh costs the individual is likely to make the decision to act in order to continue receiving benefits. In education the question is how weighing of costs and benefits influences decisions about educational choices by students in the conduct of their school experience. Boudon also states that the social costs of taking an educational option may vary by social class.

Thus not choosing a prestigious curriculum may represent a high social cost for a youngster from a middle-class family if most of his friends have chosen it; but choosing the same course may represent a high cost for a lower-class youngster if most of his friends have not (Boudon, 1974, p. 30).

Walter Müller and Wolfgang Karle (1993) elaborated on their criticism to the modernization theory and found out that in all nine countries⁶⁷ studied the class-effects tend to be smaller in later transitions than in earlier ones. With their finding they give a new perspective of the dynamics of

⁶⁷Note: These are the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Sweden, England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland, Poland and Hungary. Individuals who were selected for the study were born between 1910 and 1947.

educational inequalities - *life-course hypotheses*. It postulates that the effect of family to diminish with age, as children become less dependent on their families. In order to understand better how educational credentials are distributed among social classes in different societies, in contrast to Robert Mare's model (it will be discussed later on), Müller and Karle (1993) concentrate on the interplay on the institutional organization of the survival pattern and the social selectivity that occurs at various transition points.

Inge Sieben and Paul de Graaf (2001) test the *modernization hypothesis* and the *socialist ideology hypothesis* in a sibling analysis of the educational attainment and occupational status employing data on brothers in England, Hungary, the Netherlands, Scotland, Spain and the USA, covering a historical period from 1916 till 1990. Their comparative analysis reveals that half of the variance in individual educational attainment and 36 percent of the variance in individual occupational status can be attributed to the family (Sieben & de Graaf, 2001, p. 458). They found out that in the technologically advanced societies the family has not lost its importance for educational attainment. But at the same time they emphasize the fact that parents received more freedom to decide the most appropriate educational level is for their children and if they decide to use this freedom the total family impact would increase with modernization (Sieben & de Graaf, 2001, p. 459). At the same time the results of this study reveal that the total family impact on occupational status declines with the modernization. As regards the second hypothesis, the socialist ideology one, on one hand this study does not corroborate it since it found that parents' education, father's occupational status and the number of siblings have the same impact in socio-democratic as in the other societies. But more specifically, their results indicate that:

... the social reforms in socio-democratic and communist societies were effective in reducing the direct inheritance of the status positions, but they were not able to diminish the importance of family on the occupational status (Sieben & de Graaf, 2001, p. 460).

Aiming at better understanding the interaction between individual level characteristics and the specific context they were manifested, Majka van Doorn and others' (2011) comparative study on 28 European countries try to develop the *modernization hypothesis* further as integrate some characteristics of the countries-context on macro-level. To a great extent the choice of these characteristics was determined by previous research. They included information for GDP per capita, educational expenditure, pupil teacher ratio, school kilometer ratio to assess the quality of the educational system in the countries, plus other type of contextual data such as female labour

force participation, change in employment service sector and the political regime. Similarly to Sieben and de Graaf (2001), Van Doorn and others (2011) use information about the ‘virtual years of education’ – which measure the minimum number of years it takes to complete a certain educational level. By applying multilevel-linear regression analysis they found out that in highly industrialized country-cohorts, the relationship between parents’ education and their children’s educational achievements is weaker than in developing country-cohorts. Despite that they make an important specification of the modernization hypothesis which it had not taken into account, namely that:

...the relationship between parents’ education and their children’s educational achievements is stronger than in country-cohorts where the pace of industrialization is slower (van Doorn, 2011, p. 112).

Furthermore, they observed that in country-cohorts where more women work, the effect of the parents’ education on their children’s education decreases. With regard to the effects of the educational system the results supported the hypothesis that in country-cohorts where educational expenditure is higher, the effect of parental education is lower. As regards the political ideology of the country-cohorts in this study, the analysis of the data revealed that the educational level is higher in social-democratic and communist country-cohorts, but at the same time it does not indicate a significant interaction with the parental level of education.

Gabriele Ballarino and his associates’ (2009) research on inequalities of educational outcomes by class in Italy and Spain reveals a trend of the diminishing of the inequalities in both countries for people between 1920 and 1969. Thus, this study also provides evidence for the decrease of inequalities as a result of the educational expansion. In their opinion the decrease of these inequalities depends on the reduction in the risks families associate with the choice to further their offspring’s schooling after compulsory education.

In the same line are and the findings of Richard Breen and his colleagues (2009) who identified a widespread decline in educational inequality between students born between 1908 and 1964 and coming from different social origin in other 8 European counties (Germany, France, Italy, Ireland, Great Britain, Sweden, Poland and Hungary). In contrast to Ballarino and his associates (2009) who use cumulative logit for their analysis, in this study Breen and his colleagues (2009) use generalized ordered logit model. Their analysis reveals that the decline of the inequalities was

most evident and most widespread in the improved position of children from farming and working class origins (Breen, Luijkx, Müller, & Pollak, 2009, p. 1514).

Drawing on data for 25 countries, in their paper *Who gets a degree? Access to tertiary education in Europe 1950–2009* Jan Koucký, Aleš Bartušek and Jan Kovařovic also provide evidence in favour of a decrease of inequalities in access to tertiary education that are due to socioeconomic background in the last six decades for Europe as a whole. However, their study also demonstrates that the process of decreasing the inequality levels has not been a linear one even at Europe-wide level, as the level of inequality was decreasing mainly in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, reaching its minimum in the 1980s inequalities had reached in many European countries. Then, in the 1990s they began to grow again. Furthermore, this study shows that the overall decrease cannot be generalized for all countries and periods. Thus, as Figure 4.1. illustrates, the dynamics of inequalities in access to tertiary education is different in different groups of countries in Europe.

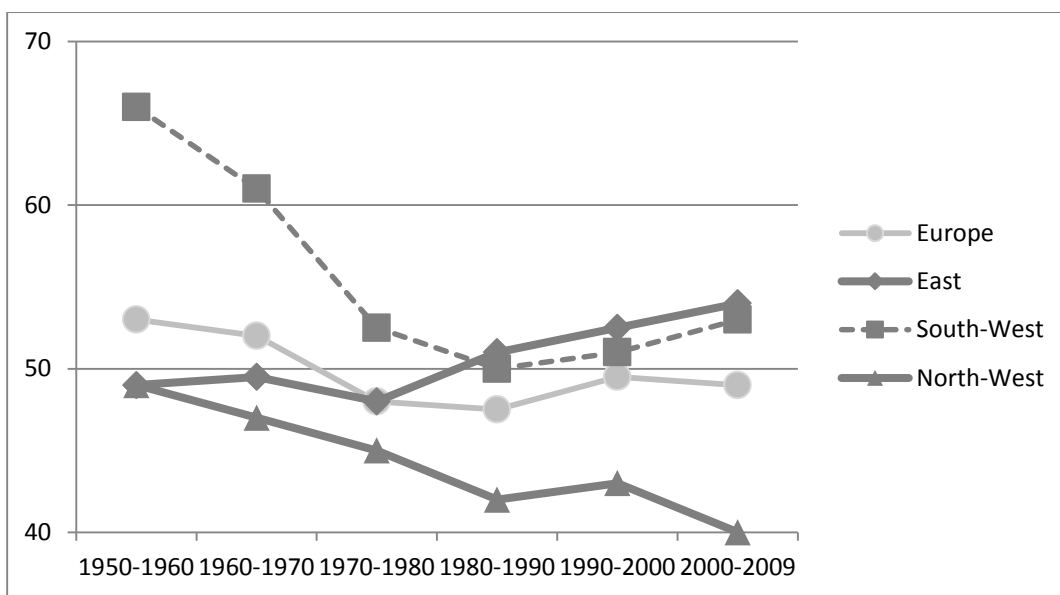


Fig. 4.1. Inequality index in access to tertiary education.

Groups of European countries 1950–2009. *Source:* Koucký, Bartušek, & Kovařovic, 2010, p. 27.

Overall, the most significant decrease of inequalities in access to tertiary education is observed in the countries of South-Western Europe. However, since the 1990s these inequalities begin to slightly increase again. In fact, the lowest levels of inequalities in access to tertiary education for the last six decades, is found in countries of North-Western Europe. In a strong contrast, countries of Eastern Europe followed a completely different pattern in terms of inequalities. The

level of inequalities in these countries was among the lowest in Europe the 1950s. This level was stable till the 1980s. After this, the inequality has been gradually increasing achieving the highest inequalities in access to tertiary education in Europe in the most recent three decades. Unfortunately, Bulgaria was not included in this study.

4.2.2. Studies which provide evidence for stability and persistence of inequalities

The *second group of studies* suggests stability and persistence of the effect on socio-economic background on school success, despite schooling expansion (Mare, 1981; Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993; Raftery & Hout, 1993; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Pfeffer, 2008).

To a great extent these studies are carried out as a critique to the macro-level explanation of the inequalities in the context of educational expansion. More specifically, Robert Mare's (1981) model is among the first that criticizes the studies that insisted on decline in educational inequalities such as this on Raymond Boudon (1974) who claimed that inequalities steadily decline over time. Mare (1981) makes two main contributions to the educational stratification research. First, he distinguishes distribution of schooling from its allocation to persons from different socioeconomic backgrounds and argues that they are conceptually independent and may change differently as a result of different factors. Second, as a way to combat with this problem, he proposes the inequality of educational opportunity to be measured with logistic response model of school continuation. He also suggests that:

School attainment can be measured by a set of school continuation (grade progression) probabilities which denote the chances that an individual will continue to a given level of schooling given that he/she has completed the immediately previous level (Mare, 1981, p. 74).

Mare (1981) found that the effect of social background on success in education declines as an individual moves from a lower to higher education but also that the effect of social background on each transition increased over time. As a result the effect of the social origin seems stable over time. Using the Mare's model and generalizing the patterns they found in Ireland among people born between 1909 and 1956 Adrian E. Raftery and Michael Hout (1993) formulate a *hypothesis* known as "*Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI)*". According to MMI "transition rates and odds ratios between social origins and educational transitions remain the same from cohort to

cohort unless they are forced to change by increasing enrollments” (Raftery & Hout 1993: 56). More specifically, inequality is maximally maintained if the following conditions are present:

1. All else being equal, growth in the capacity of secondary and higher education will reflect the increased demand occasioned by the population growth (if any) and the gradual upgrading of social origins over time (if any). In this case, origin specific transition rates remain the same over time. ...
2. If expansion raises enrollments faster than demand because of the redistribution of social origins, then transition rates for all social origins increase but in such a way as to preserve all the transition by class odds-ratios, ...
3. If the demand for a given level of education is saturated for the upper classes, that is, if some origin-specific transition rates approach or reach 100 percent, then the odds-ratios decrease (the association between social origin and education is weakened). ... (Raftery & Hout, 1993, pp. 56-57)

Socialist transformation hypothesis also adheres to the position of persistence of inequalities but in the case of socialist societies. According to this hypothesis the socialist reforms of educational systems and the corresponding policies (particularly the implementation of the so-called quota system) initially reduced the effects of social origin on educational attainment. Despite that as soon as the new elite secured privileges for themselves and took control of the educational system, they ensured educational advantages for their own children. It resulted in growing the effect of social origin in the later years of the socialist regimes (eg. Matějů, 1993; Matějů Řeháková, & Simonová, 2003, 2007). However, a study on recent trends of inequalities in access to tertiary education in Czech Republic, for the period 1989-1999 tests and corroborates the hypothesis for growing inequalities in the analyzed period (Matějů, Řeháková, & Simonová, 2003). It indicates that despite the received autonomy and the abolishment of social privileges it did not go along with reduction of inequalities in access to higher education. Furthermore, in a recent study based on the developments in the recent structure of higher education in Czech Republic another general hypothesis is formulated:

... whereby the period of persisting inequality under socialism was followed one of increasing inequality during the postcommunist transformation (Matějů, Řeháková, & Simonová, 2007, p. 398).

A comparative project⁶⁸ tests several of the already mentioned hypotheses (the *modernization*, *life-course*, *MMI* and *socialist transformation hypotheses*) plus two other: reproduction and

⁶⁸Note: These are United States, the (former) Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, England and Wales, Italy, Switzerland, Taiwan, Japan, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Israel.

differential selection hypotheses and finds out that in most of the countries included the inequalities of opportunity that due to differences of the social background persist over time (Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993). This project, whose main results are published in the book *Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries* (1993), adopts a common theoretical framework and analyses both the effect on the socio-economic origins on the length of schooling and, as Mare proposes, the effects on the socio-economic origin on the educational transitions. This comparative study demonstrates that in all societies, in contrast to the secondary education level, the expansion at the tertiary education was modest (Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993, p. 14). In general, they found a clear overall decline in the effects of the social background for the first two transitions across cohorts only in Sweden and the Netherlands. For six countries they found evidence that the effects of socioeconomic origin on education attainment have remained virtually stable. For the other five countries there was both a decline and stability or even increases in the effects. Drawing on these results the study concludes that:

... expansion of education does not consistently reduce the association between social origins of students and their educational attainment (Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993, p. 20).

As regards the change in the association between social origins and educational transitions in all countries studied, but Sweden and Netherlands, this study provides evidence for “virtual stability across cohorts” (Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993, p. 18). However, a recent comparative research in 15 countries⁶⁹ (Arum et al. 2007) found that findings on the persistent inequality had missed an important point, which is summed up here:

When a given level of education expands we should expect increasing inequality at the next level due to the increasing heterogeneity of the eligible population. [...] Consequently, they suggest that when inequality in an expanding system is stable rather than on the rise, the system should be regarded as increasingly inclusive because it allows larger proportions of all social strata to attend (Arum, Gamoran, & Shavit, 2007, p. 29).

Similarly to Blossfeld and Shavit’s (1993) initiative, Richard Arum, Adam Gamoran and Yossi Shavit (2007) also adopt a common theoretical approach in the case studies of all 15 countries. Furthermore, they enrich the analysis of the dynamics of inequalities of educational opportunity by focusing in particular at the level of higher education and by integrating in this analysis some of the specific institutional characteristics of higher education. In so doing, they take into account

⁶⁹Note: These are Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, the United States, Australia, Czech Republic and Italy.

that the inequalities may have also a *qualitative side*. More specifically, they explore inequalities in the context of higher education expansion and the processes of differentiation, stratification and private versus public allocation logics in higher education that accompanied it. Their study found out that the expansion and differentiation are related. It also revealed that diversified systems of higher education are the most inclusive ones. In general, the results of the study provide stronger evidence to support the claim that higher education expansion leads rather to inclusion than to diversion. As Arum and colleagues put it:

... overall expansion was inclusive in the sense that even when social selection is stable, expansion means that more students from all strata, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are carried further into the education system, and for the cohort as a whole the inequality is reduced (Arum Gamoran, & Shavit, 2007, p. 28).

In general, the results from this study are consistent with the view that the inequality is maximally maintained and the inequalities persist⁷⁰ over time.

Using rational choice theory and emphasizing the importance of the secondary effects as a base Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) expand it to another perspective on educational inequalities known as *rational action theory*. With this theory they try to explain why class inequalities in educational participation rates have remained largely unchanged. The central mechanism that they use to account for this is 'relative risk aversion'. According to it young people have, as their major educational goal, the acquisition of a level of education that will allow them to attain a class position at least as good as that of their family of origin. In other words their main concern is to avoid downward mobility (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997, p. 283). More specifically their model:

... represents children as acting in a (subjectively) rational way, i.e. as choosing among the different educational options available to them on the basis of evaluations of their costs and benefits and of the perceived probabilities of more and less successful outcomes. It then accounts for stability, or change, in the educational differentials that ensure by reference to a quite limited range of situational features. For example, in the case of persisting class differentials, the explanatory emphasis falls on similarly persisting inequalities in the resources that members of different classes can command in the face of constraints and opportunities that their class positions typically entail (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997, pp. 298-299).

⁷⁰ The only exceptions from this trend are post-Soviet Russia and Czech Republic, where an increase in inequality was observed.

In the model that they develop they perceive the educational attainment as a sequence of decisions to leave or continue schooling, as the Mare model implies, but one of the peculiarities of Breen and Goldthorpe's model is that these decisions are not taken in isolation. In this regard they assume that these decisions are predetermined by the existence of two structures. On one hand, a structure of positions defined by the relations in labour markets and production units within which the classes are in some degree hierarchically ordered in terms of the resources associated with and the general desirability they comprise. On the other, an educational system with a set of educational institutions that serves to define various options that are open to individuals at successive stages in their educational career which should be with a stratified and diversified structure that also provides different kinds of education, but in which students cannot easily modify their choices (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997, p. 278). Thus, one of the implications of this model is that the decision for educational conditions are not only conditioned on the structure of the educational system and social background of people and the resources that this background entails, but also on certain aspirations of parents or the children determined by parents' position on the labour market.

This theoretical approach forms the basis of a substantial amount of empirical research (Van de Werfhorst, 2002; Need & De Jong, 2001; Van de Werfhorst & Hofstede, 2007, etc.). Van de Werfhorst & Hofstede (2007) for instance compared the relative aversion with cultural reproduction theory with regard to educational outcomes using data from secondary school pupils in Amsterdam. They conclude that cultural capital mechanism proves better when it comes to explaining primary effects of school origin on schooling outcomes, whereas relative risk aversion was a preferred mechanism when it comes to understanding the schooling ambitions or the secondary effects of social origin. Van de Werfhorst (2002, p. 410) argues that although the rational action theory of educational inequality was originally developed to explain class differences in educational-level attainment it also gives insight into the impact of class background on field choice, and thus into the micro-processes that make for intergenerational class mobility.

Although to a great extent Mare's model (1981) continue to be one of the main models of studying dynamics of the educational inequalities in the context of educational expansion it has also been criticized since it misses an important point – that school systems also contain parallel branches of study which may be seen as qualitatively different and alternative pathways (Breen &

Jonsson, 2000; Lucas, 2001). As a way to overcome this limitation Richard Breen and Jan O. Jonsson try to expand the Mare model to multinomial transition model. Their rationale behind is that:

A model of educational transitions that can take into account the institutional structure of the school system is better able to explaining why educational choices differ according to social origin, sex, ethnicity, and other exogenous variables-and such a model is more appropriate for identifying at which transition the impact of such variables is greatest (Breen & Jonsson, 2000, p. 760).

Similarly to Breen and Jonsson, Samuel R. Lucas (2001) also criticizes Mare model since it does not take into account “both in-school origins and in-school destinations as stratified” (Lucas, 2001, p. 1644). He claims that, only in this way, the direct effects of social background can be estimated better. As a way to overcome this limitation Lucas (2001) tries to extend Mare model by bringing the analysis of track mobility into the research on educational transitions in secondary schooling. More specifically, he proposes an education transitions model with stratified destination and an ordered probit model for its estimation.

Using this model and in contrast to the macro-analysis adopted by Arum and colleagues (2007), Lucas (2001) also finds evidence for persistence and increase of inequalities but in a way that he takes into account the *qualitative side* of inequalities on micro level. As a result of his research another perspective of inequalities, known as *effectively maintained inequality perspective* (EMI), is formulated.

Effectively maintained inequality posits that socioeconomically advantaged actors secure for themselves and their children some degree of advantage wherever advantages are commonly possible. On the one hand, if quantitative differences are common, the socioeconomically advantaged will obtain quantitative advantage; on the other hand, if qualitative differences are common the socioeconomically advantaged will obtain qualitative advantage (Lucas, 2001, p. 1652).

In general, *EMI* postulates that the effects of social background determine on one hand who completes a level of education if completion of that level is not nearly universal and on the other the kind of education persons will receive within levels of education that are nearly universal. In this sense *EMI*'s implications differ from *MMI* ones which suggest that background-related inequality will go to zero when a level of education is nearly universal (Lucas 2001). Furthermore, in a recent study Lucas (2009) provides solid evidence that in contrast to *EMI* and the *relative risk aversion perspective* on Breen and Goldthorpe (1997), *MMI* is not-falsifiable.

Nevertheless, a recent paper that focuses on the dynamics of the inequalities in access to higher education in Britain in the period of expansion between 1960 and 1995 and which takes into account and the qualitative side that the inequalities could have, suggests that social class inequalities in British higher education have been both maximally and effectively maintained (Boliver, 2011, p. 242). By showing a robust social background effect on the choice of field of study, David Reimer and Reinhard Pollak's (2010) study provides evidence to corroborate *EMI* in the particular case of the higher education expansion in West Germany.

A study on inequalities in higher education in Finland for the period between the 1980s and 1990s gives another interpretation of the persistence of qualitative inequalities of educational opportunities which can be illustrated with a metaphor from bicycle racing (Kivinen, Sakari, & Hedman, 2001):

... even if the tail-end cyclists reach the main pack, the front-runners widen their gap between the main pack (Kivinen, Sakari, & Hedman, 2001, p. 171).

It comes to show that the real competition for gaining access to higher education is among the well off which always try to make distance between themselves and the rest.

Martin Kreidl's (2006) research also justifies the importance of horizontal stratification of school types within levels of schooling when one analyses inequalities. However, he provides evidence for decrease of inequalities in secondary education in some post-communist countries (incl. Bulgaria) after WWII. Kreidl, nonetheless, concludes that, as regards access to higher education, the results are less conclusive and robust (Kreidl, 2006). He calls for moving beyond a simple dichotomous dependent variable measuring entry into University as employing in the analysis of inequalities of tertiary education a nominal dependent variable which includes the field of study. To a great extent this view is consistent with the Breen and Jonsson's research from 2000 that we have already presented.

In contrast to the studies which analyse inequalities of educational opportunity either on macro or micro level in his comparative research on 19 industrialized nations⁷¹ Fabian T. Pfeffer (2008) tries to combine both. He also observes persistence of inequalities, but he identifies and substantial differences between nations in their degree of educational mobility. Furthermore, he

⁷¹ These are Finland, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Denmark, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Czech Republic, Sweden, Poland, Chile, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and Slovenia.

constructs a ranking of nations in terms of educational inequality. According to this ranking the most 'open' societies in regards to educational mobility are Finland, Northern Ireland and New Zealand. On the opposite side of the ranking are Slovenia, Germany and Belgium. Pfeffer investigates how the institutional characteristics of the educational systems such as the level of stratification, standardization and privatization of education, are associated with educational inequality. The institutional analysis made by him finds an association only between the level of educational inequalities and the stratification of the educational system (understood as the degree to which educational opportunities are differentiated between and within educational levels). On contrary, the analysis has not found any association between educational inequalities neither with the level of their standardization, nor with privatization (Pfeffer, 2008).

In order to assess the extent to which the expansion of higher education has been associated with any lessening of social group inequalities in access Patrick Clancy and Gaële Goastellec (2007) summarize research findings from seven countries (USA, UK, Ireland, France, Australia, Finland and Norway). They found out that there has been a significant reduction in the odds ratios, suggesting that there has been a significant reduction in socio-economic group inequalities. They argue that the large inequalities which remain will not be cancelled out by the limited scale of affirmative action that is found in education. Furthermore, the differences evident between countries suggest that it is possible to make progress and that enlightened educational and social policy is capable of reducing but not eliminating inequality.

In general, the second group of studies seems much more diverse than the first group, but at the same time they both reach to the same set of conclusions – namely persistence of the inequalities over time.

Part of the differences between the results of both groups of studies is that they due to the fact that they reflect various views on how educational attainment can be considered: as the highest level of education attained - measured by years of schooling (eg. Blau & Duncan, 1967), as a sequence of transition points at which students either continue schooling or not (eg. Mare, 1981). A contribution to this debate is made by a study on five Eastern European countries for the period between 1940 and 1979 which investigates the discrepancies in the results when Mare's model and Blau and Duncan's model are applied (Nieuwbeerta & Rijken, 1996). This study shows slight but consistent decreases in the effects of parents' education, status and political party

membership on final educational attainment in the socialist period. However, it demonstrates stability or increases in the effects of parental background on the continuation probabilities at schooling transitions. Mare (1981) and Nieuwbeerta and Rijken (1996) share the view that the discrepancies in the findings when both models are applied may be due to the substantial expansion of education.

Other possible explanations of the differences in the results may be searched in the variety of datasets used (some of them referring only to males, some are national samples, other from comparative studies which use a common theoretical), classifications on education and occupation as well as in the different understandings of how social background can be measured and which control variables are used. Sometimes a variable for social class⁷² is used, other time for father's education or father's occupational status, etc.

In sum, it seems that despite the progress within the research on the dynamics on inequalities, there is a lot that still could be done. On the one hand there are claims that despite the improvement of the research on inequality of opportunity and on the social mobility, so far it has been described as 'notoriously technical' (See Breen & Jonsson, 2005). On the other hand there are many countries that have been underexplored countries with regard to educational inequalities in comparison to others such as Central and Eastern European countries.

On the basis of the overview of existing research and hypotheses for the direction of change of inequalities in the context of educational expansion, I have formulated the following hypotheses. More specifically, taking into account the two opposite views about the dynamics of socio-economic inequalities in access to higher education in the context of expansion of higher education, I formulated two contrasting hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: The inequalities in access to higher education have decreased in the context of its expansion.

⁷² In this regard Erzsébet Bukodi and John Goldthorpe (2012) argue that the measurement of social origin has not received enough attention in the studies of the inequalities of educational attainment and that parental class, parental status, and parental education cannot be taken as essentially interchangeable indices of social origins. Furthermore they provide evidence for the significant independent effect on children's educational attainment using data from British cohort study.

Hypothesis 1b: The inequalities in access to higher education persist in the context of its expansion.

However, given the specific case of post-communist countries in which the hypotheses will be tested in line with the *socialist transformation hypothesis*, I also expect that:

Hypothesis 1c: The inequalities in access to higher education were initially reduced by the socialist reforms, but then increased in the later years of the socialist regime.

However, as the overview of the literature the expansion of higher education has shown, educational growth is accompanied by diversification. Against this background and in line with the EMI, I expect that:

Hypothesis 2: In the context of diversification the socioeconomically advantaged will obtain qualitative advantage in access to higher education.

However, this diversification has vertical and horizontal dimension. This is why I formulate two different hypotheses which correspond to both of these dimensions which aim to capture some of the institutional perspectives/structural aspects of higher education.

Hypothesis 2.1: The socio-economically advantaged will be more likely to study in longer tertiary programmes;

Hypothesis 2.2: The socio-economically advantaged will be more likely to study in more prestigious tertiary programmes;

Last but not least, I expect:

Hypothesis 3: The levels of inequalities in access to higher education that are due to the social background differ considerably by countries.

4.3. Dynamics of inequity in higher education

It should be noted that together with differences in the paths of higher education expansion that different countries follow, in the widening participation and social access to higher education there are also significant national differences in the attention given to equity and social justice issues in respect to higher education and on in the importance attached to them (Brennan, 2009) which may go in different directions across countries in the context of educational expansion.

Following Brennan and Naidoo these differences may be attributed to (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008, p. 300) differences in the perceptions of the scale and nature of the problem; the diversity of groups that are focused on (eg. class, ethnic, gender, regional); where responsibility is seen to lie (i.e. within or beyond higher education, with governments, within the family, within other parts of the education system, with the values and aspirations of the non-participants); pre-higher education educational structures (and routes into higher education); admissions policies and practices (for example, the use of special entry procedures for certain groups); the extent and nature of the differentiation of the higher education system; whether the main focus is on admission, retention or outcomes; the quality of the student experience and the role of fees and financial support mechanisms; higher education traditions—with regard to factors such as professional training, elite reproduction etc; the existence and effects of larger processes of social change (for example, in the former communist countries) the perceptions of the scale and nature of the problem.

The analysis on the dynamics of equity in higher education cross-nationally has been an under-researched issue. However, only recently the need for an in-depth analysis is realized as important. In this regard, it became possible some comparisons to be made over time thanks to the available data from the EUROSTUDENT Survey (2007, 2011). This survey was initiated on the Ministerial conference in London (2007) where it was agreed the European Commission (Eurostat) and the EUROSTUDENT⁷³ Survey to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension in all Bologna countries. This initiative was also supported by the European Commission. Furthermore, the Council conclusions on the Education and Training 2020 Framework also highlighted the fact that designing policies to promote the social dimension of higher education requires the availability of relevant and reliable data depicting the status quo⁷⁴. The main drawback is that not

⁷³ The EUROSTUDENT survey provides invaluable comparative data on the dynamics of equity in higher education, which may be used for policy development and evaluation. The uniqueness of this project is the provision of comparative data on the social make-up of the student body and participatory equity, based on contemporary enrolments. The study collects data on both the educational and occupational background of the parents of the higher education students. The Round III round covers 22 countries and Round IV – 25.

⁷⁴ In this regard an OECD report also defends the view for the need of knowledge about the extent to which equity in tertiary education is a problem (OECD, 2008, p. 21). In this respect it

all countries participated in the survey for more than one round. Despite that we will use namely these data for the analysis of the equity.

The results of these two rounds of EUROSTUDENT survey have important policy implications with regard to the social dimension but at the same time they do not solve the question about the ambiguity of this term. Furthermore, they outline important trends and contributed to answering to important questions, by solving part of the problems of lack of data across countries. But simultaneously, the implementation of these rounds raises and many other questions: whether the diversification of educational provision is also assuring the social mobility among students and more importantly to social justice; if there are national specificities in the routes to this current state; and what about the other Bologna countries which are involved in the process but do not participate in the survey?

Some of the concerns of these questions have been raised recently by a paper written by Marina Elias Andreu and John Brennan (2012) which explores how the Bologna process in particular is hindering the access and persistence of students with fewer economic resources and who have to work while studying. According to the authors this process could imply reinforcement or a return to a more elite university model⁷⁵ in conflict with the notions of equity and social justice⁷⁶. They argue that it is due to the fact that as expanded systems of higher education become more differentiated systems, the dominance of elite social groups usually ensures the greater valuation of their own higher education experience at the creation of vertically differentiated system reflecting these values. They see in this a way how mass systems of higher education manage to maintain its elite functions.

In order to prove that they summarize the inequalities that continue to exist in higher education in terms of access, experience and outcomes of higher education in the light of the impact of Bologna process had on them. Together with that they analyze how the issue of social dimension has affected the inequalities in the students' experience in higher education using

has been argued that it should be assessed first where the equity problems arise (OECD, 2008, p. 60).

⁷⁵ Many students also concluded that the Bologna Process developed a masked privatisation of the university and was making higher education more elitist (see Elias, 2011).

⁷⁶ Elias (2011) argues that the effects from the implementation of Bologna process in different countries were not those expected and in some respects entailed the opposite of Bologna aims.

“recontextualization⁷⁷” of the implementation of Bologna process in Spain. On the one hand they point out that widening access and participation in higher education provide only a step towards guaranteeing equal opportunities to all, reinforcing the social, cultural and economic development of European societies and improving the level of equality within the European Higher Education Area. But on the other they argue that that this first step is not enough to actually decrease inequalities. Moreover that in some aspects it could rather increase than decrease them (Elias Andreu & Brennan, 2012).

One of the arguments they provide is hidden in the fact that higher education institutions in all countries are in a hierarchical system when the rankings in the countries are considered⁷⁸. These rankings reinforce a historically strong stratification of institutions. But at the same time they argue that the relationship between the stratification of higher education institutions and the wider stratification in society should also be taken into account and underline that it is possible even in one higher education institution different types of students to have different experience.

The authors show that inequalities in higher education for working class students could occur at different stages of higher education process and outline the cultural and material barriers that working class student could experience at each stage (Elias Andreu & Brennan 2012, pp. 102-103):

- recruitment stage (at the access to higher education);
- process stage (related to the status of institution attended and University experience);
- output stage (related to retention and drop-out rates, future expectations and entrance to the labour market).

With regard to the process stage they underline that students’ experience in higher education is another space full of inequalities giving as example the working-class students in Spain who have to combine studies with paid employment which entails different form of engagement with the University and has an impact on the development of their identity as students. However, in the light of the Bologna process’s “recontextualization” in Spain, students’ workload has been increased together with the necessary time that should be spent in University. It is positive for

⁷⁷ Elias (2011) argues that levels of power and “recontextualisation” are fundamental to understanding policy implementation.

⁷⁸ But they are in hierarchical system and between countries.

students' academic identification but can be seen as additional pressure, especially on working-class students who work in order to pay their studies.

With regard to the outcome stage they outline another set of inequalities connected with students' success in negotiating the labour market. They resume that graduate success on the labour market is a total sum of qualifications, knowledge and skills and luck. It makes them to claim that employment related differences among students are not distributed randomly but tend to be strongly related to the student's social background. They find out that in Spain working class students usually choose studies with a clear defined profile into the labour market so as to have more possibilities to get a job in the future. These students also prefer degrees with not many difficulties to obtain the diploma in a short period of time and with more opportunities to work during University studies.

Overall, there is a certain consensus that equity in tertiary education is affected by inequities in preceding levels of education (OECD, 2008, p. 13; Koucký, Bartušek, & Kovařovic, 2010, p. 9). Furthermore, within OECD report it has been argued that the inability of systems to grant equal eligibility opportunities for tertiary education might actually lead to undesired effects of equity policies designed within the scope of tertiary education (2008, p. 17).

All these studies and analyses raise the question whether equity really go along with equality, social mobility and social justice or that there might be a relationship between them but it is not so straightforward.

For instance, there is evidence that the expansion of tertiary education has given young people an opportunity to attain a higher level of education than their parents when it is assessed in the case of many of the OECD countries (OECD, 2012, p. 103). In this regard on average, 37 percent of young people have achieved a higher level of education than their parents and in all countries except Estonia, Germany and Iceland, upward mobility in education is more common than downward mobility, reflecting the expansion of education systems in most OECD countries. However, it seems that upward mobility does not solve the problem of inequalities and inequities in access to higher education.

As regards the impact on the expansion of expansion of higher education on the level of equity, an OECD report *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Special Features: Equity, Innovation, Labour Market, Internalisation* (2008) claims that differentiation of tertiary systems

leads to a change of the nature of inequities and to a number of equity challenges and that their analysis will become more difficult (OECD, 2008, p. 17). However, it seems that expansion of higher education is not the only contextual development that affects equity in tertiary education. In this regard inequities in preceding levels of education, the demographic developments and the different cultural traditions that countries tackle equity issues also intensify the need some countries to focus on equity (OECD, 2008, pp. 17-21).

To sum up, it seems that despite the higher educational expansion there has not been provided an unambiguous answer to the question if the expansion of higher education reduced inequity in higher education or not. This discussion allowed us to formulate two hypotheses for Bulgaria for which we have not find data on equity which offers to analyze the problem in a dynamic perspective:

Hypothesis 4.1: The level of inequity which due to high social background in higher education has decreased in the context of higher education expansion.

Hypothesis 4.2: The level of inequity which due to low social background in higher education has decreased in the context of higher education expansion.

4.4. Dynamics of inequalities in labour market outcomes of higher education

As regards the impact of the expansion of higher education on the level of the inequalities in outcomes of higher education and graduate employability in particular there are also concerns that not all graduates may be able to exploit the benefits of participating in higher education. My view is consistent with Michael Tomlinson (2012) who has noted that although mass higher education was intended to alleviate inequalities, actually it perpetuates them.

Nonetheless, so far there is no undisputable answer what the real impact of higher expansion on the labour market outcomes of education and respectively employability is. Actually, for some countries, mostly from Western Europe, there is evidence that higher education expansion does not contradict to the development of employment and work opportunities for graduates (see the results from two graduates' follow up studies: a comparative one incl. 12 countries five years after graduation – Teichler, 2007a, p. 266 and a national one in the UK seven years after

graduation – Purcell & Elias, 2004). Thus, one of most significant comparative studies on graduate employment CHEERS⁷⁹, conducted in 1999, found no indications that the expansion of higher education in the countries surveyed clearly contradicted the development of employment and work opportunities for graduates. Nevertheless, it provided evidence for a clear North-South divide in Europe regarding the transition process i.e. substantial proportion of graduates from Spain, France and Italy face employment problems, but few from Nordic countries (Teichler, 2007a).

In contrast to these findings, another study provided evidence, mainly based on micro-data for 12 European countries for the period between 1988-97, that the ongoing educational expansion at tertiary level “may trigger downward substitution processes among market entrants, leading better qualified leavers to take employment in lower level occupations than in earlier times” (Gangl, 2002, p. 83).

Other studies went even further in their attempt to show that educational expansion not only changes returns to different educational degree levels, but also how it affects returns to fields of study (Reimer, Noelke, & Kucel, 2008). More specifically, David Reimer, Clemens Noelke and Aleksander Kucel (2008) found that in countries with larger shares of university graduates, degree-holders from the humanities indeed have lower occupational status and higher unemployment risks. Arnaud Chevalier and Joanne Lindley (2009) also confirmed that there is heterogeneity in the probability of over-education, depending on the subject of degree. By taking into account that overqualified are not a homogenous group, they showed that the probability of over-education in the UK has doubled compared with the pre-expansion cohort, reaching as much as 35 percent.

Overall, I assume the impact of expansion of higher education on graduate employability is dependent on the context and that in order to explore it one needs a diversified approach to assess it. In this regard, the overview made has identified a number of different studies which tested different hypotheses and explanations of the relationship between higher education and the labour market which took into account the particular settings of the labour market and how employers

⁷⁹ Careers after Higher Education – a European Research Survey was undertaken in 1999 in 11 European countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom and Japan. More than 36,000 graduates from these countries were surveyed about four years after graduation.

select employees. The main hypotheses which were tested were if education functions in line with the human capital theory or in line with positional and conflict theories.

However, most of these studies present a relatively static view on the capacity of educational system to structure the school-to-work transitions. Instead of doing that, Markus Gangl (2002) addresses the effects of changing labour market conditions on early career outcomes for those having entered the labour market in 12 European Union countries between the late 1980s and the late 1990s. Gangl claims that understanding them is an important element in understanding the nature of education-to-work transitions and the consequences of structural opportunities and constraints of these outcomes. More specifically, Gangl assesses the effect of cyclical changes in aggregate economic conditions, changing youth cohort sizes, as well as the structural changes in labour demand on labour demand on market entrants' unemployment risks and occupational allocation. He observes that:

Over the last decade, entering the labour market was increasingly perceived to be associated with rising unemployment risks and often less certain and lower level occupational attainment than in previous times. Descriptively, both perceptions accurately reflect both rising unemployment rates among leavers of all educational levels in all European countries, notably at the lowest levels of qualifications, and somewhat declining initial occupational returns to education, notably at the tertiary level of education in at least many European countries (Gangl, 2002, p. 84).

He gives as an explanation of the rising unemployment the cyclical deterioration of aggregate economic conditions in Europe from the early 1990s onwards and recognizes young people as being disproportionately affected of these developments. As regards the occupational allocation Gangl (2002) points out that the increasing levels of education in the labour force triggered downward substitution processes, which lead to decreasing levels of occupational attainment among market entrants.

David Reimer and his colleagues (2008) explored the effects of field of study on labor market outcomes, such as unemployment and occupational status, in a large number of European countries, using recent data from the EU-SILC. They tried to show that educational expansion not only changes returns to different educational degree levels, but also affects the return on fields of study. More specifically, they tested the hypothesis that educational expansion is associated with a worsening of labor market chances of humanities graduates relative to other fields, both in terms of heightened unemployment risks and lowered occupational status. They observed

considerable cross-national similarities for both outcomes and found that in countries with larger shares of university graduates, degree-holders from the humanities indeed have lower occupational status and higher unemployment risks. For occupational status, the effect of educational expansion also pointed consistently in the expected direction.

The recent report *The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe: Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility* (Eurostudent, 2009) clearly demonstrates that the more qualified people are, the less affected they will be by unemployment. Nonetheless, the gap between low and highly educated is especially wide in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as in Bulgaria, Germany, and Poland (p. 125). The unemployment rates vary considerably and by field of study as the fields of humanities, languages and arts appear to be the field most affected by unemployment in all age groups (p. 128).

In respect to the qualification mismatch this report documents that in nearly half of the Bologna Area, more than one in five graduates aged 25–34 are employed below their skill level. This vertical mismatch affects 25 percent of tertiary graduates in the EU-27 (p. 132). Similarly to the unemployment rates and the level of this type of mismatch vary considerably by countries and fields of studies. The results of the report reveal that in the EU-27, only one in eight graduates in the fields of teacher training and education science, or in health and welfare, are vertically mismatched. In contrast, in the field of services, nearly half of employees with tertiary education occupy a position below their skill level, with a maximum of 85 percent recorded in Cyprus (p. 136).

In general, our view is consistent with David Reimer and Marita Jacob (2011) who have emphasized recently that although there are many studies that explored the stratification in higher education and its change over time still the dynamics within educational careers and the consequences for labour market outcomes and social inequalities given the differentiation in higher education in a cross-national research remain yet to be examined. The overview has revealed that there are only few studies that include countries from Central and Eastern Europe which participated in the main comparative studies on graduate employment (CHEERs; Reflex; Kogan, Noelke, & Gebel, 2011; Noelke, Gebel, & Kogan, 2012). On the basis of this overview of existing studies on the dynamics of the labour market outcomes of higher education and the general lack of studies on Bulgaria, I will therefore test two contrasting hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a: The higher education expansion leads better qualified leavers to take employment in lower level occupations than in earlier times.

Hypothesis 5b: The higher education expansion does not contradict the development of employment and work opportunities for graduates.

However, having in mind processes of stratification and diversification have resulted a growing inequality within the group of higher education graduates, I expect that the institutional perspectives of education influence on graduate employability. More specifically, I focus on two aspects horizontal and vertical aspects of diversification and one of stratification of higher education institutions.

Hypothesis 6.1: Graduates from different degree programmes have different employability.

Hypothesis 6.2: Graduates from different fields of study have different employability.

Hypothesis 6.3: Graduates from different higher education institutions have different employability.

I also expect to observe cross-national differences and this is why I formulated the following hypothesis:

Hypotheses 7: The graduate employability varies across countries.

4.5. Conclusion

Chapter 4 has discussed on the effect on development of higher education (its expansion accompanied by differentiation vs. its standardization and convergence) on the dynamics of inequalities in access, inequities in participation and inequalities in labour market outcomes of higher education.

The first section has discussed the existing research on inequalities in access to higher education which have explored this phenomenon in a dynamic perspective in the context of educational expansion. Two strands of studies have been identified. In fact, the literature devoted to educational inequalities is not unanimous about the direction of their change. Some authors

provide evidence for their increase, other for their decrease but still there are spaces of inequalities where persist, especially in relation to the social background of students. The discussion of these studies has outlined that most of these theories and studies focus on evaluating inequalities either in the space of opportunity or in the space of outcomes in the context of the expansion.

The second section was devoted to the studies which focus on the dynamics of inequities in access to higher education in the context of educational expansion. It turned out that there is a very limited body of literature and data despite the increasing significance of this issue. Similarly to the inequalities in access to higher education, it seems that despite the higher educational expansion there has not been provided an unambiguous answer to the question if the expansion of higher education reduced inequity in higher education or not.

The third subsection focuses on the existing studies on the dynamics of the labour market outcomes of higher education. The overview has identified the need of taking into account both horizontal and vertical aspects of diversification which have resulted a growing inequality within the group of higher education graduates when evaluating the influence of higher education expansion on graduate employability.

Overall, this overview identified a huge lack of studies which focus on qualitative inequalities in the discussion of the influence of educational expansion on levels of educational inequalities. Furthermore, it highlighted the fact that these problems are under-researched in Bulgaria and in general in Central and Eastern European countries. Despite that, this overview was important to the extent that it helped me to formulate hypotheses which will be tested in the thesis. The next chapter introduces the specific context and the current trends related to higher education expansion and the labour market in Bulgaria, in which these hypotheses will be tested.

CHAPTER FIVE. DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET IN BULGARIA

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on the developments in higher education and the labour market in Bulgaria. It sets out to contextualize the issues of social justice in relation to these developments, in the particular settings of Bulgaria, and to place Bulgaria in the wider context of the New EU Member States.

Section 5.2. begins with a brief overview of the trends in higher education in Bulgaria during two periods, the communist and the post-communist. More specifically, it focuses on the main developments related to the two aspects of higher education – admission policies and funding mechanisms through which different norms of social justice have been implemented in higher education during these two periods. The section then pays special attention to the trend of expansion of higher education in Bulgaria and its specific routes. The analysis of these routes reveals some common elements in the communist and the post-communist periods. In both cases, the expansion was implemented by the gradual inclusion of more women in higher education, by offering students part-time modes of studying and it took place in particular fields of studies. However, the routes of expansion in the post-communist period have become more diverse and the expansion has occurred via other paths as well (e.g. enrollment in the private education sector).

Section 5.3. makes an overview of the developments of the labour market in Bulgaria in the communist and the post-communist periods. It also focuses on the labour market position of higher education graduates in both periods. The section highlights the differences in the distribution of employment opportunities for higher education graduates. These developments are important to the extent that they create the context within which social justice is pursued.

The last section summarizes the identified developments.

5.2. The developments in higher education in Bulgaria in the period 1944-2011.

Previous research has outlined that basic features distinguishing education systems in Central and Eastern European countries today were established under socialism (Kogan, 2008; Kogan, Gebel, & Noelke, 2012). Despite that, each country undoubtedly has its own unique features that differentiate it from the rest. While the use of higher education for social engineering was a common model in all countries within the communist zone, Bulgaria displayed the general features of the communist model for admissions policies in its “purest” form (Boyadjieva, 2010a, 2013). On the other hand, although all post-communist countries were exposed to similar challenges in the period of transition to democracy, such as the regaining of autonomy, the experienced pressures to harmonize tertiary education with practices in the European Union and with the Bologna Process, Bulgarian higher education seems to lag behind the other countries of this group in many respects.

Bulgarian higher education experienced a post-WWII expansion following the respective trends in Western countries. The expansion of higher education may be seen as a part of the general development of higher education. In this regard as well, two main periods may be distinguished - a communist and a democratic one. The dividing line between them is the year 1989, when communism collapsed. Both periods are marked by expansion, including an increase in the number of students, higher schools and teaching staff. Despite that, if we follow Martin Trow’s framework, we see that the massification of higher education began in the second period. In the following subsections, I focus on the main developments related to two aspects of higher education – admission policies and funding mechanisms in the communist and democratic periods. Then, I focus on the specific routes of expansion of Bulgarian higher education in these two periods.

5.2.1. Development of Bulgarian higher education (1944-1989).

In the period between 1944 and 1989, education played a significant role in the building of the new society. During this period, education served the goals of the centrally planned economy and there was a close link between education and the various economic branches and sectors

(Kostova, 2008, p. 98). Until the “velvet revolution” in 1989, the Bulgarian higher education system had been dominated by the model of specialized higher education schools that were closely linked to the communist labour market (Boyadjieva, 2007). By 1989, there were only three Bulgarian universities and many higher education schools: e.g. pedagogical, technological and agricultural institutes. This model favoured the Soviet approach (Kostova, 2008). The development of higher education in this period was under centralized control, and the higher schools lacked autonomy. Higher education development during that period was highly politicized and was directed to planning expansion so as to satisfy the needs of implementation of the state’s economic policy and to construct the intellectual basis (the intelligentsia) of the communist society. Thus, on the one hand, education was seen as a key to the country’s modernization and industrialization. On the other hand, it was assumed that socialist man should be educated and that illiteracy could disgrace and discredit the system (Marinova-Christidi, 2010, pp. 429-464).

There were two processes that accompanied the development of higher education during this period as regards the admission policy to higher education (Boyadjieva, 2010):

1) limitation of the opportunities of candidate-students coming from a bourgeois background, until then the traditional background for university students, to have access to higher education; this was done via *discrimination*⁸⁰;

2) widening the opportunities of candidate-students from non-traditional backgrounds to acquire higher education through the implementation of various kinds of *social privileges*⁸¹.

⁸⁰ The main instruments for the implementation of this *discrimination* were: i) the expulsion of students who, while already admitted, had been deemed untrustworthy based on their background and political views or those of their parents (e.g. via the so-called Fatherland Front certificate for trustworthiness); ii) bans preventing members of certain groups from applying and iii) broadening the set of admission criteria so as to include considerations regarding the social profile and the political stance of the applicants and of the members of their families (Boyadjieva, 2013, pp. 507-509).

⁸¹ The *social privileges* differed in the modes of their implementation. There were: i) direct ones which guaranteed the admission of all members of a certain group of applicants (e.g. for “active fighters against fascism and capitalism”) and ii) indirect ones, which aimed at increasing the likelihood that members of a given group would be admitted to higher education institutions by introducing a quota for the group (Boyadjieva, 2013, pp. 510-515).

A central role in constraining or widening the access of candidate-students played the assessment of the personal characteristics – i.e., the socio-political behaviour – not only of the candidates but also of their families as well; these characteristics included features such as party affiliation, social status, domicile, gender, ethnicity and age. Thus, in the communist zone of influence, conditions were established under which the social factors (different enactments, regulations, laws, and decisions) could constrain the access of candidate-students lacking the personal characteristics required for access to higher education. Although the development of admission policies changed over time in this period, the trend being towards increasing weight of the academic criteria, still, even as late as 1987, 55 percent of the spots in universities were still allocated on the basis of social privileges (Boyadjieva, 2013, p. 522). Furthermore, according to a study on the admission policies to higher education under the communist regime, the introduced social privileges did not succeed in creating a student body that represented the social structure of Bulgarian society at that time (Boyadjieva, 2010).

In fact, the same way of regulation by means of egalitarian policies could be observed in other countries (e.g. Czechoslovakia and Poland), where:

..., ‘social scholarships’ were granted to the politically privileged for admission to higher education, and social origin, place of residence (‘territorial advantage’) and nationality (Czech vs. Slovak) were subject to political scrutiny in the admission procedure (Simonová & Antonowicz, 2006, p. 3).

As regards funding during this period, the state covered all expenses for the education process as well as provided accommodation facilities for the students studying far from home. There were no tuition fees. However, the state had full control over the curriculum, which was thereby kept under the influence of the dominant ideology. Furthermore, the curriculum guidelines, research goals and requirements for filling teaching positions were defined and closely monitored by the Communist Party, and a unitary system of traditional university education was provided, which had no Bachelors’ programmes (see Matějů, Řeháková, & Simonová, 2007, pp. 374–375). Moreover, Western literature was not available in the libraries. One of the specific features of higher education studies in these countries was that they were generally strong in conveying factual knowledge. In this regard, Michael Mertaugh and Eric Hanushek (2005, p. 219) emphasize that the inherited education systems in Central and Eastern Europe have preserved this

quality —especially in mathematics and natural science programmes – but they were not as good at developing critical thinking skills and skills related to application and synthesis of knowledge.

5.2.2. Development of Bulgarian higher education (1990-2011).

The collapse of communism in 1989 was followed by a series of reforms in Central and Eastern European countries towards changes in the institutional structures, teaching, curricula, management, governance and financing of educational systems, and the status of teachers. These changes were to a great extent driven by the political and economic opening and liberalization taking place in these countries (Cerych, 1997). As claimed by Kwiek (2012), the knowledge production in the region still cannot escape its recent history: after being viewed as strategic elements of communist regimes, universities in the first decade of the transition period were largely left on their own, becoming autonomous but severely underfunded, and engaged far more in (mostly fee-based) teaching than in traditional knowledge production. Their recent history is of importance, especially in three areas: slow (and generally limited) governance and funding reforms; an academic institutional culture that accepts the denigration of research missions; and underfunding of research in higher education.

In line with these general trends, the most significant changes in the higher education system implemented in Bulgaria in the period after 1989, as compared with the higher education system that existed in the communist period, are associated with: the restoration of the autonomy of Bulgarian higher education institutions (1990); the introduction of structural elements and practices transferred from other educational systems, such as the two-level model of higher education (Bachelor's and Master's degrees), university quality assurance systems, freedom of speech, and access to Western literature⁸². Furthermore, in this period the specialized higher schools that had been established in the communist period developed in the direction of incorporating the university model of higher education; in addition to this, the private sector emerged (see Boyadjieva, 2007). Alongside these changes, it is worth-noting that a study of the transformations in the post socialist education on sociology in Bulgaria show that such transformations are carried out also within particular specialties, as they are mediated by internal

⁸² Although the higher education institutions cannot afford to ensure access to the latest and most prestigious books and journals, which are available for the higher education institutions in all western countries.

structures and relationships, which these specialties inherited by the late socialism (Slavova, 2012).

Whereas the number of higher education institutions in the communist period increased from seven in 1944/45 to 30 in 1989/90, the number of higher schools in 2010/2011 was 53 (16 of which were private), of which 44 were universities and equivalent higher schools, and nine were independent colleges (NSI, 2013, p. 66). The number of higher education institutions has been relatively stable after 2002/2003, although there are many critics that their number is too high as compared to the number of the Bulgarian population.

As regards access to higher education, a significant change in Bulgaria after 1989 was the abolishment of social origin criteria in selection processes. Thus, the weight of academic criteria increased significantly. The admission policy which was introduced in Bulgaria, and is currently in effect, is based on the principle of equality of opportunity. It is directed to widening access to higher education by focusing on all candidate-students without applying specific measures for any groups defined as underrepresented. The Higher Education Act in Bulgaria (art. 68) stipulates special admission measures only for people with disabilities, orphans, twins (when they apply for the same professional field and one of them is accepted), and mothers with three or more children. Such measure may be supported by John Rawls' theory of justice. However, it needs to be assessed whether the widened access has really provided social justice in admission to higher education.

As regards the funding, in contrast to the communist period, when higher education was public and free for all students, after 1989 the funding model of education was changed. The underfunding of the Bulgarian education system after 1989 became one of its main characteristics. To a great extent, the transition brought the need for fundamental changes in education programmes, which also made funding education more difficult (Mertaugh & Hanushek, 2005). In some of the Eastern and Central European countries, these difficulties were very severe. Bulgaria definitely stands out in this respect. The budget allocations in this country reflected the decline in national GDP and contributed to the most severe decline in education expenditures compared with all the accession countries: real education expenditures in Bulgaria in the year 2000 were just 40.3 percent of their 1990 level (Table 5.1.). Although financial crisis is a common feature in all transition countries, which undoubtedly reflects the speed of their reforms, the resource situation in Bulgaria is seen as "almost desperate and in no way comparable

to the financial difficulties of education reported from virtually any-even the most advanced-Western countries” (Cerych, 1997, p. 93).

Table 5.1. Real changes in GDP and public expenditures on education 1990-2000.

	Real GDP in 2000 as % of 1990 GDP	Real expenditures on education as % of 1990	
		1995	2000
Bulgaria	82.1	52.6	40.3
Czech Republic	99.9	118.3	96.0
Estonia	86.1	91.2	108.5
Hungary	108.0	93.5	98.6
Latvia	62.3	86.5	116.1
Lithuania	68.4	69.1	70.1
Poland	143.2	154.6	211.0
Romania	82.9	154.8	128.9
Slovak Republic	105.1	90.1	81.3
Slovenia	120.1	117.8	139.5

Source: Adapted by Mertaugh and Hanushek (2005, p. 212) Table 7.1. World Bank database.

Seen in a wider comparative perspective, one year after the accession of the country to the European Union (2007), Bulgaria was among the countries with the lowest total public expenditure on education, and higher education in particular, as a percentage of the GDP - respectively 4.6 percent and 0.9 percent (Fig. 5.1.). These expenditures are below the EU 27 average – 5.1 percent for all educational levels (ISCED 0 to 6) and 1.1 percent for higher education (ISCED 5-6).

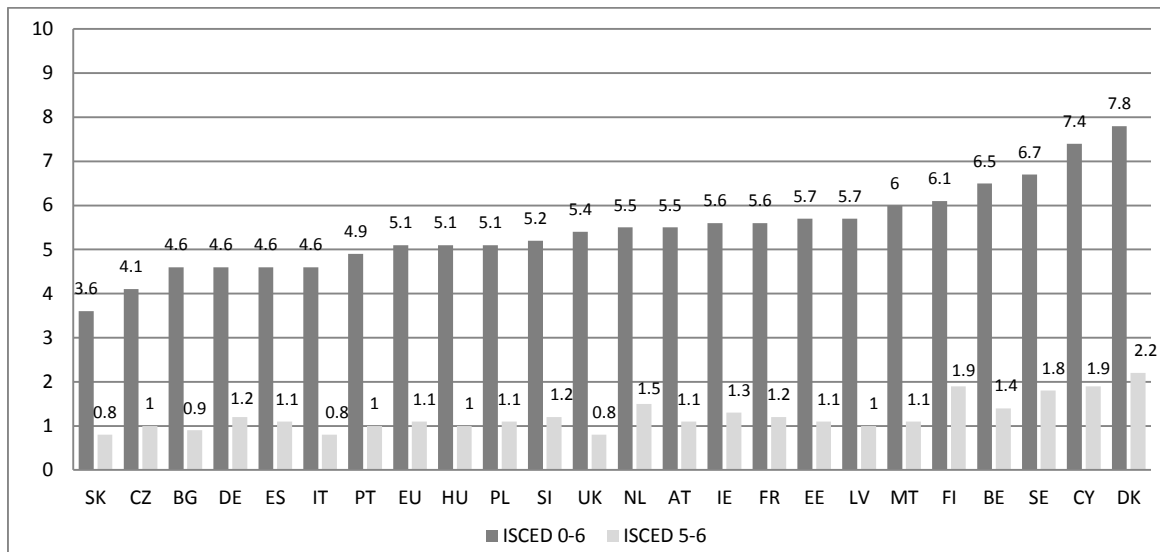


Fig. 5.1. Total public expenditure on education by education level (ISCED 0 to 6) as a percentage of GDP, 2008. *Source:* Adapted by Eurydice (2012, p. 88.)

Notes: There are no data available for Romania, Luxemburg and Greece.

As higher education institutions gained autonomy, they were allowed to manage their own curricula and budgets. Whereas public higher education institutions are subsidized by the state, the private providers do not receive any financing from the state except funds for competition-based projects. The current financial policy has adopted two main approaches in financing school education. On one hand, the state continues to guarantee citizens their right to education - meaning that the state provides all educational institutions with the minimum funding needed to cover their expenses. On the other hand, the principle of economic efficiency is applied - it suggests more resources should be invested where there is an already optimized network containing all the necessary material, organizational and methodological conditions for a quality educational process (investments in development). In the case of higher education, the funding system applied to state institutions is such that the allotted subsidy is based on the number of students enrolled. The main forms of funding mechanisms for each higher school are determined by the number of students, professional fields and evaluation for accreditation, publishing of textbooks and scientific works, municipal social spending, capital expenditure. Each state university may form its own funds and define procedures for spending them.

Public higher education institutions define their own fees, but the maximum limits are set by the government. Actually, almost all students pay fees, except orphans, persons with disabilities, war

invalids and senior cadets in military schools. Usually, those who have highest scores on exams are those who pay the lowest fees. The student fees also depend on the particular programme and field of study. The lowest fees are paid in the following fields: pedagogy, economics, administration and management (Eurydice, 2013a, p. 9).

The state also supports full-time students by offering them grants/scholarships. These are distributed by higher education institutions in taking into account need-based and merit-based criteria. However, scholarship rates are very low. In fact, the burden for the funding of education and students' maintenance in the end of the 1990s, especially in the case of higher education, was almost entirely shifted to the students' families or the students themselves. The number of scholarships funded by enterprises or by universities has diminished. Under these conditions, students would not hesitate to quit their studies if they find a well-paid job. Such a choice is more common among males than females and among students who live outside the capital city, Sofia, than those who study in the capital (Annual Report on Youth, 2004).

As regards the opportunity of students to take out state-guaranteed loans, it seems that the interest in the existing loan system is very low. The proportion of students who take out loans is only 2 percent (Eurydice, 2013a, p. 9). This low interest in students' loans may be explained by the fact that their introduction and the debates around it did not take into account the needs of the individual students or mitigate the barriers related to the students' background (Stoilova, 2010). As a result, this option does not lead to widening the opportunity of individuals to make choices regarding their studies. In fact, instead of taking out loans, students rely on their parents' support or prefer to combine their studies with work to pay their fees. In this respect, data from Eurostudent survey (2007) reveal that 35 percent of all students work alongside studying (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2008, p. 119). This percentage varies enormously depending on the social origin and age of students. Thus, the proportion of students above 28 years of age who combine working and studying is almost two times higher - 65 percent. Whereas the employment rate of students with a high parental educational background is 34 percent, this percentage is much higher among students a low background – 54 percent (ibid., p. 120). The only other country with such a considerable difference is Portugal. In contrast, in Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Czech Republic and many other countries, the difference between the proportions of students from low and high social background who work alongside studying is very low.

In the light of these developments, it is really essential to be concerned with the level of social justice achieved in access to higher education. I believe this is important because, in the context of growing social and economic inequalities in the country and the underfunding of education in the transition period, and of a growing gap between curricula learned in the secondary school and the knowledge required to pass entry exams, the academic criteria have become more achievable among candidates originating from a more advantaged socioeconomic background, since only they have the resources to compensate this knowledge gap by taking private lessons. Thus, the academic criteria have become a new barrier for students of a low socioeconomic background. In the context of the demographic crisis, these criteria have been recently weakened in some higher education institutions in order to keep the number of students stable, or even have it increase over time and receive a state subsidy which could guarantee their survival, given the overall underfunding of the sector. It is hard to assess the magnitude of this problem, because in Bulgaria there is no practice of monitoring the student body and no systematic data are available about its main socioeconomic characteristics. The present study aims to fill part of this gap, and shed light on these problems, and provide some evidence of their magnitude.

Despite these unfavorable trends, Bulgarian higher education has been expanding both before and after 1989. Following the framework developed by Marek Kwiek (2013c) as a model for an analysis of higher education expansion between 1995 and 2010 (in that case, linked to the analysis of the contraction processes ongoing and envisaged for the future in Polish higher education), the following section attempts to shed light on the particular routes of expansion of higher education in Bulgaria, also a post-communist country, but for a longer period of time.

5.2.3. Routes of expansion of Bulgarian higher education

The application of the framework developed by Marek Kwiek (2013c) is relevant to the present study, given that higher education expansion in Bulgaria after 1989 was accompanied by diversification trends but also by a demographic crisis. This crisis took place in parallel with two trends – increasing early school dropout and massification of higher education. In this regard, it has been claimed that the expansion at the top after 1989 has led to an increase of the percentage of people from a single birth cohort that achieve the highest educational level, but also to a widening of the educational variations among the population (Stoilova, 2010). More specifically, the chosen framework requires that the expansion should be examined in four components: *by*

age, by gender, by sector (public/private), and by student status (full-time/part-time) (Kwiek, 2013c). However, it has been applied here with some modifications. Thus, it was not relevant to include the sector component when discussing the route of expansion in the communist period. However, due to the processes of diversification in higher education and in the context of the Bologna Process developments in the last two decades, it was relevant to include the diversity of tertiary programmes. This is why I added two more components - *by field of study* and *by education-qualification degree*. An attempt has also been made to assess the route of expansion by field of study for the communist period. The main challenge in applying this framework was the availability of data and its comparability over time. Thus, for instance, the qualifications for fields of study have been changing over time: this is one of the reasons why I refer to different periods of time. Although, the analysis does not have claims to be exhaustive, it has captured some important trends in the routes of expansion of higher education in Bulgaria.

The analysis of the expansion of Bulgarian higher education is based mainly on data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI)⁸³ and from Eurostat. More specifically, the data show that the overall enrollments of students in the period 1950-2011 increased 5.25 times for the period 1950/51-1990/1991 (from 34,926 to 183,453) and 1.53 times between 1990/91 and 2010/11 (from 183,453 to 281,170) (NSI)⁸⁴. In the following two subsections, I focus on the routes of expansions separately for the two periods in the development of Bulgarian higher education – the communist and the democratic.

Routes of the expansion in the communist period

Tables 5.2. present the expansion disaggregated into three components: by *gender, status* and *field of study*, in the communist period. Age was excluded from the analysis because data on age are not available for this period. However, it is worth noting that in this period there were age restrictions on access to higher education. Thus, for instance, according to a provision of the Higher Education Act, as of 1958, only students up to 35 years of age who had graduated

⁸³The data used from the Statistical Yearbooks and Statistical Reference Books are available on the NSI site: www.nsi.bg.

⁸⁴ Own calculations based on NSI (Statistical Yearbooks, 1956, p. 115; 1991, p. 341; 2002, p. 395 and www.nsi.bg) *Note:* Doctoral students are not included.

secondary schools could apply for the regular mode of higher education, whereas for part-time studies the age limit was 40 years (Boyadjieva, 2010a, p. 66).

Tables 5.2. Composition of Enrollment Increase in the communist period.

a) *By gender*

	1960/61	1990/91	1960/61-1990/91	% Distribution of Increase
Men	43,767	88,580	44,813	36.64
Women	17,385	94,873	77,488	63.36
Total	61,152	183,453	122,301	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (Statistical Yearbooks, 1961, pp. 344-345; 1991, p. 341).

Note: The number of women in 1960/61 refers only to the regular students;

Doctoral students are not included.

b) *By student status*

	1970/71	1990/91	1970/71-1990/91	% Distribution of Increase
Extra-mural training and evening courses	24,138	46,867	22,729	0.27
Total	99,596	183,453	83,857	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (Statistical Yearbooks, 1972, p. 355; 1991, p. 341).

c) *By field of study*

	1950/51	1990/91	1950/51-1990/91	% Distribution of Increase
Engineering and technical	5,221	56,793	51,572	0.43
Economics	5,481	22,205	16,724	0.14
Agriculture	3,270	5,805	2,535	0.02
Art	1,303	2,189	886	0.01
Health	7,718	12,673	4,955	0.04
Other	7,934	8,475	541	0.004
Maths, natural sciences and humanities (from 1970/71)	-	43,370	43,370	0.36
Total	30,927	151,510	120,583	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (Statistical Yearbook, 1961, p. 345; 1991, p. 253)

Notes: Since 1990/91 the category ‘maths, natural sciences and humanities’ has changed to ‘education and pedagogy’; as of the academic year 1990/91 sports has been included in the group of education and pedagogy. The data refer to regular students.

As regards the gender dimension, the increase of the share of women in the student body for the period 1960/61-1990/1991 was more than fivefold (from 17,385 to 94,873). This trend led to a complete change in the gender composition of students. Whereas in the beginning of the period, the enrollment of men prevailed, at the end of this period the number of female students surpassed that of men. From a student status perspective, about 63 percent of the overall increase of students in this period consisted of female students.

The expansion at this time occurred mainly via enrollment of students in full-time studies. Opportunities for extra-mural training and evening courses were offered in both types of higher education institutions – universities and semi-higher schools. The enrollments in extra-mural training and evening classes increased in the period 1970/71-1990/91 almost two times (from 24,138 to 46,867). Actually, the option of part-time study was created as an additional pathway for working-class students in all communist countries in order to enhance their numbers in the student body (Noelke & Müller, 2011). However, only about a quarter of the increase of students in Bulgaria was due to increase of people in extra-mural studies or attending evening classes.

Finally, expansion occurred in specific fields of study. In the communist period, it took place mainly in engineering, education and pedagogy and economics. Enrollments in engineering accounted for 43 percent of the increase in the period between 1950/51 and 1990/1991. Furthermore, the increase of the number of students in this field was more than tenfold (from 5,221 to 56,793). The expansion in maths, natural sciences and humanities, a field that was later changed to education and pedagogy, was also very impressive. The increase of students in the field of economics was fourfold. In fact, the focus on technical fields and natural sciences and the low rate of enrollments in social sciences and humanities were common features for all communist countries. This emphasis was based on the belief that the engineers and natural scientists had innovative capacities and were able to contribute to the modernization of industrial production and “to run the socialist bureaucracy” (Noelke & Müller, 2011, p. 18). At the same time, despite the expansion of higher education in Central European countries, their systems remained highly exclusive, with enrollment rates below those in advanced Western countries. This could be partially explained by two considerations. On the one hand, tertiary educated intellectuals, the so-called *intelligentsia*, have often been critical of the ruling regime. On the other hand, wage differentials between tertiary educated and skilled manual workers or technicians were very low, which did not stimulate people in Central and Eastern Europe to invest in higher education (Kogan, Gebel, & Noelke, 2012).

To sum up, the analysis of the higher educational expansion in Bulgaria in its communist period shows it was implemented by the gradual inclusion of women in higher education and by the offer of part-time modes of studying, and that it took place in particular fields of studies such as engineering and education and pedagogy.

Routes of the expansion in the democratic period

The demand for higher education in Bulgaria and other Central and Eastern European countries in the beginning of this period can be explained partly by the intention of people to stay in education in order to avoid unemployment and, subsequently, to have higher earnings (Cerych, 1997; Kogan, 2008).

Continuing the pre-1989 trend, the expansion of higher education in the democratic period continued to be heavily gendered. Thus, about 62 percent of the increase involved female students (Tables 5.3.). However, the absolute increase of the number of women in the student

body was not so high as the increase observed in the communist period – 1.64 times. A similar trend is observed for the period between 1999 and 2004 in all Central and Eastern European countries (Kogan, 2008).

Tables 5.3. Composition of Enrollment Increase in the post-communist period.

a) *By gender*

	1990/91	2010/11	1990/91-2010/11	% Distribution of Increase
Men	88,580	126,028	37,448	38.32
Women	94,873	155,142	60,269	61.68
Total	183,453	281,170	97,717	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (Statistical Yearbooks, 1991, p. 341 and www.nsi.bg).

Note: Doctoral students are not included.

b) *By student status*

	2000/01	2010/11	2000/01-2010/11	% Distribution of Increase
Regular training	168,772	193,118	24,346	0.65
Extra-mural training and evening courses	72,520	76,814	4,294	0.11
Distance-learning	2,300	11,238	8,938	0.24
Total	243,592	281,170	37,578	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (www.nsi.bg).

Note: Doctoral students are not included.

c) *By field of study*

	2003	2011	2003-2011	% Distribution of Increase
Teacher training and education science	21,100	16,692	-4,408	-0.08
Humanities and arts	20,461	22,578	2,117	0.04
Social science, business and law	94,120	117,807	23,687	0.43
Science, mathematics and computing	11,677	14,892	3,215	0.06
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	50,948	53,680	2,732	0.05
Agriculture & veterinary	5,152	6,883	1,731	0.03
Health and welfare	13,079	20,848	7,769	0.14
Services	13,675	24,244	10,569	0.19
Unknown	301	7,641	7,340	0.13
Total	230,513	285,265	54,752	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on Eurostat, Extracted on 04.12.2014.

Note: Doctoral students are included.

d) *By educational-qualification degree*

	2001/02	2010/11	2001/02-2010/11	% Distribution of Increase
Professional bachelor	16,646	25,511	8,865	0.16
Bachelor	157,725	178,728	21,003	0.37
Master	50,025	76,931	26,906	0.47
Doctor	3,998	4,095	97	0.002
Total	228,394	285,265	56,871	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (www.nsi.bg)

e) *By sector*

	2000/01	2010/11	2000/01-2010/11	% Distribution of Increase
Public	215,676	223,866	8,190	0.22
Private	27,916	57,304	29,388	0.78
Total	243,592	281,170	37,578	100.00

Source: Own calculations based on NSI (www.nsi.bg)

Note: Doctoral students are not included.

After 1989, the modes of attendance at higher education schools became more diversified. Thus, distance-learning emerged as a new mode of attendance and the number of people enrolled in such programmes increased almost five times between 2001 and 2011. Extra-mural training, evening classes and distance-learning were fee-based. It seems that the expansion by mode of attendance has led to the most significant restructuring in enrollments in the last decade. While in public universities more than 70 percent of the students are currently enrolled in regular training, in the private sector slightly more than 40 percent prefer this mode of attendance. Most likely, the private sector searched for opportunities to reduce the regular training and to allow students to combine their studies with work in view of the high tuition fees, which students were less and less able to afford, especially amidst the economic crisis which hit the country in 2008.

In the post-communist period, educational expansion took place mainly in the field of social science, business and law. These disciplines account for 43 percent of the overall increase of students during the period between 2003 and 2011. The fields of services and health and welfare were also marked by significant expansion. This trend does not deviate from what was observed in Central and Eastern Europe as a whole, where the drop in natural sciences in the 1990s was accompanied by a considerable growth of the number of students in the humanities and the social sciences (Scott, 2002). Study in other fields also increased quantitatively in Bulgaria but accounted for a very low share of the overall increase. The only field was teacher training and education science. This field is predominantly female dominated. The same is true for the teacher's profession in Bulgaria. Although highly prestigious, it is underpaid which does not make it attractive for graduates, especially for men.

Higher education in Bulgaria is offered in four educational-qualification degrees. These have not contributed to expansion equally. Thus, almost half of the increase of students is due to increase

those studying for a Master's degree. The distribution of the expansion in the period for Bachelor's students was respectively 37 percent for Bachelor's and 16 percent for Professional Bachelor's students. In contrast, the number of Doctoral students has been quite stable during the studied period. This degree was granted via the centralized system inherited from the past. After the decentralization of the procedure for granting this degree in 2010, there has been a considerable increase of PhD graduates in recent years.

As regards the public/private sectoral perspective, it is difficult to fully assess this route because of the emergence of the private sector within public universities as well. If we focus on the divide between public/private universities alone, it can be said that 78 percent of the increase in enrollment in higher education in the period 2000/01 - 2010/11 was due to the increase in the private sector. The enrollments at that time increased from 27,916 to 57,304. This is a striking fact, given that the share of students who study in private higher education in Bulgaria was relatively low compared with Poland, where there was a massive growth of the private sector during that time. In contrast, in 2000/2001, the share of students in private higher education out of all students in Bulgaria was 11.46 percent, and in 2010/11 it increased to 20.38 percent.

Since the age structure of students is not presented in an absolute aspect after 1989 and there are limited data on the age structure for regular students alone or for students in semi-higher schools alone before 1989, the analysis of the expansion by age is restricted here only to the available data. It is done using NSI data for the net enrollment rate of the population aged 19-23 and data on the net enrollment rate of the population in a broader age range offered by Eurostudent 2009 as a proxy for this analysis (Fig. 5.2 & Fig. 5.3). The first set of data reveals a trend of gradual increase of the population enrolled in education. The second set reveals that the net entry rate for 2002 was below the average Europe 27 rate for all age groups surveyed (18 and less, 19-24 and over 25). In contrast to this, the rates for 2006 were close to the EU 27 average only for the group aged 19-24 and were still below the average for the other two categories.

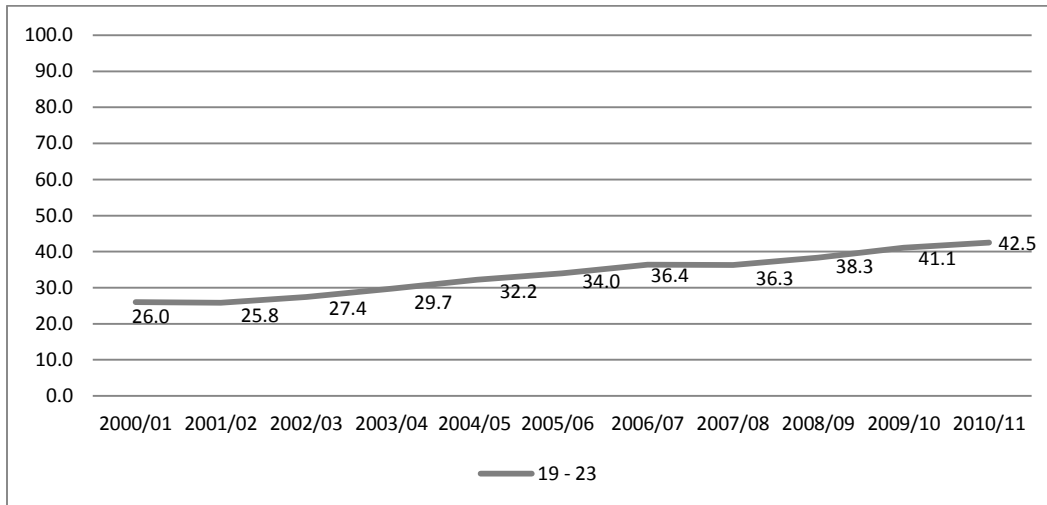


Fig. 5.2. Net enrollment rate of the Bulgarian population aged 19-23. *Source:* NSI website.

Note: The rate is calculated as the ratio of the number of enrollments aged 19-23, independently of the educational level, to the number of population in the same age group.

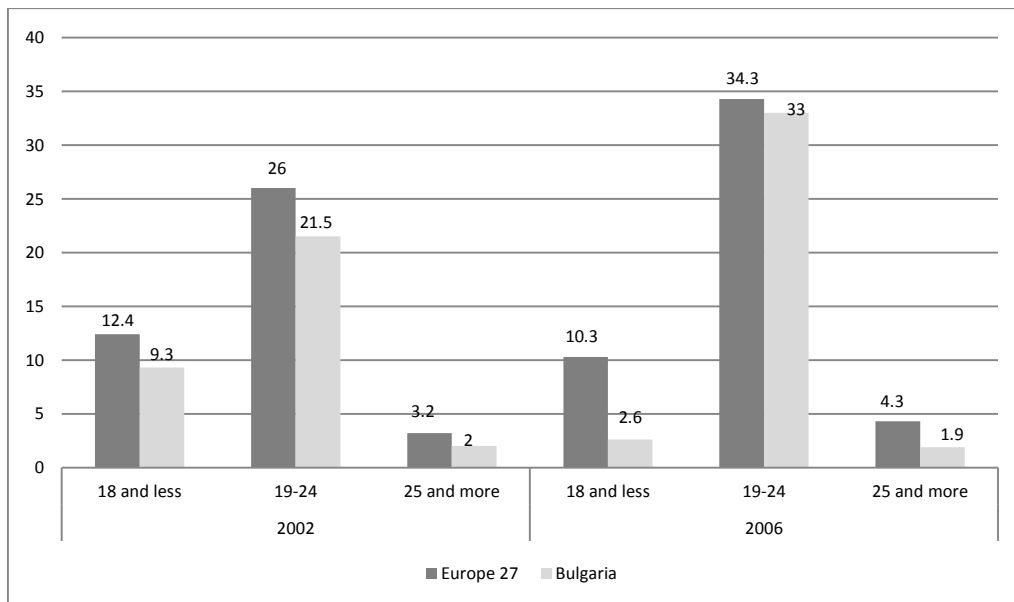


Fig. 5.3. Net entry rate (%) by age, ISCED 5A, 2002 and 2006.

Source: Adapted by Eurostudent (2009, p. 190, 193). Data: Eurostat, UOE.

It seems that the provided opportunity for people to pursue a higher education at an older age has not in fact contributed much to the expansion of higher education. Bulgaria is the second lowest performing country with respect to participation in formal or non-formal learning among all EU

28 countries as of 2012 (Eurydice, 2013b, p. 58). The percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in formal or non-formal learning in Bulgaria is only 1.5 percent, whereas the EU 28 average is 9 percent (ibid.). Only Romania is lower than Bulgaria in this respect.

To sum up, the analysis has revealed that the expansion in the democratic period occurred mainly by enrollment of female students (62 percent), by studying in the private educational sector (78 percent), in full-time programmes (65 percent), by quantitative growth in the field of social science, business and law (43 percent), by increase of Master' students (47 percent).

In line with these trends, most Central and Eastern European countries have experienced expansion in these years accompanied by differentiation. These trends were associated with the emergence of private universities, introduction of tuition-based university slots, growth or establishment of non-university institutions, such as vocational colleges, the reorganization of the one-cycle programmes and the reorganization of existing structures, such as the upgrading of higher education institutions into universities (Kogan, 2008; Gebel & Noelke, 2011). However, when expansion of higher education in Bulgaria is examined in a comparative perspective among all ten new EU 27 member states, Hungary proves to be the country with the lowest growth in the number of higher education graduates per year in the period between 2000 and 2008 – 0.7 percent (Table 5.4.). Although Bulgaria has higher growth per year (2.2 percent), Bulgaria and Hungary are the only two countries where the growth is lower than the EU 27 average (4.4 percent). The highest growth of higher education graduates can be observed in Romania (21.0 percent) – almost five times higher than the EU 27 average.

Table 5.4. Tertiary graduates (2000-2008).

	Number of tertiary graduates(in 1000)			Growth per year
	2000	2007	2008	2000-2008
EU 27	2873	3865	4079	4.5
Bulgaria	46.7	49.2	54.9	2.0
Estonia	7.7	12.6	11.3	5.0
Hungary	59.9	67.2	63.3	0.7
Poland	350.0	532.8	558.0	6.0
Slovenia	11.5	16.7	17.2	5.2
Slovakia	22.7	46.4	65.0	14.1
Czech Republic	38.4	77.6	89.0	11.1
Latvia	15.3	26.8	24.2	5.9
Lithuania	25.2	43.2	42.5	6.8
Romania	67.9	206.0	311.5	21.0

Source: European commission working staff document (2011, p. 66).⁸⁵ Data: Eurostat (UOE)

The expansion of higher education has undoubtedly led to an increase of the number of higher education graduates in the economy. However, it is expected that the high number of graduates should contribute to economic growth. The new Europe 2020 headline target requires that at least 40 percent of 30-34 year olds should hold a university degree or its equivalent. However, the opportunities that higher education graduates have to obtain a ‘good’ job as a result of this increase are not often discussed. These opportunities are mostly associated with the high employment rates among graduates, while the issues of the quality of this employment are hardly addressed. But, as will be shown in the next section, the relationship between higher education and the world of work in Central and Eastern European countries did not develop in the same way as in Western countries, and has involved many difficulties in the last decades. This raises many questions regarding the rationale behind the increase of the number of people with a degree in higher education and the effect of this increase on the opportunities of graduates in Central and Eastern Europe.

⁸⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/report10/report_en.pdf

In order to grasp the outcomes of higher education expansion on the labour market, we also have to focus on how higher education and the world of work interact, and on the developments in the labour market in Bulgaria.

5.3. Developments in the labour market in Bulgaria

Similarly to the developments in higher education, it is difficult to understand the current developments in the labour market and graduate employment in Bulgaria without taking into consideration the historical heritage of the communist past. That is why, I will focus on the developments in the labour market in a historical perspective and will pay special attention to the graduate labour market position in both the communist and post-communist periods.

5.3.1. In the period between 1944 and 1989.

The whole period between 1944 and 1989 was associated with the industrialization⁸⁶ of the country, which has been defined as being “on medium technical level, but highly energy and material-consuming”, “with too broad a nomenclature of production”, “with prevailing share of the mining branches, which relied on the markets of Comecon and USSR” (Marcheva, 2010, p. 221). During this period service-sector production was neglected: so were the skills—including humanities, business, and social sciences—associated with the service sector. This period can be roughly divided into two sub-periods (Marcheva, 2010, pp. 179-224):

- 1) from the mid 1940s until the mid 1960s and
- 2) from the mid 1960s until the end of the 1980s.

These two sub-periods differ significantly, especially in the way the Party-state used technology, foreign trade and working class mobilization in the course of industrial development in the transition from an extensive to an intensive economic model. During the first period the nationalization of industrial enterprises and banks was carried out. Some of the main postulates of the socialist economic theory, as described by Daniel Vachkov (2009, p. 278), were that the country had to carry out nationalization of the means of production, eliminating private property, competition, free action of the market mechanisms, and introduce the centralized planned

⁸⁶ According to Daniel Vachkov (2009, p. 280) this type of industry can exist only through import of raw materials and energy sources from outside the country.

economy under state command. Together with this, the country had to adopt the idea of rapid industrial development in which the production of means of production was given priority over the production of means of consumption. It was imperative for the country to develop mainly heavy industry – mining, metallurgy, machinery construction, energy industry, chemical industry. During this period the share of women among workers increased rapidly (Marcheva, 2010, p. 206). While in 1952 their share was 25 percent, in 1960 it was 30 percent, and in 1965, 34 percent. Traditionally, the proportion of women was higher in the food and textile industries. The women employed in industry were mainly workers. In 1965, female graduates amounted to only 24 percent of the total number of employed people.

After the mid 1960s, the factors of economic growth changed. The country started to accept assessment for effectiveness not only in the framework of Comecon but on the international markets as well, which imposed changes in industrialization policy (Marcheva, 2010, p. 206). Despite that, the development of heavy industry branches remained a priority until 1989. It was assessed that the extensive factors had been exhausted and attempts were made to intensify production as the productivity/efficiency of labour grew in order to provide competitive low-priced goods that could be sold on the international markets (*ibid.*, p. 207). Starting from the second half of the 1970s the industrialization policy moved towards implementing the achievements of science, towards complex mechanization, automatization of the processes of production and reduction of the share of manual labour not only in the main processes but in the secondary ones as well. Industrialization was introduced in agriculture, construction, in the management of separate technological processes, and in whole productions (*ibid.*, p. 210).

As Mertaugh and Hanushek (2005, p. 209) point out, in this period, job stability, not job mobility, was encouraged. Thus, full employment was guaranteed to a great extent, and overall, people were not exposed to the risk of unemployment, regardless of their individual characteristics or qualifications (Noelke & Müller, 2011). However, guaranteed employment was accompanied by overstaffing in some firms, lack of competition, lack of free market and free labour movements, which distorted the allocation of labour between industries and was seen as the cause of low labour productivity (Gebel, 2008, p. 41).

At that time, the educational credentials were more important for job allocation than actual knowledge or skills. Thus, access to specific status and class positions was strongly related to

qualifications (Noelke & Müller, 2011). At the same time, wages and salaries were fixed normatively rather than on the basis of marginal productivity, and played no role in allocating skills where they were most needed. Salaries of highly educated workers were often lower than for jobs requiring minimal skills⁸⁷. Nevertheless, there was less inequality in the salaries between different types of jobs in comparison with the capitalist system (Noelke & Müller, 2011).

Two aspects which characterized the position of higher education graduates on the Bulgarian labour market in the period between 1944 and 1989 are worth noting.

1) The state assigned higher education graduates to jobs after their graduation. In this way, the state played a role in mediating the *transition from university to work*. This was done through central planning. However, graduates were deprived of the freedom to choose: i) whether to work or not, and ii) what their first job would be⁸⁸. The only exceptions were the cases when higher education graduates decided to continue their education as PhD students. A common characteristic for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the socialist period was the strong link between educational qualifications and occupational outcomes (Noelke & Müller, 2011). In order to obtain efficient matches between these, the central planners had to know each person's specific skills and the employers' skill requirements and preferences (ibid.). Thus, the communist-era higher education and research systems and their knowledge production in Central and Eastern Europe differed substantially from their Western European counterparts, for the former tried to balance the number of graduates with the number of jobs (Kwiek, 2013a).

The centralized distribution of jobs among higher education graduates was one of the most significant policies⁸⁹ in the social dimension of higher education and the pursuit of social justice by the communist regimes, i.e., 'social engineering'. The question of 'social engineering' in the policies for access and admission to higher schools in Bulgaria is discussed in detail by Pepka

⁸⁷ However, after the introduction of extensive factors in the economic development of the country, the salaries of people employed in science became the highest ones.

⁸⁸ This refers to the mandatory assignment of higher education graduates to jobs at the exit from higher education institutions. After this mandatory work period expired, graduates were given the choice to continue working at the same place or change their workplace.

⁸⁹ The other policy was the so-called "affirmative actions" (Boyadjieva, 2010a, pp. 29-32). One of the main arguments in their support was that they provided compensation for the injustice that people had experienced in the past.

Boyadjieva (2010). Boyadjieva points out that it was realized not only in the “access⁹⁰” to higher schools, but in the process of learning and at the exit as well. This is why it is important to mention the main traits of this term. Boyadjieva (2010) looks at ‘social engineering’ as the implementation of policies for radical change in the way of functioning of society and its social structures in accordance with the principles and values of communist ideology. This ideology designed a new model of a society, the implementation of which required conscientious, consistent, centrally planned actions for transformation of the whole social reality – from its main spheres and social structure to the way of life and values of people.

2) In this period, higher education graduates (and not only them) experienced high labor force participation, job security, certainty; essential benefits were guaranteed through employment. In the communist period, productivity was not related to wages, since enterprises were subsidized by the state and experienced limited international migration. At the same time, there was no labor market measure for the success of different training institutions or university programmes. In this sense, Mansoor Rashid, Jan Rutkowski and David Fretwell (2005, p. 60) point out that at that time in order to „attract labor and avoid taxes, employers often had to offer nonwage benefits to workers”. The determinants of worker wages were therefore strikingly different here compared with market economies. Instead of being explained largely by differences in humancapital and other productivity-reflecting attributes of workers, differences in wages across workers were attributable to non-economic and unobserved differences (Rashid, Rutkowski, & Fretwell, 2005). Thus, party and system loyalty were recognized as important for access to ‘good jobs’ in that period (Noelke & Müller, 2011).

5.3.2. In the period between 1990 and 2011.

Overall, this was a period of democratization of the country and of transformation of its economic model, an element of which was the transformation of state capitals into private ones. The main paths for this were privatization, restitution, liquidation and insolvency (Stoyanova, 2003). The new economic model in Bulgaria was not implemented without difficulties, and it

⁹⁰ Social engineering in the access to higher education was realized through centralized Party control over the admission of students, which refers not only to setting a maximum number of students to be admitted in general and in different fields of study, but mainly to the “shaping” of the social composition of the students. (Boyadjieva, 2010, p. 34).

caused many industrialization-related conflicts in society (Stoyanova, 2003). It involved the restructuring not only of people's values but of the characteristics of labour and the available jobs.

In fact, the gradual introduction of market mechanisms has contributed to redressing the misallocation of resources observed in the previous era, which was industry-oriented, and had a high share of employment in agriculture and a low share in services (Gebel, 2008). Thus, during the transition period, there was a common increase of the share of total employment in the sphere of services in all Central and Eastern European countries, at the expense of lower shares of employment in industry and agriculture. A private sector also appeared, in which a significant share of people were employed. The types of work contracts also changed, shifting from permanent to more flexible contracts, whereby the job security workers had experienced in the communist period disappeared. Another phenomenon was the change from employment in the formal to the informal sector. However, these changes were accompanied by growing unemployment and increasing mismatch between demand and supply (ibid.). Last but not least, the transformation of the model was associated with a new legislation and institutions which mediate the labour relations.

There were two main driving forces of the change in the first years after 1989: *economic* and *political* (Barr, 1994). Among the economic driving forces were the widening differences in distribution of income and the explicit role of personal self-interest (including the increased role of individual choice and a variety of property relationships and ownership options). On one hand, some of the resulting outcomes increased productivity and improved the responsiveness of the government to the desires of citizens in the context of democracy. On the other hand, the widening differences of income resulted in changes in wages, employment, unemployment, and increased poverty. The workers at greatest risk were those in heavy industry and in geographical areas with the greatest concentration of uncompetitive industries. The destinations of the displaced workers were not very attractive. The options were to find other employment, to emigrate, to leaving the labour market altogether, or to become unemployed. The levels of unemployment remained quite high for a long time because of the decline in output. Some workers had skills that were no longer in demand – in most of these cases, their skills were outdated and not in demand. Other people had skills that were not in demand locally. There was a

problem with misallocation of housing, which was one of the constraints for these people to move to the places where there was a demand for their skills.

Seen through the lens of the country's economic development, the development of the labour market in Bulgaria can be divided into two main periods (Beleva, 2012, p. 15):

- 1) From 1990 to 2000, and
- 2) From 2001 to 2011.

The first of these periods had four sub-periods: i) collapse of the labour market as a result of the shock reforms (1990-1992), ii) a period of economic enlivening (1993-1994), iii) crisis (1995-1996), and iv) stabilization (1997-2000). In contrast, the second period can be divided into three sub-periods: i) a period of economic enlivening, with accelerating growth (2001-2004), ii) of stable growth (2005-2008), and iii) of crisis (2008-2011). Nevertheless, instead of focusing in detail on the characteristics of each of these periods, I will pay attention to some cross-cutting trends which shed light on some of the general trends in the transition period, and I will pay special attention to the dynamics of the labour market position of higher education graduates.

New risks

Given the link, identified above, between labour market and economic development, it is worth-noting that in the first years after 1989, the annual growth of GDP started to decrease and reached negative values. This was accompanied not only by a lower share of allocated funds to education but also by rising inflation and unemployment in Bulgaria, which in 1992 was the highest here of all Central and Eastern European countries (15 percent) (See Barr & Harbison, 1994, p. 11, Table. 1-1). Among the countries with the highest rate of unemployment in 1992 were Poland (13.6 percent) and Hungary (12.2 percent). Unemployment was a new phenomenon for people. During the initial phase of restructuring, women tended to be more affected than men by unemployment; they were laid off more often, and their chance of being re-employed was lower. In all countries, youth unemployment rates were very high – in some cases, three or four times higher than the general unemployment rate (Fretwell & Jackman, 1994, p. 167). Rashid, Rutkowski and Fretwell (2005) document that the disparity in unemployment rates between high- and low-skilled workers was much higher in transition countries in comparison to EU countries. Among the groups that they depict as vulnerable to unemployment were workers with obsolete or

narrow skills and young people; they also identify huge rural-urban disparities in access to jobs. Here, they give Bulgaria as an example: only the region of the country's capital city created jobs on a net basis. In contrast, in all remaining regions job destruction exceeded job creation.

Barr (2005, p. 10) underlines that the rise of unemployment, as the result both of economic adjustment and of falling output, exposed increasing divergence between the skills imparted to meet the needs of the central plan and those demanded by the market. Problems included narrow and inflexible skills, missing skills, and unquestioning attitudes. He argues that the challenge for education and training—another central reform direction—was not only to put in place a modern, pluralist curriculum, but to impart broader, more flexible skills and to develop more advanced problem-solving skills, as well as to introduce incentives to use resources more efficiently.

As regards reinforcing skill requirements, Mertaugh and Hanushek (2005, pp. 210-211) outlined three broad trends that were launched by the transition. *First*, as a result of market liberalization, wage and salary levels were no longer normatively set but were free to reflect differences in productivity and to signal emerging scarcities and redundancies in specific labor market skills. This led to a major reconfiguration of the structure of production and the creation of entirely new industries, especially in the service sector. It also led to major adjustments in the returns to skills: earnings in most low-skill occupations, especially in the manufacturing sector, fell sharply compared with salaries in occupations requiring higher skill levels. *Second*, the opening of the accession economies and the disappearance of subsidies and guaranteed markets required competition between the enterprises. This created powerful new incentives for efficiency in production. Inefficient enterprises—including many of the largest employers—closed or were restructured. *Third*, freer flows of trade, of financial resources, of information, and of human capital interacted with an acceleration of technological change throughout the global economy, reinforcing the other demands for change in the accession economies. As a result, the value of 'old' skills was depreciated by new applications such as the replacement of mechanical control with digital control in manufacturing; the substitution of robotics and production teams for repetitive assembly line tasks; miniaturization; substitution of lighter, cleaner, and cheaper materials; and the proliferation of web-based information, communications, and marketing. These fundamental changes in the economy decreased the predictability of labor-market skill requirements.

In this sense, people experienced deterioration of their employment conditions and faced insecurity regarding their income and employment situation. Lifetime employment became the exception rather than the rule. At the same time, there was a problem concerning the motivation of workers: this, together with the inappropriate individual incentives, was part of the economic constraints that affected restructuring (Barr, Gomulka & Tomeš 1994, p. 94). The authors explain this by the legacy of the old system, when wages were low and there were bad labour market relations. We could add the security of jobs in this period. This poor motivation was expressed in the fact that productivity could not be increased through the threat of job loss or the opportunity of earning higher wages.

As Richard Jackman and Michal Rutkowski (1994) point out, in a depressed labour market with high unemployment, few firms will be taking on new recruits, and workers, far from being in a position to choose among the jobs that exist, may practically have no alternative but to stay in the job they already have. Jackman and Rutkowski (1994, p. 154) also stress one other characteristic in Central and Eastern European countries. In conditions of depressed demand, raising productivity is seen as destroying jobs, and managers are under considerable pressure from their work force to permit productivity to fall in order to protect jobs.

As Bruno Laporte and Julian Schweitzer (1994) emphasize, as salary differentials widen, individuals begin to seek skills which allow them to move into higher-paying jobs. For workers displaced by enterprise restructuring, new skills may increase their chances of finding alternative employment. In this regard the transition countries took two policy actions in response to the emerging skills mismatch on the labor market (Rashid, Rutkowski, & Fretwell, 2005, p. 68). On the one hand, the countries responded by reforming their education systems. On the other, most countries created national employment services, often with local offices, which served to improve the skills of the long-term unemployed through *Active Labour Market Programmes*, such as training and retraining, job-insertion training (sometimes through wage subsidy programs), and development of entrepreneurial skills. By providing services mainly to laid-off workers, *Active Labour Market Programmes* also facilitated economic restructuring and layoffs. These programmes were found to improve worker skills and help workers reenter the labor force in cases in which services were well targeted to the populations most in need and where financing was adequate. However, successful programs were costly to implement, both administratively and financially.

Diverse paths to transition

In fact, there was a considerable variation in how Central and Eastern European countries implemented this transition. Thus, some countries, such as Poland and Hungary, started the reforms very early. Others, such as Estonia and Czech Republic, engaged in a fast reform process which contributed for better stability at the macroeconomic level and higher economic growth. Still others, such as Slovenia, adopted a step-by-step approach to reforms (Gebel, 2008). In strong contrast with these countries, Bulgaria, together with Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, suffered from delayed restructuring (ibid.).

According to another classification, the post-communist countries can be divided into three groups, based on their transition path (See Ringold, 2005, p. 32). The first group includes all countries that experienced a relatively small collapse in output, followed by rapid recovery. These are the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. By 2001, the per capita GDP of these countries exceeded the 1990 levels. In the second group are the countries which suffered a larger collapse of output but then experienced a gradual yet continuous recovery. These are Latvia and Lithuania. In the third group are the countries that experienced a relatively small fall in output, followed by recovery and then recession when restructuring lagged. Such was the case of Bulgaria and Romania. In 2001, GDP per capita in these two countries was about 90 percent of the 1990 levels.

Dena Ringold (2005, pp. 34-35) underlines that these different transition paths differ because of the initial conditions, the timing and phasing of key reforms, and the influence of the accession process itself. Initial conditions are linked to the pre-communist and communist-period experience with market mechanisms. Countries such as the Czech Republic, which had more developed market institutions before the communist period, were better positioned to make the transition. Similarly, countries where the transition began before 1989 were also more favorably positioned, including Poland and Hungary, which both experimented with market-based reforms in the 1980s (World Bank, 2002). Countries that stopped and started reforms, lagged behind. In Bulgaria and Romania, reforms stagnated until the late 1990s, when their resumption put recovery back on track.

This shows how diverse all these countries are in fact, even though they may seem a homogenous group compared with the Western, Northern and Southern European countries. Even welfare

regime theory (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Walther, 2006) has failed so far to give a comprehensive view on how the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe tend to exhibit a particular orientation towards public policy. This is rather problematic when we analyse the overall employment conditions of Bulgaria, quality of work, the current occupational structure of higher education graduates, and whether this situation is comparable with the situation in other post-communist countries. These countries are often labeled as New Member States (NMS), or just Eastern countries; there is a rough division of states into those accepted in the EU in 2007 and those accepted in 2004.

In this sense, it is worth noting the contribution of Nikolai Tilkidjiev (2006), who found a clearly shaped status hierarchy with regard to the acceptance of democratic values, based on the attitudes of different status groups to democracy. In his opinion, this hierarchy was an outcome of the way people experienced the transition to democracy and the market economy. More specifically, Tilkidjiev distinguishes the following two groups of post-communist countries on the transition road: the lagging ones (such as Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Slovakia) and the outpacing ones (such as Poland, Estonia, East Germany, Czech Republic, and Hungary) (Tilkidjiev, 2006, pp. 132-133). His conclusions are in line with the findings of Ivan Szeleznyi (2001), who also identifies two divergent paths leading from communism to “post-communist capitalism”. In his view, these paths are consequential for poverty outcomes in these countries. More specifically, he compares the “neo-liberal regimes” of Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia to the “neo-patrimonial systems” in Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia. He also provides evidence that (2001, p. 40) the growth of inequality and poverty is much sharper in Russia, Bulgaria, and Romania, than in Hungary, Poland, or Slovakia. The first group of countries such, as Hungary and Poland, implemented rather fast and rather radical institutional change. Whereas the privatization in these countries was carried out relatively quickly, it proceeded more slowly in the second group of countries, including Bulgaria and Romania (Szelenyi, 2001, pp. 45-46). His study also found evidence that the divergence across countries by the year 2000 cannot be simply attributed to the differences in their initial levels of economic development but were also due to the differences in the post-communist economic policies (Szelenyi, 2001, p. 50).

Whatever the classification adopted, Bulgaria lags behind, or is a group of countries lagging behind, the other Central and Eastern European ones with regard to its economic development.

EU accession

Another factor that undoubtedly influenced the developments in the labour market was the accession of the post-communist countries to the European Union. Most of them were accepted in 2004 and two – Bulgaria and Romania – in 2007, Croatia – in 2013. The influence of the accession was manifold. Two main points will be mentioned here. On the one hand, Central and Eastern European countries had to cover EU accession criteria. Some of them succeeded in covering them earlier than others, which had an impact on their transition. On the other hand, the accession itself opened many opportunities for mobility for higher education graduates. However, Barr (2005, p. 17) alerts for potential conflicts between the objectives of transition and those of accession to the European Union: this can be considered as yet another impediment to smooth transition that undoubtedly had an impact on employment opportunities for higher education graduates. Analyzing these conflicts, Barr (2005, p. 18) pays attention to the fact that firms in the older member states were competitive because workers were productive. In the case of Central and Eastern European countries, firms were competitive because labor was cheap. The accession itself also implied that countries, despite their diversity, had to have common targets set by the OMC in different areas, including employment and education.

The effects of the crisis

Finally, this period was marked by the effects of the economic downturn in 2008 (as mentioned above, Bulgaria experienced a very severe crisis in the period 1995 and 1996 as well). The crisis obviously affected the overall state of the economy and the levels of inequalities in the country. These may be assumed to be factors that constrain or widen the employment opportunities of higher education graduates. However, as already mentioned, the economic crisis in post-communist countries did not start in 2008. Nevertheless, I will focus on some important trends in order to describe the overall context in which the relationship between higher education and the world of work is embedded.

The levels of overall unemployment in the age interval 15-64⁹¹ increased since the beginning of the crisis, which was not so marked for countries like Czech Republic, Romania and Slovenia, but was much more salient in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and especially in Lithuania,

⁹¹ For more details, see ETUI, 2011, pp. 26-27.

Estonia and Latvia (all of these seven countries have unemployment rates higher than the EU 27 average⁹²). In all ten New Member States but Czech Republic, males were more affected by the crisis than women in terms of unemployment rates; this can be explained by the fact that predominantly ‘male’ sectors (manufacturing and construction) were the ones first hit by the crisis. Another result of the economic crisis with regard to the unemployment rates was that it affected mostly the group of people aged 15-24, although to different extents in EU 27 countries (Fig. 5.4). Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are the new members with a rate of unemployment in the 15-24 age group that is higher than the EU27 average for 2010Q2. The rate of young people who are neither in employment, education or training (NEETs) also increased during the crisis. Bulgaria definitely stands out both before and after 2008 in this respect; here the share of young people aged 15-24 is highest of all EU 27 members states. As regards the other post-communist countries, only Slovenia and Czech Republic had relatively low NEETs rates before and after 2008. In Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia the rates were around the EU 27 average, but in Latvia, Romania and Bulgaria they were much higher and increased steeply during the crisis although they were above the EU 27 average in 2007 as well.

⁹²Poland stays closest to the average.

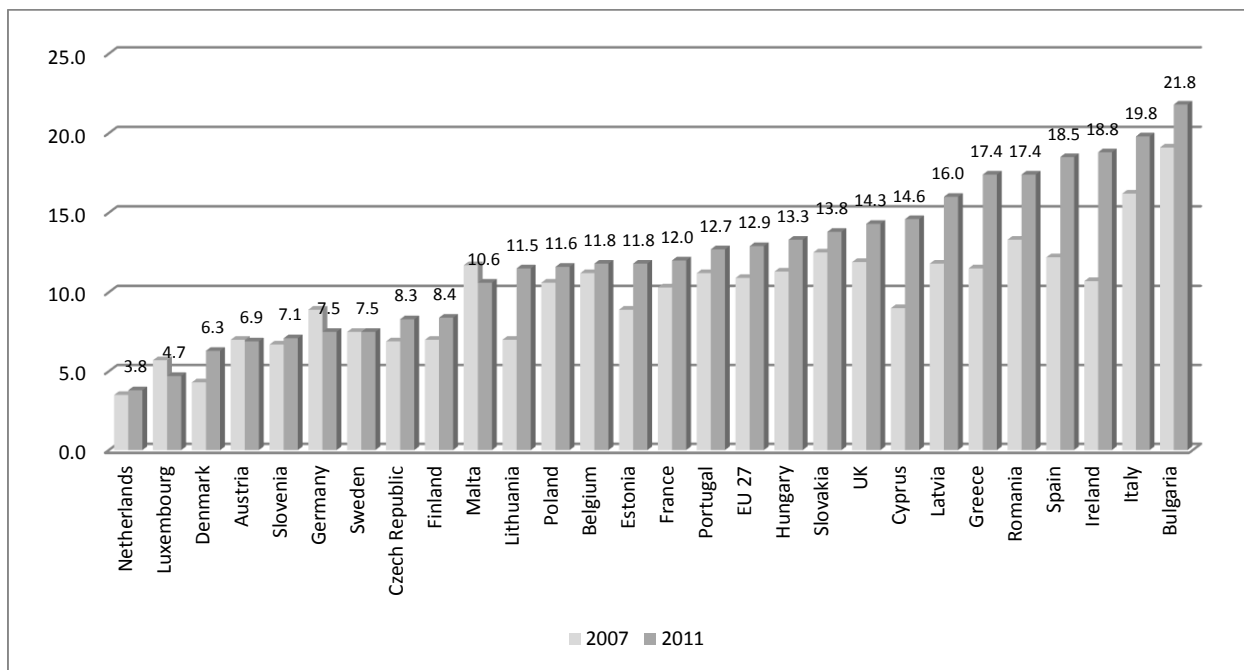


Fig. 5.4. Young people not in employment or education and training (NEET rates) in 27 EU countries in 2007 and 2011, 15-24 years old, total, (%). *Source:* Eurostat⁹³, Extracted on 25.05.13.

It seems that the crisis exacerbated the level of poverty and inequalities in the country, which had already increased dramatically in the transition period. Thus, for instance, during the period between 2007 and 2011, Bulgaria was among the countries with the highest increase of poverty among the working population in EU 27 according to Eurostat data (Extracted on 25.5.2013, EU-SILC) and measured with the so-called in-work at-risk-of poverty indicator⁹⁴. At the same time Bulgaria is among the countries with the highest inequalities in EU 27. Furthermore, despite the crisis, the levels of inequalities as measured by Gini Index⁹⁵ in these countries are very stable. (Eurostat, Extracted on 25.5.2013, EU-SILC). With regard to the indicator for the risk of poverty

⁹³http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_social_policy_equality/youth/indicators.

⁹⁴This indicator is measured as the rate of poverty risk (less than 60 percent of median equalized household income) among persons “in work”. A disadvantage of the indicator is that it is measured at the household level (ETUI, 2011, p. 27).

⁹⁵Gini coefficient is commonly used as a measure of inequality of income and wealth. The coefficient is defined as the ratio of cumulative shares of the population, arranged according to the level of equalized disposable income, to the cumulative share of the equalised total disposable income received by people.

or social exclusion⁹⁶ despite the significant decrease of its levels between 2007 and 2011, Bulgaria again stands out with the highest share of people at such risk. A huge decrease of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion is observed in Poland and Romania. The Czech Republic had the lowest share of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2011. Slovenia, Slovakia and Estonia also show rates below the EU 27 average. (Eurostat, Extracted on 25.5.2013)

Last but not least, with regard to material deprivation⁹⁷, the data reveal that the share of severely deprived people decreased significantly in the period between 2007 and 2011 in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland. Despite this decrease, Bulgaria is the country where people are most affected by material deprivation (43.6 percent). In contrast, the EU 27 average for 2011 was 8.8 percent (Eurostat, Extracted on 25.5.2013).

All that has been said so far contributes to understanding the development of the relationship between higher education and the labour market in Bulgaria. However, it seems quite difficult to put all this in a model. Moreover, it is difficult to show a comprehensive picture of the development of relationship between higher education and labor market in Bulgaria since 1989 and until now because of changes that have taken place in the classifications of the economic branches (there was one classification between 1991 and 1996 and another between 1997-2001) and of the fields of education (2003).

Labour market position of higher education graduates

Given this context, it is worth nothing that the relationship between higher education and the economy in this period has also changed. In contrast to the communist era, when education

⁹⁶This indicator corresponds to the sum of persons who are: at risk of poverty or severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. Persons are only counted once, even if they are present in several sub-indicators. At risk-of-poverty are persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 percent of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers).

⁹⁷ Material deprivation covers indicators relating to economic strain and durables. Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources; they experience at least four out of the following nine deprivations items: they cannot afford i) to pay rent or utility bills, ii) keep their home adequately warm, iii) face unexpected expenses, iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, v) a week holiday away from home, vi) a car, vii) a washing machine, viii) a colour TV, or ix) a telephone. People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 living in households where the adults (aged 18-59) have worked less than 20 percent of their total work potential during the past year.

served the goals of the centrally planned economy, mainly corresponding to the various economic sectors, after 1989 the relation with enterprises was eliminated. This reflected in two respects. On the one hand, the vocational education in Bulgaria “has increasingly become school-based” (Kogan, 2008, p. 30). On the other hand, the practice of centralized distribution of jobs for graduates at the exit of higher education was eliminated. However, the larger freedom which people acquired to pursue higher education studies and manage their careers was in the context of a period of economic model transformation in all public spheres, unfavourable privatization and restructuring of employment opportunities. All of this contributed to growing social inequalities, uncertainty and insecurity of people’s working lives. Thus, in contrast to the socialist period, “the rise of capitalism made people’s economic status again dependent on their labour market situation” (Gebel & Noelke, 2011, p. 29).

The new relation between education and the labour market that was established implied its greater relevance than in the past and provided individuals with a strong economic motivation in their demand for more and higher levels of schooling (Cerych, 1997, p. 78). Overall, the change of the economic model reflected on the restructuring of the opportunity structures for higher education graduates to find a ‘good’ job. This change affected highly qualified persons as well, although to a much lesser extent than people with lower levels of education. The most vulnerable to unemployment in the first years of transition were specialists with a degree in engineering, who comprised almost half of the total number of unemployed higher education graduates. This was due to the deindustrialization of the country and is clearly evident from the structure of unemployment among higher education graduates in the case of Bulgaria (see Fig. 5.5., Fig. 5.6. & Fig. 5.7.). To deal with this situation, many of the highly qualified people, especially those with a degree in engineering, decided to emigrate from the country. Thus, only between 1990 and 1992, about 252,700 people left the country (Beleva, 2012, p. 29).

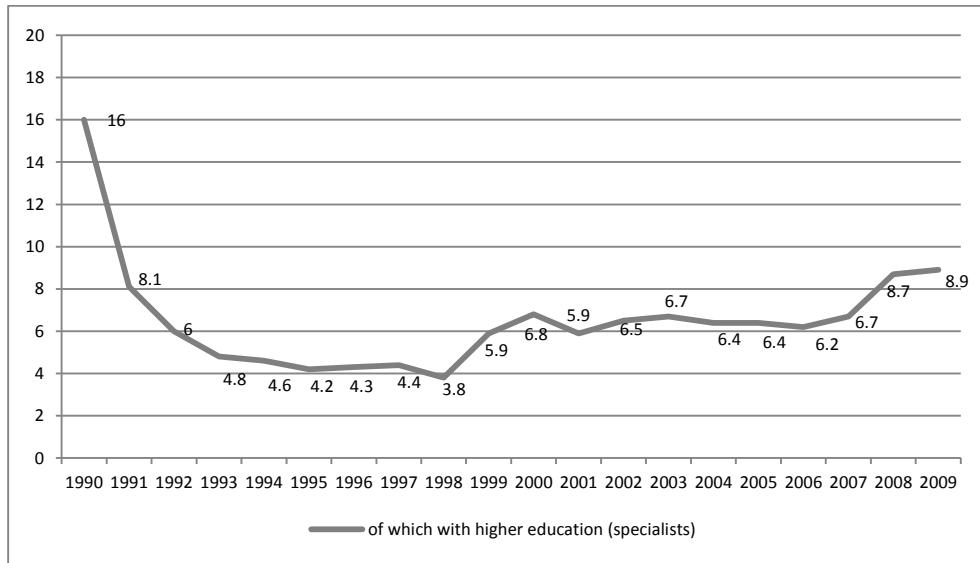


Fig. 5.5. Share of the unemployed with higher education among all unemployed, (%).

Source: NSI.

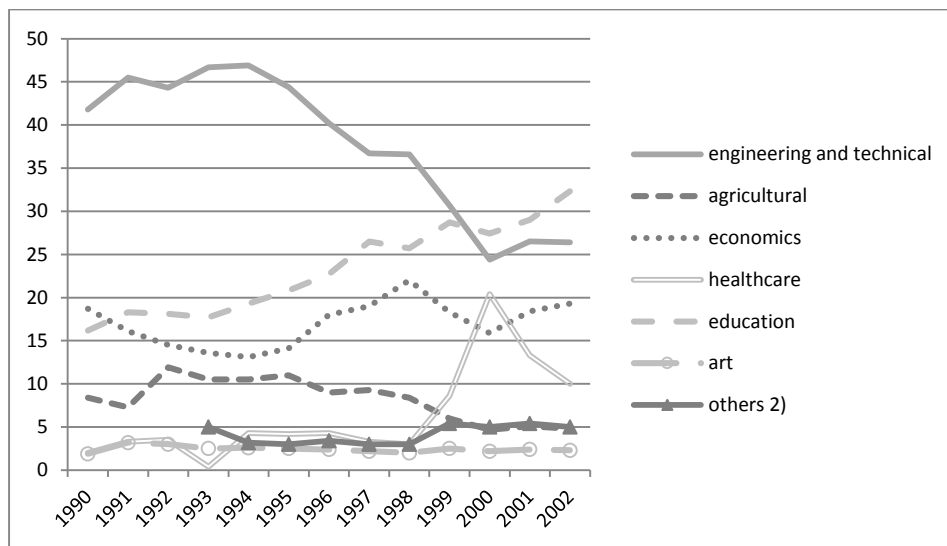


Fig. 5.6. Unemployed registered with higher education at the labour offices by kind of specialization as of 31.12., (%). Source: NSI.

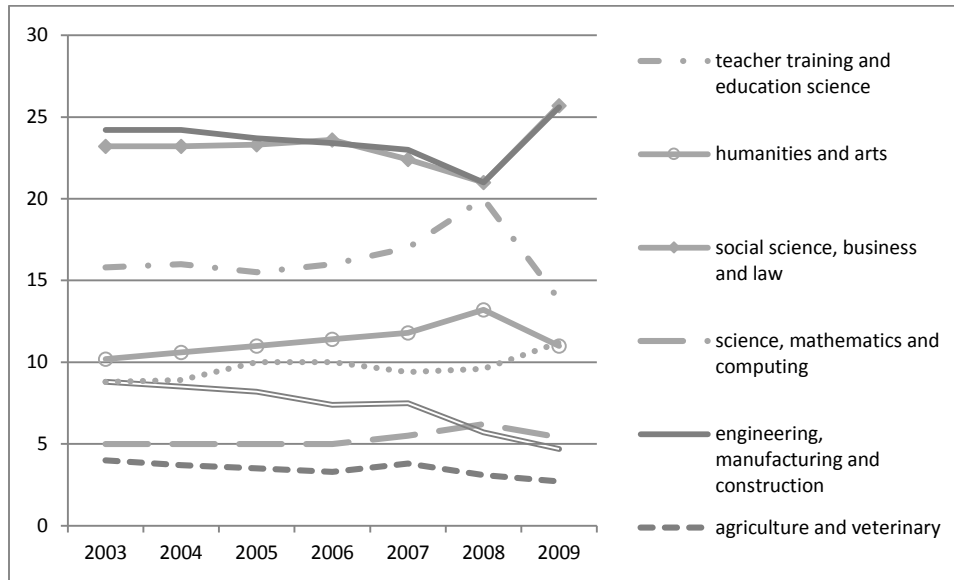


Fig. 5.7. Unemployed registered with higher education at the labour offices by field of education as of 31.12., (%). *Source:* NSI.

Despite the low unemployment rates among tertiary graduates, respectively 2.3 percent in 2008, 4.4 percent in 2010, and 5.8 percent in 2012 (www.nsi.bg), the analysis of comparative data on graduate employment shows that even prior to the ongoing economic crisis of 2008, more than a quarter (28.4 percent) of higher education graduates in Bulgaria aged 25-34 were employed in a job that required a lower level of education (Eurostudent, 2009, p. 228). This share is above the EU 27 and Bologna averages and is the highest one among all post-communist countries that are new EU members.

5.4. Conclusion

Chapter 5 has discussed some of the main developments in higher education and the labour market in Bulgaria, seen in a wider comparative perspective of post-communist countries. The overview of these developments is descriptive rather than explanatory in character. The discussion referred both the communist and the post-communist periods. This scope was recognized as important because, to a great extent, the current developments in higher education and the labour market are embedded in particular settings determined by the past development of the country.

The analysis of the expansion during the studied period (1944-2011) revealed that, despite the differences between the communist and the democratic periods in terms of the criteria for admission and funding, some common trends existed. It seems that the expansion was implemented by the gradual inclusion of women in higher education; by offering students part-time modes of studying; and that it took place in particular fields of studies. At the same time, the routes to expansion in the democratic period became more diverse. Thus, the analysis also revealed that expansion then occurred by increased enrollment in the private sector and by a growing number of Master's students. Higher education expansion was described here for a particular purpose: the routes of expansion are recognized as particularly important with respect to evaluating the inequalities in access and outcomes of higher education.

The chapter then focused on the developments in the labour market in a historical perspective, with special attention paid to the graduate labour market position in both the communist and post-communist periods. The differences between the distributions of employment opportunities for higher education graduates in these periods were discussed. This chapter also touched upon some of the major challenges related to the level of poverty and inequality in the country and to the economic crisis. All developments were discussed in a wider comparative perspective. Thus, it was found that, among the various paths of transition adopted by different countries, Bulgaria adopted an unfavourable path. Despite the many changes that have taken place in the country, it still lags behind other post-communist countries on many indicators.

Nevertheless, the country's experience with different ways of understanding and implementing the distribution of opportunities in access to higher education and in regards to employment opportunities at the exit of higher education in these two periods provides an opportunity for comparing alternatives that may be useful in public debates on how to enhance social justice in higher education. Thus, whereas in the communist period the focus was on equality of outcome and educational inequalities (at the entry and exit of higher education) and these were regulated by means of an egalitarian social policy and resource redistribution, the democratic period was marked by liberalization of education policy and further emphasis on equality of opportunity. However, given the great socioeconomic inequalities and the problems which the country experienced in the transition period, it is doubtful whether social justice has really been enhanced. The next chapter sets out the methodology of how the present study will explore social justice in higher education.

CHAPTER SIX. DATA AND STUDY DESIGN

6.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the data and methodology used in this study. I begin with a discussion of the secondary data analysis which is the main research strategy chosen for the present study. I go through the main advantages and disadvantages of this strategy. Then, I present the main data source which will be used in the thesis. More specifically, this is the European Social Survey (2006-2010). Although, it is not designed specifically for the purposes of my study, it contains rich data which can be used in the analysis of inequalities. The use of such dataset, though, raises some ethical issues which are also discussed at a next stage. After that, the choice of countries which will be used in the analysis is justified. In fact, Bulgaria will be placed among Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Although these countries shared a communist past, they differ considerably in terms of the social inclusiveness of their higher education systems and state of their economy.

This is followed by a section which deals with the operationalization of concepts, measures and variables. Thus, to define the capability people have to access a tertiary programme, the present study uses information about the plurality of alternative outcomes which this access entails. These outcomes are operationalized not only as access to higher education but also as access to *different fields of studies, tertiary programmes and higher education institutions*. In a similar vein, the way I have conceptualized graduate employability focuses on the plurality of options for employment which may be qualitatively different. Thus, by focusing on the capability of graduates to be employed in a graduate job I can go beyond the information for obtaining employment and take into account the plurality of labour market outcomes which graduates may achieve in terms of occupational status or whether they are employed jobs commensurate with their level of education.

Then, the chapter discusses the measures which can be used in the analyses of inequalities in access, equity in higher education and graduate employability at national level.

Finally, the chapter discusses the variables and models employed in the micro-data analysis. More specifically, regression models are proposed. They are useful to the extent that they allow us to analyze the inequalities at individual level.

6.2. Research strategy: limitations, possibilities and ethical issues

This section aims at justifying the research strategy of the present study. More specifically, it discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the secondary data analysis and highlights these disadvantages which are mitigated by the use of the particular dataset chosen for the study. It also discusses some ethical considerations as well as the selection of countries with which Bulgaria will be compared with.

6.2.1. Secondary data analysis

The present study adopts a secondary data analysis as a main research strategy. In fact, there is evidence that research in higher education has benefited tremendously from the increased availability of quality secondary datasets (Thomas & Heck, 2001). More specifically, secondary data analysis “involves the analysis of an existing dataset, which had previously been collected by another researcher, usually for a different research question” (Devine, 2003, p. 285). It is only one of the many possible types of strategies which may be used in social research (Saykova, Atanassov, & Chengelova, 2014). Secondary data can be a valuable source of information for gaining knowledge and insight into a broad range of issues and phenomena. They can provide a cost-effective way of addressing issues, conducting cross-national comparisons, understanding country-specific and local conditions, determining the direction and magnitude of change trends, and describing the current situation.

Among the main advantages of the secondary data analysis are the saving of resources which must have been made for a primary data collection, increased data quality, larger sample size, researching topics and/or time periods that they would not otherwise have access to such as cross-national studies (Devine, 2003). Last but not least, the using of large datasets, which contain a sufficient number of cases, allows researchers to apply more advanced statistical techniques for the data analysis (Vartanian, 2011). Nevertheless, the chosen strategy may also be accompanied by certain problems such as: the location and the accessibility of the dataset, the understanding of

the dataset, different purposes of data collection, sample issues and data quality (Devine, 2003; Miller & Brewer, 2003). Another potential problem with the use of secondary data analysis is related to the fact usually researchers are interested in the analysis of certain segments of the population. However, random sampling of the whole population might not yield adequate numbers of observations in the segments of interest (Thomas & Heck, 2001). Last but not least, weighting might be a problem with this analysis (Thomas & Heck, 2001; Miller & Brewer, 2003).

However, most of these problems can be mitigated to a great extent for the needs of the present study. Thus, the main dataset which will be used is accessible and provides a rich range of variables which are relevant for the present study (See more details about the survey in the next subsection). Furthermore, it is a regular data source which provides representative data every two years which meet high data quality requirements and standards. It is a survey which allows both cross-national comparisons and comparisons over time. Weights which adjust for unequal probabilities of selection in the sample design of the survey are also available. Last, but not least, I have participated in the national team for the carrying out of survey in Bulgaria for some of the rounds and pilots and I am familiar with the dataset and do not feel so distant from it, which is a common practice when one analyzes large-scale secondary data. Despite that, it was not possible to mitigate the main limitation of secondary data analysis referring to the fact that the survey is not collected for the purposes of the present research and its questionnaire is not developed based on the theoretical framework of the capability approach. Given this, below are provided more details for the chosen data source.

6.2.2. Choice of the source of data: advantages and limitations

The data that will be used in this project is from European Social Survey (ESS). The data are available on the site of the survey (<http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>) without restrictions, for not-for-profit purposes.

More specifically, the ESS is a biannual multi-country survey covering over 30 nations. The first round was fielded in 2002/2003, the fifth in 2010/2011. The project is funded jointly by the European Commission, the European Science Foundation and academic funding bodies in each participating country, and is designed and carried out to exceptionally high standards. The

differences in the fieldwork periods are due to the specificity of the funding of the project in each country.

In its core the ESS is academically led which provides rich database for analysis for different well-being domains as education, health, work, family, etc. In contrast to the surveys from the official statistics (EU-LFS, EU-SILC, etc.), it provides information about social attitudes, trust, socio-political orientations and attitudes, human values, and etc. Additionally to the ‘core’ questionnaire which remains relatively constant from round to round, and two rotating modules - each devoted to a substantive topic or theme.

The aims of the survey are in line the aims of the current research project. The principal long-term aim of the European Social Survey is to chart and explain the interaction between Europe’s changing institutions, its political and economic structures, and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. Among its shorter-term aims it is to develop and demonstrate an approach to the conduct of rigorous quantitative multinational social surveys in Europe that matches that of the best national surveys in Europe and the USA. It also aims to develop a set of attitudinal social indicators that can be considered alongside existing economic and behavioural indicators.

The reasons for using this survey in the present study are several. *First*, it is a representative survey for the population of all country participants for the population aged 15 years and above. *Second*, together with the data on other topics, it provides reliable and accurate data on education and work, parents’ occupation when the respondent was 14 years and parents’ education. *Third*, it allows making comparisons between and within different levels of education and fields of study. *Fourth*, it allows making comparison between countries and over time. *Fifth*, the analysis based on these data may be continued and enriched given that the data are collected every two years.

When it comes to the present research, this dataset has some limitations, though. Among the limitations of the dataset are the differences in the classifications over rounds (eg. about education ISCED). I should comply with them because these changes are made in the name of better measurement but I tried to use conversion tables between them, in order to overcome these differences and to keep the comparative perspective of the study. Another limitation is that the year of graduation is missing which make the analysis of this issue difficult. It was one of the

reasons to apply analysis of birth cohorts. Despite all these limitations, they do not take away the whole richness and advantages which this dataset offer for the analysis of the current topic.

On a technical note all of these countries participated in the third (Round 3), fourth (Round 4) and fifth (Round 5) rounds of the ESS. Specifically the dataset for Bulgaria contains 1400 cases for Round 3 (2006/07), 2230 for Round 4 (2009) and 2434 for Round 5 (2010/11). For Estonia respectively Round 3 (2006/07) - 1517, Round 4 (2008/09) - 1661, Round 5 (2010/11) – 1793; for Hungary: Round 3 (2006/07) - 1518, Round 4 (2009)-1544, Round 5 (2010) - 1561; for Poland: Round 3 (2006) -1 721, Round 4 (2008/09) - 1619, Round 5 (2010/11)-1751; for Slovenia: Round 3 (2006)-1476, Round 4 (2008/09) - 1286, Round 5 (2010/11) – 1403, and for Slovakia: Round 3 (2006/07) - 1766, Round 4 (2008/09) - 1810, Round 5 (2010/11) – 1856.

The data from the three rounds of the study (2006–2010) are cumulated so that the analytical data file contains 30 346 cases. A weighting procedure⁹⁸ will be used in order to obtain the most accurate estimates which represent the countries chosen.

These data are complemented by data from the National Statistical Institute in Bulgaria, Eurostat, EUROSTUDENT (III & IV) and the Bulgarian Universities Ranking system.

6.2.3. Ethical issues

With regard to the research strategy, it is necessary the source of data to be mentioned. The data is processed, documented, distributed and archived by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

In terms of the ethical issues the confidentiality of the respondents is kept since in accordance with data protection regulations in participating countries, only anonymous data are available to users. Before depositing data to NSD, each national team is responsible for checking their data with confidentiality in mind and to undertake the necessary measures to ensure anonymity of the data files and to foresee that anonymity is also maintained after merging of data files.

The details for the source are given below:

European Social Survey, Available at: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

⁹⁸ More details for the weighting on the European social survey data are available here: http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/methodology/ESS_weighting_data.pdf

ESS Round 5: European Social Survey Round 5 Data (2010). Data file edition 3.1.

ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data (2008). Data file edition 4.2.

ESS Round 3: European Social Survey Round 3 Data (2006). Data file edition 3.4.

Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

ESS Round 5: European Social Survey (2012): ESS-5 2010 Documentation Report. Edition 3.0.

ESS Round 4: European Social Survey (2012): ESS-4 2008 Documentation Report. Edition 5.1.

ESS Round 3: European Social Survey (2012): ESS-3 2006 Documentation Report. Edition 3.4.

Bergen, European Social Survey Data Archive, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

As a part of the deposit requirements in order to provide funding agencies with essential information about the use of ESS data and to facilitate the exchange of information about the ESS, in case of publishing papers or articles on the base of this data, they should be registered as bibliographic citation in the ESS on-line bibliography database at <http://ess.nsd.uib.no>.

6.2.4. Selection of countries

The analysis of the data will be focused on the Bulgarian case. But in order to see if the patterns observed in Bulgaria can be generalized in a broader context a comparative aspect of the analysis was pursued. Although post-communist countries had different historical and cultural heritage, as it was discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, they shared the central planning and totalitarian government for quite a long time. After the fall of communism many of them shared the desire to integrate in Western Europe and adopted reforms in order to introduce private markets, democracy and decentralization, although these reforms differed a lot in their speed and efficiency.

In the present study Bulgaria will be placed among Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. To a great extent these six countries shared a common past in the years after the Second World War, but they have differed in their approaches to the transformation of higher education after the ‘velvet revolution’ of 1989, even though they were exposed to similar challenges. It is well-known that in all countries that found themselves under Soviet influence after the Second World War similar policies in the field of higher education were employed. But the different

social-political and academic environments in the different countries predetermined the difference in the procedures and criteria used in implementing these policies, and the different results of the policies. For instance, the class-based admission quotas were abolished in Hungary in the 1970s (Szelényi & Aschaffenburg, 1993, p. 274), while in Bulgaria they were retained until 1989. Regarding diversification and liberalization of higher education systems after 1989, the countries chosen fall into three groups: Poland and Estonia have introduced very liberal rules for establishing new higher education institutions, Slovakia has stuck to more conservative legislation, whereas Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovenia have followed a more balanced policy (Slantcheva & Levy, 2007; Simonova & Antonowicz, 2006, Kwiek, 2014). As far as the social dimension of higher education is concerned, the countries chosen represent the whole spectrum – according to a recent report on Bologna process implementation, Slovakia, and Bulgaria are placed among the socially exclusive systems, whereas Slovenia is among the most socially inclusive (Eurydice, 2012, p. 78).

As regards the labour market and seen in a broader perspective by encompassing specificity of the state of the economy of these six countries, it is hard to outline unanimous distinctions. On one hand it is assumed the post-communist countries comprise a homogenous group often referred to as transition countries or recently as New Member States (eg. Leschke, Watt, & Finn, 2012). Thus, following the example of Eastern Europe Gil Eyal, Iván Szelényi, Eleanor R. Townsley (1998) propose a new form of capitalism, namely ‘capitalism without capitalists’. With this theory they try to explain the transition from socialism to capitalism suggesting that this transition followed its own dynamics which differ from the dynamics of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. On the other hand without going into detail, because this is a subject of a wider discussion, which is outside the scope of this thesis, it is worth pointing out that authors differ in the way they describe the type of capitalism which post-communist have adopted. According to the applications of the Varieties of Capitalism approach (Hall & Soskice, 2001) some of the post-communist countries may be classified as following either liberal or coordinated market model as the defining factor for their distinction is the way in which the activities of firms are coordinated: via competitive markets or through non-market relationships. Thus, Slovenia may be taken as an example of the coordinated market model whereas Estonia follows a liberal model (Feldmann, 2006; Adam, Kristan, & Tomšič, 2009). Nonetheless, despite the explanatory potential of the Varieties of Capitalism approach (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Amable, 2003), it has

also been criticised namely as regards the former state socialist societies since it is more appropriate for Western countries and it does not capture the dynamics of the economic systems in the countries undergoing transformation (Lane, 2007; Nölke & Vliegenthart, 2009). Thus, Andreas Nölke and Arjan Vliegenthart (2009) classify Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia into a third type of capitalism - dependent market economy with which they overcome this pitfall of the theory.

According to David Lane (2007), however, the six countries which are included in our analysis may be even further differentiated. On a first stage they may be classified as consolidated market economies, whereas on a second stage, they fall into two subgroups. The first subgroup includes Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. These countries exhibit features which are very similar to the continental type of market capitalism, although in their case it is more state-led. In particular they stand close to the OECD countries with respect to levels of marketization and privatization. But at the same time they have a low level of stock market capitalization and more developed welfare states. In contrast to them Bulgaria falls into a specific subgroup, as far as it is with lower levels of privatization and greater state coordination, but at the same time it possesses most of the other components of advanced capitalism. Thus, given the differences and similarities between the state of the economy in these countries I will look if there are common patterns between these countries when it comes to the level of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education.

6.3. Operationalization of Concepts, Measures, Variables and Models

This section aims to operationalize the concepts defined in Chapter 3 and to propose adequate measures and variables which to be used in the analysis of the inequalities in access to higher education, equity in higher education and the inequalities in graduate employability.

6.3.1. Operationalization of Concepts

In Chapter 3 several concepts how access to, and outcomes of, higher education can be conceptualized via the capability approach lens were introduced. These concepts need further operationalization, so that they may be applied in the analysis of inequalities in access to higher

education and graduate employability into the space of capability. In this regard, I should remind that the capability perspective entails that choosing a lifestyle is not the same as having that lifestyle no matter of the way how it is chosen. The combination of all capabilities, that a person has, constructs her own and specific capability set. Nonetheless, one peculiarity of the capability set is that “it is not directly observable and has to be constructed on the basis of presumptions” (Sen, 1992, p. 52). It causes a lot of problems in terms of the defining the scope of capability sets and for the operationalization and measuring capabilities as such. Figure 6.1. illustrates a person’s capability set.

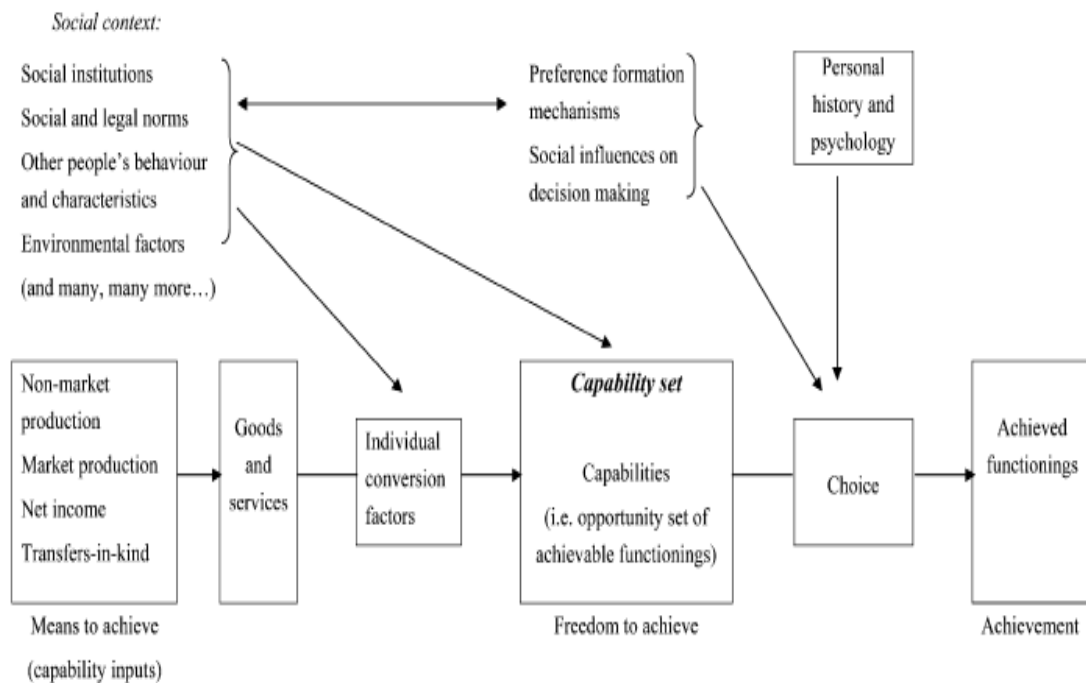


Fig. 6.1. A stylised non-dynamic representation of a person’s capability set and her social and personal context. *Source:* Robeyns, 2005, p. 98.

Although Figure 6.1. shows a very oversimplified scheme of how this set might look like in reality, it clearly shows the differences between means and ends and between the freedom and the actual achievement and point to the variety of factors which shape one’s set of achievable functionings. This scheme is used here to the extent that it can be informative and helpful for the further operationalization of these concepts in the specific context of the inequalities in the capability spaces of access to higher education and graduate employability.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Sen (1999) has distinguished three ways in which the capability perspective can inform empirical and quantitative measurement work: the ‘direct approach’ – which ‘takes the form of directly examining and comparing vectors of functionings or capabilities’; the ‘supplementary approach’ – which involves ‘use of traditional procedures of interpersonal comparisons in income spaces but supplements them with capability considerations’; and the ‘indirect approach’ – which “remains focused on the familiar space of incomes, appropriately adjusted” (Sen, 1999, pp. 82–83).

The choice of application of either or another approach seems to depend on the aim of the evaluation and also on the availability and access to the necessary information. In the light of the research project’s problem, it seems that the most appropriate approach will be the first one and in particular one of its forms, namely – the ‘distinguished capability comparison’. More specifically, it involves comparison of some capability chosen as the focus, without looking for completeness of coverage. Examples of this type of comparison can be seen in concentrated attention being paid to some particular capability such as the capability to be employed, or educated. Sen (1999) emphasizes that although the coverage of distinguished comparisons is incomplete, the results of such comparisons can be quite illuminating⁹⁹.

More specifically in Chapter 3, I have conceptualized ‘*being able to access higher education*’ (or ‘*having the freedom to access higher education*’) as a *capability* which people have to access higher education and distinguish it from ‘*being enrolled/accepted in a tertiary programme*’, which may be conceptualized via the capability approach lens as a *functioning*. To define the capability people have to access a tertiary programme the present study uses information about the plurality of alternative outcomes which this access entails. In this sense, I operationalize these outcomes as access to *different fields of studies, tertiary programmes and higher education institutions*. This information will be used as a proxy for defining the set of capabilities available to a given category of people and as a measure of inequalities in the capabilities of people from different social backgrounds to access higher education. It should be noted that notwithstanding the priority on capability over functioning, in the capability approach it seems that despite a few

⁹⁹ The other two forms of the direct approach are ‘total comparison’ and ‘partial ranking’. Whereas the ‘total comparison’, the most ambitious of all three, involves the ranking of all such vectors vis-à-vis each other in terms poverty or inequality for instance, the ‘partial ranking’ involves the ranking of some vectors vis-à-vis others, but not demanding completeness of the evaluative ranking (Sen, 1999, pp. 81-85).

valuable exceptions (Andreassen, Dagsvik, & Di Tommaso, 2013; Andreassen, Di Tommaso, & Fuscaldo, 2014), almost all applications of the approach, especially in quantitative research, have focused on functionings rather than on capabilities. Furthermore, Sen himself acknowledges such possibility of “examining the achieved functioning bundle only” (Sen, 1992, p. 53) instead of taking note of the full extent of freedom to choose between different functioning bundles interpreted in the case of access to higher education as the freedom to choose between the full range of fields of study and types of degree. However, Sen suggests going beyond the information about the functioning by looking at them as comprehensive outcomes. To a great extent this capability is defined and by the characteristics of the higher education system (incl. number and type of higher education institutions, admission criteria, level of massification, etc.).

As regards the other concept graduate employability – it has been conceptualized as a *capability* and defined as ‘*being able to be employed*’ (or ‘*having the freedom to be employed*’). Seen as a capability, graduate employability is in line with my working definition which views graduate employability as *related not simply to graduates’ abilities to find employment but also to graduates’ abilities to find employment of specific quality*. The way I have conceptualized graduate employability focuses on the plurality of options for employment which may be qualitatively different. I differentiate from it ‘*being employed*’, which I have conceptualized as a *functioning*. It will be analyzed as a comprehensive outcome. Thus, by focusing on the capability of graduates to be employed in a graduate job I can go beyond the information for obtaining employment and take into account the plurality of labour market outcomes which graduates may achieve. Most likely these outcomes are with different quality and graduates may have different reasons to value them or not. In my view it is very important because the employment itself may hide problems which graduates experience despite having a job (eg. being employed in a job that is commensurate with their level of education their education).

6.3.2. Studying inequalities in access to higher education

Given the operationalization made, the study may focus on studying of inequalities in access to higher education in the space of capabilities. In fact, there is no unanimous measure for educational inequalities. Given the specifics of the capability as an evaluative space, we can take into account the qualitative side of inequalities alongside their quantitative side. This distinction

seems especially relevant having in mind not only the expansion of higher education but its accompanying processes of diversification in higher education. This is why I used one index and two indicators in order to capture both type of inequalities at national level. More specifically, they are:

- *Modified Inequality Index*
- *Share of graduates from higher education institutions in field of subject of study with a high educational background*
- *Share of graduates from higher education institutions in different tertiary programmes with a high educational background*

1) *The Modified Inequality Index* is developed as a modification of the Inequality Index used in Jan Koucký, Aleš Bartušek and Jan Kovařovic's (2010) recent comparative study, including 25 European countries. Inequality Index has been constructed to lessen comparative analysis of inequality. The method that has been used for its construction is a logistic regression. Attainment of tertiary education is used as a dependent variable whereas parents' education and occupational status are used as explanatory variables. Jan Koucký, Aleš Bartušek and Jan Kovařovic's (2010) conceptual model requires the categories for parent's occupation and education to be splitted into four equal groups (quartiles) and comparisons to be made between the top and bottom quarters of the most and the least disadvantaged children by the characteristics of family background.

The formula for the index is: I_I (*Inequality index*) = $(2AUC - 1) \times 100$

(Koucký, Bartušek, & Kovařovic, 2010, p. 20)

The index assumes values on a 0–100 scale where higher index levels mean higher levels of inequality and vice versa (perfect equality in access to tertiary education is represented by the value 0, perfect inequality - by the value 100).

Area under the curve¹⁰⁰ (AUC) is used in their study to the extent that it can assess the intensity of the influence of parents' occupation and education on acquisition of tertiary education and to

¹⁰⁰The area under the ROC curve ranges between 0 and 1. It provides measure of the model's ability to discriminate between those subjects who experience the outcome of interest (in our case people who have a degree) versus those who do not. The ROC curve plots the probability of detecting true signal (sensitivity) and false signal (specificity) for the entire range of possible cutpoints. (See more details in Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000, pp. 160-164).

determine the level of inequalities in access to tertiary education. They assume that the higher the level of the AUC indicator, the more dependent the acquisition of tertiary education on the variables which characterize the education and occupation of parents, i.e. on ascriptive factors (which cannot be influenced individually and do not depend on individual abilities, motivation and performance), and also the higher the inequality in access to tertiary education.

In contrast to the original index, in its modified version which is used in the present study, only father's and mother's education are used as explanatory variables. The main argument for not including parents' occupation, as in the original version of the index, is that usually there is a high correlation between parents' education and occupation, which violates the assumption of multicollinearity in logistic regression. The conceptual model of Koucký, Bartušek, and Kovařovic (2010) requires that the categories for parent's occupation and education be split into four equal groups (quartiles) and comparisons be made between the top and bottom quarters. It seems, however, that this approach would be very sensitive as concerns ranking the cases and would give high deviations, especially in the first cohorts, in which a very high share of the population had low education. That is why the data for respondents' education and for parents' education will be reduced to three categories: low – ISCED¹⁰¹ 0-2; medium – ISCED 3-4, and high – ISCED 5-6. An additional modification is that gender is included as a control variable.

A dummy variable expressing whether a person graduated higher education institution was generated. More specifically, it is the dependent variable in the analysis, and has two values:

0 – not attaining a tertiary education degree (incl. ISCED 0/4);

1 – attaining a tertiary education degree (incl. ISCED 5/6).

This index is calculated for five birth cohorts instead of six historical periods as in the original study. These birth cohorts cover all respondents born between 1936 and 1985 (1936-1945, 1946-1955, 1956-1965, 1966-1975 and 1976-1985). This modification is made in order to deal with the differences in the typical age of graduation across countries.

2) A recent report on access to higher education in Europe (Griga & Mühleck, 2010, pp. 54-56) shows that socioeconomic differences are visible in regards to qualitative aspects of higher

¹⁰¹ I have in mind the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), revision 1997.

education and in the fields of study in particular. In order to capture this aspect, I will use information for:

- *the share of graduates from Higher Education institutions with a high educational background by field of subject.*

The high educational background is ascribed to graduates, if either their fathers or mothers had attained tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6). Similar analysis of this qualitative dimension of inequalities is available only for the countries which participate in REFLEX¹⁰² project. However, some trends can be identified. For instance the total shares of graduates from a privileged educational background are highest in the arts (50 percent). Beyond arts, shares of graduates with a high educational background are above average in law, health, social and behavioural sciences (all three 47 percent), humanities (46 percent), and architecture and building (45 percent). In contrast, business and administration, teacher training and education science, and engineering and engineering trades are with the lowest share of graduates with privileged educational background, respectively 38 percent, 39 percent and 39 percent.

3) Another possible way to capture the qualitative side of inequality is to look at the:

- *Share of graduates from Higher Education institutions in different tertiary programmes with a high educational background*

Similarly to the second index, the high educational background is ascribed to graduates, if either their fathers or mothers had attained tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6). Unfortunately, due to a lack of data it was not possible to capture the qualitative side of inequality in regards to access to different higher education institutions.

6.3.3. Equity measures

In fact, there is no indisputable measure for equity neither. Most of the equity measures provide a very simple and one-dimensional view on equity. This is why, the present study incorporates

¹⁰² REFLEX project has been carried out in 2005 in 16 countries among graduates that they got their degree in the academic year 1999/2000. For more information about this project see *The Flexible Professionals in the Knowledge Society: General Results of the REFLEX* (http://www.fdewb.unimaas.nl/roa/reflex/documents%20public/publications/reflex_book_eu.pdf)

more than one measure in order to capture the different dimensions of this phenomena, which has been identified in Chapter 3, namely *fairness* and *inclusion*. Given this and having in mind the limitations of the data a set of measures will be used for the data analysis at national level. These measures allow us seeing what the current trends are and where the problems of inequity are most salient. More specifically, these are:

- *Educational equity index (EEI);*
- *The typology of social inclusiveness of higher education systems;*
- *Tertiary attainment level*

1) The first one is the Educational equity index (EEI). It measures the representation of the population within higher education. It has been developed by Alex Usher (2004) and is used later on by Alex Usher and Jon Medow (2010) for construction of accessibility rankings between 14 countries. More specifically, it measures:

... student SES (using father's education as a proxy) in relation to the overall SES status of the general population (Usher, 2004, p. 6).

This index ranges between 0 and 1. A high score of it indicates that the student body is very similar in socio-demographic characteristics to the overall population, whereas a low EEI score indicates less equity. Its expression is as follows:

$$EEI = 100 \times \frac{(\% \text{ of all males } 45-65 \text{ with higher education degrees})}{(\% \text{ of all students whose fathers have higher education degrees})}$$

(Usher, 2004, p. 6; Usher & Medow, 2010)

According to the results of the ranking the Netherlands has the most accessible system of education, followed closely by Australia and Canada. On the other spectrum are Estonia, Portugal and Mexico (Usher & Medow, 2010).

Yet, very similar to it is another index presented in the report *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent III 2005-2008* (2008) - Ratio of highest education attainment of students' fathers compared to the general population (men 40 – 60 yrs., %). In a recent report Kai Mühleck and Dorit Griga (2010, p. 20) refer to it as Eurostudent inequity index. The expression of the index is given below.

$$\text{Extent of inequity due to educational background} = \frac{\text{share of students with low educational background}}{\text{share of men with low education 40-60 in the population}}$$

(Mühleck & Griga, 2010, p. 20)

Values of the index below 1 indicate underrepresentation and values above one - overrepresentation. This index can be calculated using mother or father's educational attainment or parents' occupational background (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2008). As regards students' educational background, this index is calculated for two groups, which represent two extremes on a social scale. On the one hand, the share of students whose parents graduated from tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6) is analyzed to assess the extent of social reproduction in a higher education system. On the other hand, the share of students whose parents have only completed lower secondary school (ISCED 0 – 2) is analyzed to assess social disadvantage. (ibid., pp. 57-58).

2) In the report *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent IV 2008–2011* the information of two indexes have been used in order a typology of social inclusiveness of higher education systems to be developed (See Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2011, p. 50). More specifically, these indexes are:

- *the share of fathers with low education attainment divided by the share of men of corresponding age (40 – 60) in the national population with the same level of educational attainment and*
- *the share of fathers with high education attainment divided by the share of men of corresponding age (40 – 60) in the national population with the same level of educational attainment.*

Specifically, the criteria for the defining of the systems as socially inclusive is that they have both a minimal underrepresentation of students from low education background and a minimal overrepresentation of students from high education background. If the opposite situation is present the systems are classified as socially exclusive. Additionally, two transition groups are identified. In one case these are the countries with a low underrepresentation of students from low education background, but a high overrepresentation of students from high education background or vice-versa (ibid., pp. 50-51).

3) In contrast to the first two measures which capture fairness dimension, tertiary attainment level addresses the inclusion dimension. More specifically, it refers to one of the ET 2020 benchmarks:

- *the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment*

6.3.4. Measures for graduate employability

Similarly to educational inequalities and equity, there is no undisputable measure for graduate employability. This is why again I propose a set of indicators which capture different aspects of graduate employability. Following the definition of graduate employability, I will measure graduate employability at national level with the following *three indicators*:

- *Benchmark on employability*
- *Occupational status*
- *Qualification mismatch*

1) According to the benchmark on employability, introduced in 2012, by 2020, the share of employed graduates (ISCED 3-6), aged 20-34 year who have left education and training no more than three years before the reference year should be at least 82 percent. (Council of the European Union, 2012). Although the employability benchmark has addressed a very important problem of the transition of graduates to the labour market, the graduate employability refers not only to the very fact of being employed but it also depends on the needs of the economy and on the quantity of graduates in the economy (it has not only an absolute but also a relative aspect and refer to the quality of employment). In other words its definition reflects a very narrow understanding of how employability may be perceived and how it could contribute to economic growth. It places the responsibility only to graduates and excludes the possibility that some could be employable but unemployed or employable but employed in a job that requires lower level of education. It also does not take into account that diverse graduates (eg. ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, people with different social backgrounds, living in different regions) are with different potential to convert their employability into employment.

This thesis goes beyond the information of employment rates and takes into account the qualitative side of employment and employability and focuses also on graduates’:

- *occupational status, and*

- *qualification mismatch.*

2) To measure graduates' occupational status I use Ganzeboom and Treimen's (1996) Standard International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) as a continuous measure of occupational attainment that is comparable across countries. Specifically ISEI scores are derived from ISCO88(com) 4 digits-level classification. The index ranges between 16 and 90, where a score of 16 refers to the lowest status jobs such as forestry labourers and 90 is a score given to judges. It is also used as a measure on job quality. I use the average value of this index and look at this value in the case of graduates who have studied in different tertiary programmes.

3) Taking into consideration that there is no undisputable yardstick for measuring graduates labour market outcomes and the variety of ways for defining and measuring the qualification mismatch often referred to education-job mismatch or overeducation (Chevalier, 2003; Groot & Maassen van den Brink, 2000; Hartog, 2000; Sloane, 2003; Quintini, 2011), the analysis will be limited to the incidence of vertical mismatch. More concretely, this type of mismatch "refers to the lack of correspondence between the level of the education acquired and the level required in the job" (Støren & Arnesen, 2011, p. 200). In this paper a normative approach for its assessment will be adopted. Thus, graduates who are not employed in the first three categories of ISCO 88 are classified as vertically mismatched. I use the proportion of vertically-mismatched in the case of graduates who have studied in different tertiary programmes. Another possible form of education-job mismatch – defined as the most severe one – is graduate unemployment which is also of interest to us. These measures can also be applied in the case of analysis of institutional level analysis of graduate employability.

6.3.5. Educational measures

As it has been discussed part of the differences in the results of the educational expansion result in a decrease of inequalities or to their increase can be explained by the differences in how education is measured: in terms of years of schooling/educational attainment or in terms of school continuation probabilities. In this project I will adhere to measuring education in terms of attainment and will use the educational measures available in the ESS instead of the years of schooling.

It should be underlined that the educational attainment is one of the few concepts that cannot be harmonised by input harmonisation, i. e. by using the same (thus ‘merely’ translated) question in all countries, because educational systems and their outputs differ a lot across countries (Schneider, 2009). This is the reason why countries use their specific data collection instruments for educational attainment in cross-national surveys, and the resulting variables are recoded into a cross-national scheme with some basic instructions from the survey organisers.

In the current project, two harmonized measure of educational attainment will be used variables ‘edulvla’ and ‘edulvlb’. ‘Edulvla’ is a variable which is available for all countries participants in the ESS Round 3 (2006) and Round 4 (2008). It is constructed on the base of answers to the question “What is the highest level of education you have achieved?” and is made for each of the country-specific variables on respondent’s highest level of education. The coding frame which is used is based on ISCED 1997. In contrast, the variable ‘Edulvlb’ is constructed on the base of answers to the same question “What is the highest level of education you have achieved?” and is made for each of the country-specific variables on respondent’s highest level of education. However, the coding frame which is used is different. It is based on ISCED 2011. ‘Edulvlb’ includes information about the orientation of the educational programmes within the levels of education, which could give us some insights about the higher education systems in the selected countries. It is made in a way that better accounts for the institutional diversity within the respective educational system (eg. the difference between vocational and academic education).

In fact, ‘Edulvlb’ is a more detailed educational attainment measure, but since it is available only in round 5, it will be transformed to an ‘edulvla’ variable following the ‘syntax path’ provided by the ESS researchers (See the path in Appendix 2). It is done in order to make comparison between the selected countries and over time. However, the new educational attainment measures in the last round of the survey will be used as a proxy since they are made in correspondence to the ISCED 2011.

The evaluation of the quality of educational measures itself is beyond the scope of this research, but it is something that every researcher should be concerned with. It should be underlined that the quantitative measures available for analysis of the education are not perfect and also need to be improved.

In this sense it will be taken into account that the analysis of the current developments in higher education and the labour market is highly influenced by the quality of the measures available.

That is why the last improvements in the area are used. Educational systems themselves are not static and they continue to change. (Braun & Müller, 1997; Schneider, 2009, p. 69)

Improvements in both – measurement of the educational attainment concepts and on the employment (although it has longer tradition in development of its measurement) ones and on the research on the relationship between both, must go hand in hand. That is why the analysis and researchers familiar with the current education policy reforms should not rely on availability of the current measures, but should contribute to suggestions the changes to be taken into account in designing surveys, so that their policy analysis will be much more reliable. Or the least to comment on the reliability on the data that they use.

We need to be fare that a lot of information is lost through harmonization and then through grouping of the education levels, but this is a compromise that should be made in order to keep all six countries in the analysis. Schneider (2009) points out that ISCED is most problematic for Central and Eastern European countries which probably due to fact that the reduced version of ISCED 97 does not differentiate general from vocational qualifications—a distinction which is essential in these countries.

However, these drawbacks are taken into consideration in ISCED 2011 and are available in R5 of the ESS. In the context of tertiary level, this scale differentiates between:

ISCED 5A programmes of short duration, intermediate certificate or academic/general tertiary qualification below the bachelor's level;

ISCED 5B programmes of short duration, advanced vocational qualifications;

ISCED 5A programmes of medium duration, qualifications at the bachelor's level or equivalent from a lower tier tertiary institution;

ISCED 5A programmes of medium duration, qualifications at the bachelor's level or equivalent from an upper/single tier tertiary institution;

ISCED 5A programmes of long cumulative duration, qualifications at the master's level or equivalent from a lower tier tertiary institution;

ISCED 5A programmes of long cumulative duration, qualifications at the master's level or equivalent from an upper/single tier tertiary institution;

ISCED 6. doctoral degree;

Thus, the qualitative differences in the tertiary programmes introduced in Bologna process can be taken into account in the analysis.

The educational attainment differs also in terms of fields or subjects of studies. The question is ‘In which one of these fields or subjects is your highest qualification?’ (See Appendix 3). However, data on the fields of study is available only for the ESS Round 3 (2006) and ESS Round 4 (2008).

Last but not least, the educational attainment differs from the university where it was received. As we discussed universities are ranked nationally and internationally and they differ in terms of their prestige and respectively in the quality of education and the opportunities for career development they offer.

These variables have been found quite relevant for research on graduates’ employment and employability since they allow us to capture the diversity of degrees that graduates may have.

6.3.6. Variables

The identified measures will be very important for identifying the macro-level of inequalities i.e. inequalities at national level. However, for the analysis of inequalities at individual level, I had to define a set of dependent variables and a set of independent variables.

Dependent variables

In fact, there is available data on the time when people accessed higher education. This is why, I used data on people for whom there are data that they have graduated higher education. This information is used as a proxy for the analysis of access to higher education. The dependent variable in the analysis is whether a person graduated a higher education institution. More specifically, it has two values:

0 – not attaining a tertiary education degree (incl. ISCED 0/4);

1 – attaining a tertiary education degree (incl. ISCED 5/6).

As regards the analysis of the inequality in graduate employability, two dependent variables are applied – continuous and a binary one.

The continuous one is the graduates' *occupational status*, measured by Ganzeboom and Treimen's (1996) Standard International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI), however used in micro-data analyses. Its scale is between 16 and 90.

The binary one refers to the *vertical education-job mismatch* which will also be used in micro-data analyses. It has two values:

0 – being employed in a job that is commensurate with graduates' level of education (being employed in a graduate job)

1 – being employed in a job that is not commensurate with graduates' level of education (being vertically-mismatched)

Independent variables

Regarding the analyses of inequalities in access to higher education variables refer to parents' educational level and gender. Parents' educational level is our main independent variable. It is reduced to three categories: low – ISCED 0–2; medium – ISCED 3–4 and high – ISCED 5–6. They are used for both parents. The low levels of education are used as reference categories. Gender is used in these analyses as a control variable. It is included as a dummy variable by distinguishing men and women.

Regarding the analyses on inequalities in graduate employability two main variables are used as independent variables. Whereas the first one distinguishes between different fields of study, the second one refers to different types of tertiary education. More specifically, I distinguish between two groups of tertiary programmes based on their duration: 1) short and medium and 2) long. Short duration refers to ISCED 5A, short and ISCED 5B, short; medium refers to ISCED 5A, Bachelor; and long, to ISCED 5A, Master and ISCED 6, Doctor (ISCED 2011).

I add several control variables such as age, sex and socioeconomic background. Age enters the models as four age groups: 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64. Sex is included as a dummy variable by distinguishing men and women. Socioeconomic background is measured as a dummy variable referring to graduates whose parents have not attained a tertiary degree and those who have at

least one parent with a tertiary degree. I also add a variable distinguishing the rounds of the survey. To account for the context a variable differentiating between all six countries studied are included.

6.3.7. Models

The analysis of inequalities in access and graduate employability apply regression analysis. This analysis “is a technique for modelling of relationships between two (or more) variables” (Miles & Shevlin, 2001, p. 10). Depending on the outcome variable, though in our analysis either logistic or linear regression models are employed. Thus, in cases when the outcome variable is a binary one (it has values 0 and 1), a logistic model is applied, whereas in the case of a continuous outcome, a linear regression model is used. Given, the number of independent variables which I would like to use in the models, it is more correct to say that I apply multiple regression analysis. It is the analysis which reflects a situation where “we have more than one independent variable” (ibid., p. 27). However, I do not have enough cases per country which does not allow me to apply it at this stage.

As regards the inequalities in access to higher education logistic regression analysis was applied in order to estimate the chances of people with different socioeconomic background to graduate a higher education institution. More specifically, five models were estimated for each of the six countries studied. They refer to the five birth cohorts discussed about the modified inequality index. These birth cohorts cover all respondents born between 1936 and 1985. The results are controlled for gender. The estimates from the logistic regression are interpreted in terms of odds ratios. The odds ratio of an event happening is calculated using the formula (Miles & Shevlin, 2001): Odds ratio = $\frac{P(event)}{1 - P(event)}$, where $P(event)$ refers to the probability of an event occurring, and $1 - P(event)$ refers to the probability of the event not occurring. Odds ratio, is one of the preferable parameter in a logistic regression, “due to its ease of interpretation” (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000, p. 52). The odds ratio is the number by which we will multiply the odds of attaining a tertiary degree or being vertically mismatched for each one-unit increase in the independent variable (Menard, 2010). In the cases of categorical and dummy variables this increase is compared to a reference category chosen by us. In the case of dummy variable the reference category is the one which we define as 0. Following Scott Menard (2010, pp. 93-94), I

interpret an odds ratio greater than 1 as odds of being attaining a tertiary degree or being vertically mismatched increase when the independent variable increases, whereas an odds ratio of less than 1 indicates that these odds decrease when the independent variable increases. Alternatively, following J. Scott Long and Jeremy Freese (2006, p. 179) it may be said that for odds ratio >1 (eg. 2), we can say that these odds are two times larger than the odds of the reference category, whereas for odds ratio <1 (eg. 0.60), we can say that the odds are 0.60 smaller than the odds of the reference category, holding all other variables constant. In the case of odds ratio <1 (eg. 0.60), it can also be said that the odds are 40 percent lower in comparison to the reference category.

Regarding the inequalities in graduate employability, four models are estimated. These models are estimated using data for all six countries studied. More specifically, for the analysis of occupational status, two models are employed. They both use a linear regression. It is also known as an Ordinary Least Square regression. The interpretation of these two models will focus on the regression coefficients or the so-called slopes (*b*), because they indicate “the amount of change in the dependent variable ... that we would expect for a change of one unit of the independent variable” (Miles & Shevlin, 2001, p. 18). Model 1 includes, as a main independent variable, a variable that distinguishes between different fields of study. Model 2 includes as a main independent variable one that refers to tertiary programmes with different duration. I add several control variables such as age, sex and socioeconomic background. Age enters the models as four age groups: 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64. Sex is included as a dummy variable by distinguishing men and women. I also add a variable distinguishing the rounds of the survey. Socioeconomic background is measured as a dummy variable referring to graduates whose parents have not attained a tertiary degree and those who have at least one parent with a tertiary degree. Models 3 and 4 use the same explanatory variables as Model 1 and 2, respectively. They apply a binary logistic regression analysis. The dependent variable in Models 3 and 4 is whether a graduate is vertically mismatched or not.

These models are estimated in the following chapter in which the results of the testing of the hypotheses will be implemented.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the data and the study design, which are used in the following analysis. More specifically, the advantages and the disadvantages of the chosen research strategy - secondary data analysis, have been discussed. Then, the opportunities and the limitations of the European Social Survey (2006-2010) have been outlined. Although, this survey is not designed specifically for the purposes of my study, it contains rich data which can be used in the analysis of inequalities. In this way, the use of this survey allows me to fill a huge gap in the case of Bulgaria in terms of comparative and good quality data which can be used in the analysis of social justice in access and labour market outcomes of graduates. As a result of the analysis, five countries have been selected among which Bulgaria will be placed among. These are: Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Although these countries shared a communist past, they differ considerably in terms of the social inclusiveness of their higher education systems and state of their economy.

The operationalization of concepts, which was made in this chapter, has outlined the importance of taking into account the plurality of alternative outcomes which access or employability entail. It is essential when one considers evaluating inequalities in access to higher education and in graduate employability in the space of the capability. However, as it has been outlined the capability space being an evaluative space for justice, is hard to measure. This is why, in line with the work of the other researchers the further analysis will stick to the analysis of the outcomes/functionings and on the basis of these results it will draw conclusions about the space of capability.

The chapter has also proposed a set of indicators which can be used in the analyses of inequalities in access at national level. More specifically three measures are used in the case of inequalities in access: 1) Modified Inequality Index, 2) Share of graduates from higher education institutions in field of subject of study with a high educational background and 3) Share of graduates from higher education institutions in different tertiary programmes with a high educational background. A special emphasis is placed on taking into account the qualitative side of these inequalities. Three measures were selected to study the dynamics of equity in higher education in Bulgaria at national level in both of its aspects: fairness and inclusion. More specifically, these are: 1) Educational equity index (EEI), 2) Typology of social inclusiveness of higher education

systems and 3) Tertiary attainment level. In addition, a set of indicators has been chosen in the case of measuring inequalities in graduate employability at national level: 1) Benchmark on employability, 2) Occupational status and 3) Qualification mismatch. They were also identified as appropriate in the case of institutional level analysis of graduate employability.

In the end, the chapter has proposed the variables and models which are used for the analysis of inequalities in access to higher education and in graduate employability at individual level. The main method for the analysis is regression analysis. However, two types of analysis will be applied depending on the outcome variable of interest – whether it is a continuous or binary one.

This chapter moves to the specific analysis of inequalities in access to higher education and in graduate employability in Bulgaria in a historical and a wider comparative perspective.

CHAPTER SEVEN. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN BULGARIA

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the main results from the analyses of the inequity in higher education and the inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education. The first section starts with the examination of the inequalities in access to higher education in Bulgaria in a dynamic perspective. The analysis follows a comparative perspective and places Bulgaria among five post-communist countries. The analysis of the inequalities in access to higher education reveals that the socioeconomic inequalities increase, on average, for all nations over time, when using father's and mother's education as independent variables. This increase refers to the people born in the first four birth cohorts (1936/45, 1946/1955, 1956/65 and 1966/1975). In the most recent cohort (1976/1985) there is a decrease in the inequalities among people of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and this is a common trend in all the studied post-communist countries. The results show that Bulgaria stands out as a country with the highest level of inequalities in access to higher education for all birth cohorts but the first one. The section also identifies considerable qualitative inequalities in access to higher education as regard the fields of study and types of tertiary programmes.

I then analyze the problem of the dynamics of equity. This analysis mainly focuses on the Bulgarian case. It reveals that the levels of equity are very low for the whole period for which they are analyzed. The analysis of the dynamics of social inclusiveness shows that the levels of overrepresentation of students with higher education background is around three times the size of the corresponding age group in the general population; the levels of underrepresentation of students with a low education background have been increasing over time. Similar negative tendencies are observed in Slovakia, but not in Estonia, where the analysis reveals that there are trends of improvement of equity over time. As regards the current levels of equity, the comparative analysis reveals that underrepresentation of people with a low education background within the student body is most pronounced in Bulgaria.

After that, the chapter presents the results on inequalities in graduate employability, analyzed on national, individual and institutional levels. In fact, when employability is measured in terms of employment rates higher education graduates seem to be very employable at national level. However, high shares of young graduates are employed below their level of education. The results also reveal considerable differences in graduate employability by country. At the same time the analysis shows that there are differences in graduate employability by type of tertiary programme and field of study. These differences are common for all six countries and are in favour of graduates who studied on longer and more prestigious programmes. As regards the individual level, the analysis clearly show that graduates who have high socioeconomic background gain, on average, higher occupational status and have lower chances of experiencing vertical education-job mismatch in comparison with graduates from lower socioeconomic background. The analysis also identifies a relationship between the level of graduate employability and some structural characteristics of the educational systems, such as the field of study and type of the tertiary programme. The next part of the section focuses on the analysis of graduate employability in Bulgaria at the institutional level. The results show that there are huge differences in graduate employability depending on the higher education institutions where people obtained their degrees.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the identified trend in the light of the hypotheses and of previous research.

7.2. Dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education and equity in higher education

This section examines the inequalities in access to higher education in Bulgaria in a dynamic perspective. The analysis follows a comparative perspective and places Bulgaria among five post-communist countries. This section also looks at the problem of dynamics of equity over time. However, due to a lack of data, this analysis is mainly focused on Bulgaria. A comparative perspective is given only as regards the most recent levels of equity.

7.2.1. Inequalities in access to higher education

Inequalities in access to higher education will be analyzed using the three measures discussed in Chapter 6. More specifically, these are: 1) Modified Inequality Index, 2) Share of graduates from Higher Education institutions in field of subject of study with a high educational background, 3) Share of graduates from Higher Education institutions in different tertiary programmes with a high educational background.

Whereas the inequality index and the second measure allow comparison over time, the last measure accounts for the most recent inequalities in access to higher education. Furthermore, with the use of the last two measures, I aim to capture the plurality of alternatives which the access implies and thus unfold the qualitative side of inequalities in access to higher education.

The shares of higher education graduates within the chosen cohorts are shown in Figure 7.1. They clearly confirm the trend that higher education expansion occurred in all countries.

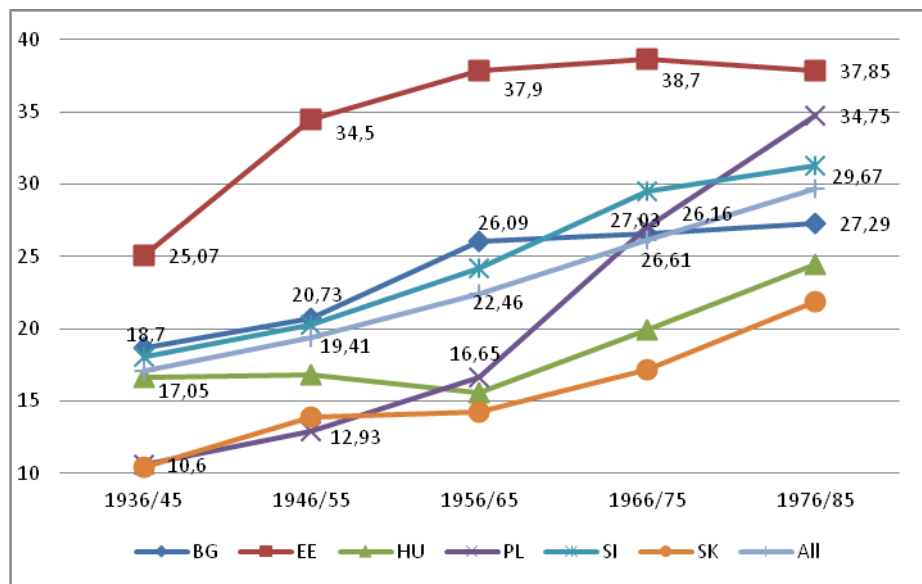


Fig. 7.1. Tertiary education attainment in six Eastern European countries by cohort, 1936-1985, (%).

Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data from the ESS (2006-2010), unweighted data.

The *Modified Inequality Index* is constructed by applying a logistic regression. The results of the postestimation analysis¹⁰³ suggest that the model fits the data for all periods and all countries, except for the cohort born in Estonia between 1956 and 1965. The index results reveal that the inequalities in educational attainment increase on average, for all nations over time, when using father's and mother's education as independent variables (Fig. 7.2). This increase refers to the people born in the first four birth cohorts. In the most recent cohort there is a decrease in the inequalities among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and this is a common trend in all the post-communist countries surveyed. Despite this common trend, all countries show specific national patterns. For example, the level of inequalities is most pronounced in Bulgaria for all birth cohorts but the first one. The inequalities in higher education attainment in Bulgaria are still very high, which indicates that the widened access to higher education in the country was not able to significantly reduce the level of inequalities. Furthermore, in Estonia and Slovakia the inequalities decrease among people born between 1956 and 1965 compared with the preceding birth cohort. The most significant reduction of inequalities of educational attainment in the last two cohorts may be found in Slovenia.

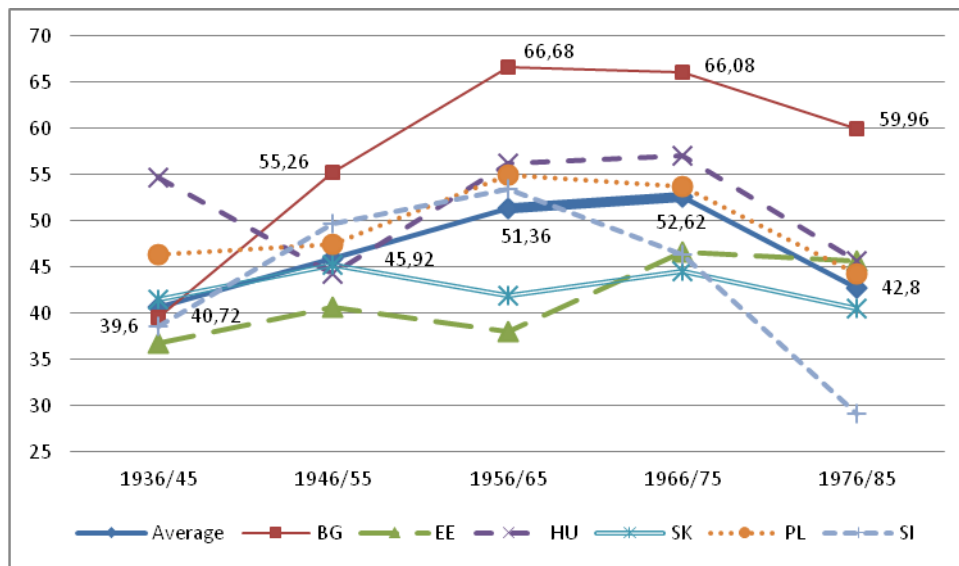
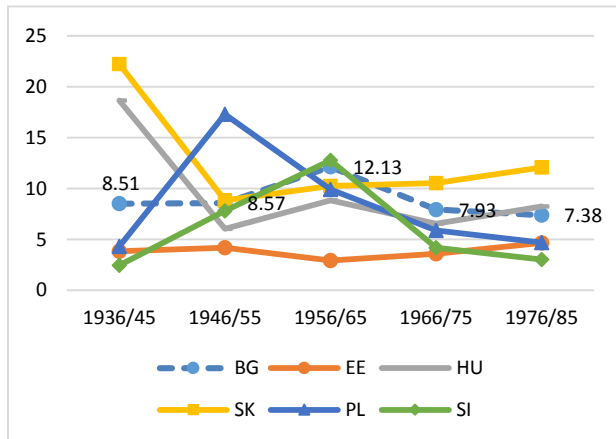


Fig. 7.2. Inequality index for graduates born between 1936 and 1985 in six countries.

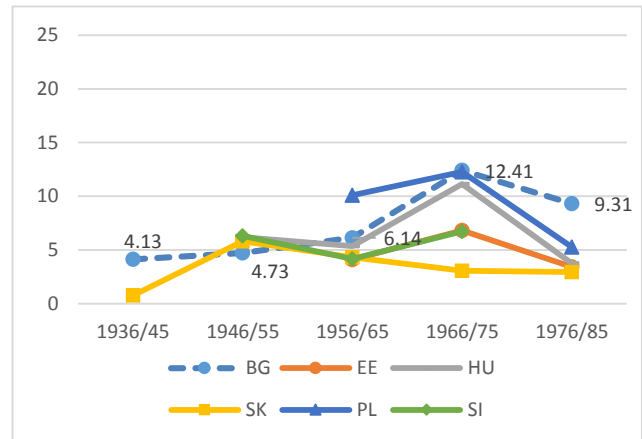
Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data from ESS (2006-1010), unweighted data.

¹⁰³ They are available on request.

The estimates of the odds ratios, received from the logistic regressions, also provide interesting insights into the differences in chances of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds to attain tertiary education over time and across countries at individual level (Figures 7.3. a) and b)). They confirm the trend that, of all surveyed countries, the inequalities of educational attainment between children of parents with a low and a high education are most pronounced in Bulgaria, after controlling for gender.



7.3 (a) Father



7.3 (b) Mother

Figures 7.3. Odds ratios on tertiary education attainment for children born between 1936 and 1985, whose parents have higher education, in six European countries.

Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data from ESS (2006-2010), unweighted data.

- Notes:* 1. In the figure only the odds ratios that are significant at $p > 0.10$ are presented.
 2. Reference categories: low education of father and mother.

In contrast to most countries, in which the father's education is the most decisive factor in determining the chances of attaining a higher education degree in a long-term perspective, it seems that mother's education is the most decisive factor in Bulgaria and Poland for people born in the two most recent cohorts. In the Bulgarian cohort born between 1976 and 1985, the odds of attaining a degree for a child whose mother had higher education is estimated to be 9.31 times higher than those for a child whose mother had low education. These odds are estimated to be between 3.61 and 24.03 (with 95% confidence). For people born in the same cohort in Poland the odds ratio is estimated to be 5.26 times higher; they are between 2.77 and 9.99 (with 95% confidence). However, for the oldest two cohorts, father's education seems to be the most

decisive factor in determining the chances of a Pole or a Bulgarian having a higher education degree. Slovakia is the only country where father's education is the most decisive factor in determining these chances for all birth cohorts. In all other countries the influence is mixed. Estonia seems to be the country with the most stable odds for attaining a degree in higher education over time with respect to father's education. In general it seems that in the oldest cohort for all countries, fathers' education was more important than mothers' education, but in the most recent cohort I observe a unification of the importance of both factors.

Then, I focused on the share of graduates from higher education institutions in field or subject of study with a high educational background. For the sake of simplicity, as a proxy for socioeconomic background, I use information that at least one of the parents has higher education. In an ideal situation, the capability approach should take note of the full extent of freedom to choose between different functioning bundles, but limits of practicality may often force the analysis to be confined to examining the achieved functioning bundle only (Sen 1992: 53). In this sense, the information about the diversity of functionings that a particular group could achieve will be used in our case as a proxy for defining the set of capabilities available to this group.

In order to preserve the variety of fields of study, the birth cohorts were reduced to three. It is assumed that the graduates from the first two received a degree in tertiary education in the period 1944-1989 and people from the third one graduated after 1989 (See Figures 7.4. and 7.5. and Figures A in Appendix 1 for Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia).

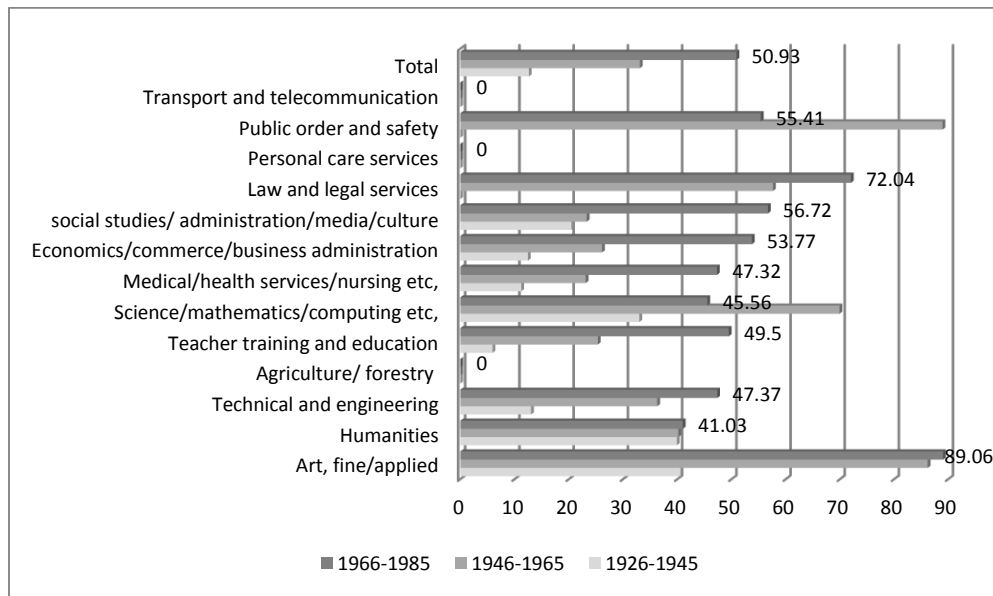


Fig. 7.4. Graduates from different fields of study who were born between 1926/1985, with at least one parent having higher education in % (Bulgaria).

Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data from ESS (2006-2008), unweighted data.

The share of Bulgarian graduates who have at least one parent with higher education increases over time and is high above the average in all six countries for all birth cohorts but the first one. The distributions of graduates from different social backgrounds within different fields of studies in Bulgaria reveal a clear presence of qualitative inequalities in educational attainment. These inequalities are related, on the one hand, to a very high share of graduates from high socioeconomic background who study subjects like the arts, law, social studies, etc. (this share increases over time), and, on the other hand, to the very low share of graduates with a high social background in fields like agriculture, the humanities, and personal care services. This signifies that children with a low education background can hardly get a real opportunity to matriculate in law or the arts (which would not be a problem if they really had no reason to study in these fields). Thus, some specialties are not really accessible to children of low and medium socioeconomic background, which means there is a qualitative difference in the possibility that certain fields of studies will include/admit people of low and medium social background. This trend has a long-term effect and is evident when the average shares for all six countries are considered; it is evident for the socialist period but is still very salient in the recent cohort.

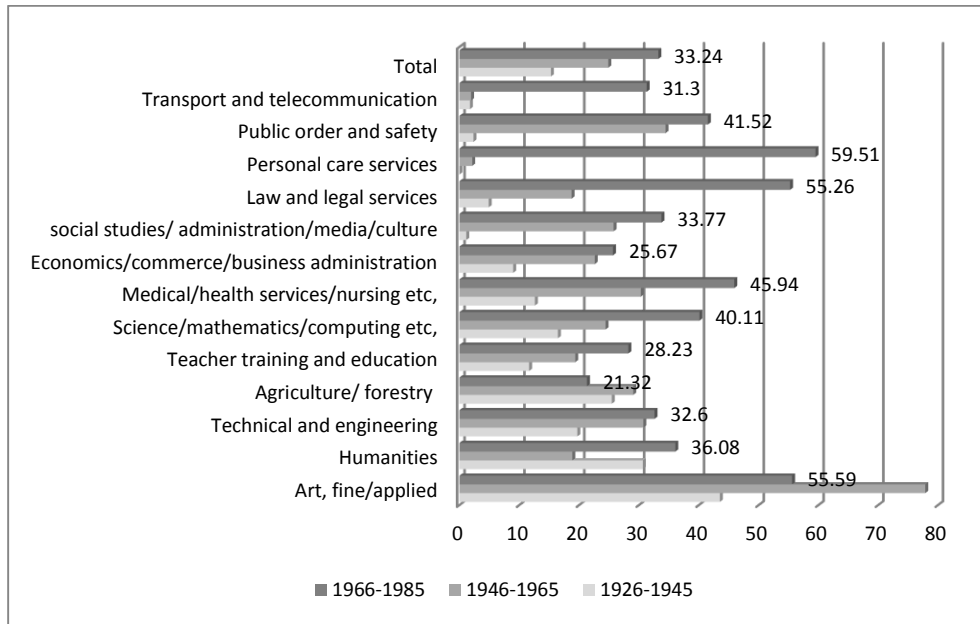


Fig. 7.5. Graduates from different fields of study who were born between 1926/1985, with at least one parent having higher education in % (all countries).

Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data from ESS (2006-2008), unweighted data.

The analysis of the distributions of graduates with different socioeconomic backgrounds within different fields of study shows that the (cap)ability of people with a low educational background to attain a degree is highly limited to a particular range of possibilities; this is a trend common to all the countries studied. In other words, in all of the surveyed countries, the widening of access to higher education institutions has not resulted in reduction of the qualitative inequalities in access to tertiary education.

As regards the other aspect of education that I assume might open room for potential qualitative inequalities, i.e. the type of tertiary degree, it was possible to assess it only through data from the fifth round of the European Social Survey (2010) (Fig. 7.6.).

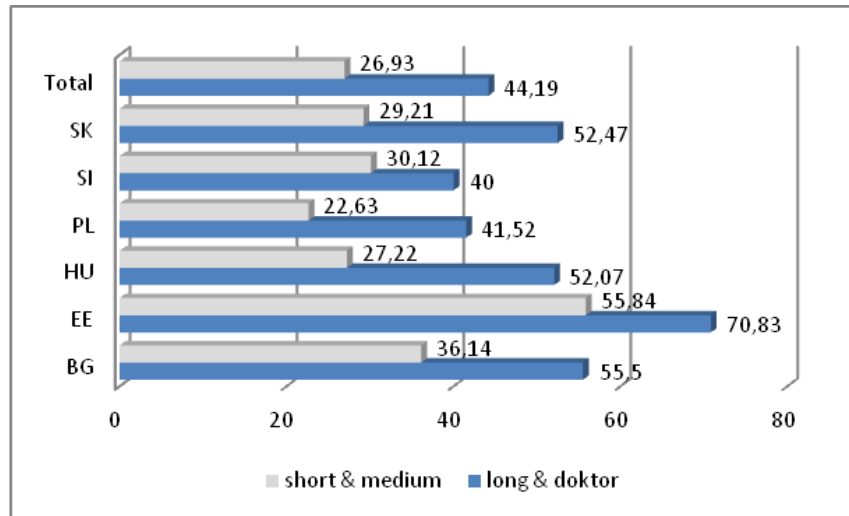


Fig. 7.6. Graduates with different types of degrees born between 1976 and 1985 with a high educational background (who had at least one parent with higher education), (%).

Source: Own calculations based on ESS data (2010), weighted data (dweight & pweight).

The results reveal a common pattern in all countries studied: the share of graduates who had at least one parent with higher education is higher within more prestigious types of degrees and is significantly lower for the shorter and less prestigious ones, such as Bachelor and Professional Bachelor. This shows that most likely children from low socioeconomic background have lower chances to access the same type of higher education institutions as that accessed by children with highly-qualified parents. However, a more accurate answer could be achieved by employing models that take into consideration the variety of degrees (in terms of either field of study, type of degree, or higher education institutions), e.g. multinomial logistic regression; this is an approach worth following up in further research.

7.2.2. Equity in higher education

I used the EEI and the typology of social inclusiveness of higher education systems and Tertiary attainment level to explore the dynamics of the equity in higher education in Bulgaria in both of its dimensions, *fairness* and *inclusion*.

Fairness aspect

Data from National Statistical Institute (NSI) regarding the share of males aged 40-59 with higher education degrees in the general population are used. These data are from the national censuses in 1965, 1975, 1985, 1992 and 2001 (NSI 2012).

Table 7.1. Educational equity index for Bulgaria (1965-2001).

Years	% of men aged 40-59 with higher education	Year of birth (18-23 years)	% of students whose fathers have a degree	E EI
1965	4.98	1942-1947	15.82	31.48
1975	8.01	1952-1957	33.33	24.03
1985	10.39	1962-1967	28.46	36.51
1992	12.55	1969-1974	35.44	35.41
2001	13.20	1978-1983	40.34	32.83

Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data for Bulgaria from ESS (2006-2010), weighted data (dweight and pweight) & NSI (2012, pp. 93-94).

Since the NSI does not collect data for parents' education, this information was extracted from the ESS. I assume that graduates in the survey were students between the ages of 18 and 23 (which are indicative of schooling in higher education). Regarding the year 1965, I suggest those were people born between 1942 and 1947; as for 1975, the people then were born between 1952 and 1957, etc. (Table 7.1).

Following the typology of EUROSTUDENT IV (2011, p. 51), the values of two indexes are plotted on Fig. 7.7. An index value of 1 on the y and x-axis means that both groups are of the same relative size in their respective populations.

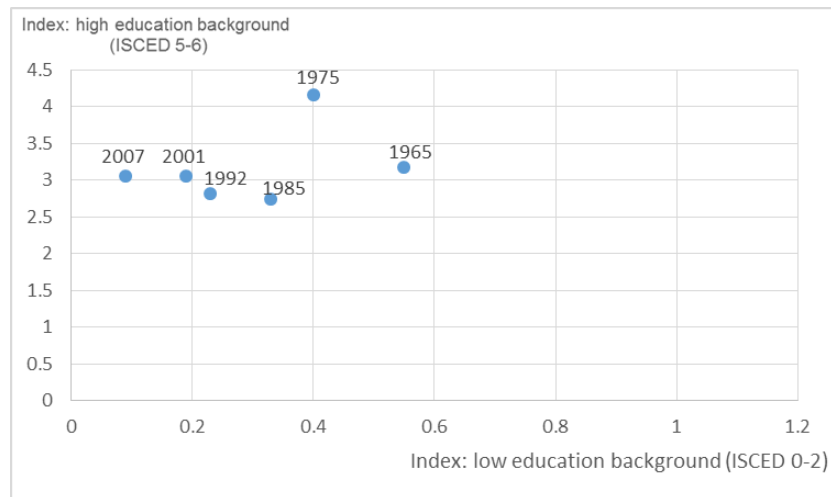


Fig. 7.7. Dynamics of social inclusiveness of Bulgarian higher education system (1965-2007). *Source:* Own calculations based on cumulated data for Bulgaria from ESS (2006-2010), weighted data (dweight and pweight), data from NSI (2012, pp. 93-94), and data for 2007 from Eurostudent III (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2008, p. 63). *Note:* Index: 1 = perfect balance.

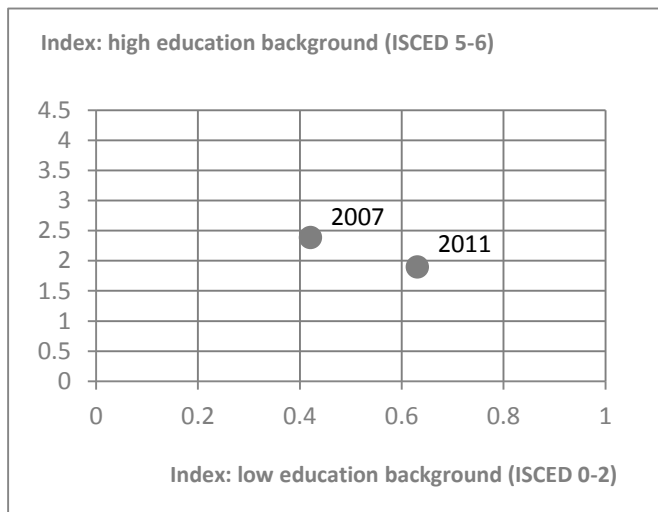
The dynamics of both indexes led to very similar results. In terms of EEI scores, the levels of equity in Bulgaria are very low for the whole period. Nonetheless, the lowest score is observed in 1975. Then equity increases in 1985 and it decreases slightly for the next two reference years. The analysis of the dynamics of the social inclusiveness, however, suggests an additional insight. While the levels of overrepresentation of students from a high educational background is around three times the size of the corresponding age group in the general population, the levels of underrepresentation of students with a low education background increases over time. That is how the Bulgarian higher education system turns out to be the one with the highest underrepresentation of students with a low education background (0.09) and with the highest level of overrepresentation of students with a high education background (3.05) among all 23 participant countries in the EUROSTUDENT III survey (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2008, p. 63) and the most socially exclusive system if we adopt the EUROSTUDENT IV typology.

In fact, the results from the final report, *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent III 2005-2008* (2008), reveal that the under-representation of low socioeconomic groups prevails in all higher education systems for which data were available. According to this report, Scotland, the Netherlands and Finland

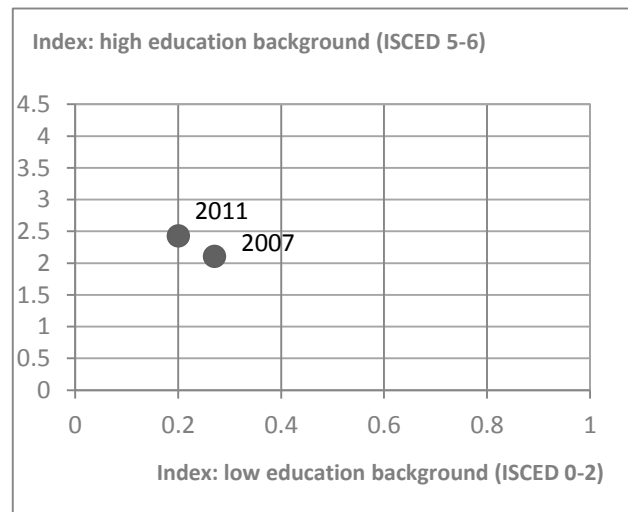
appear to be the most open systems. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany and Estonia are the least open (ibid., p. 55).

As regards the dynamics in equity in higher education, Eurostudent survey data for the period 2007 and 2011 are available only for two of the countries of interest in this thesis – Estonia and Slovakia. This is why I only present the data for these two countries (Figures 7.8 a) and b)). The figures show a considerable decrease in inequity in Estonia where, as a whole, the representation of student body with low and high education background has become closer to the real distribution of these two groups in the population. More specifically, the values of the indexes show that the overrepresentation of students with high educational background decreased considerably, whereas the underrepresentation of students with low education background decreased. Overall, these two trends indicate that the equity in higher education increased in Estonia. In contrast, we observe an opposite trend in Slovakia, where the representation of people with low and high education background within higher education slightly deteriorates for the same reference period, which reflects a decrease of equity.

a. Estonia



b. Slovakia



Figures 7.8. Inequity in higher education systems in Estonia and Slovakia - in 2007 and 2011 - Students' fathers by highest educational attainment as a share of the corresponding age group in the general population. *Source:* Selected data by Eurostudent III - 2007 (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2008, p. 63) & Eurostudent IV - 2011 (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2011, p. 51). *Note:* Index: 1 = perfect balance.

In line with these findings, the *Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe. Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility*¹⁰⁴ (Eurostudent 2009) report reveals that, despite the development of mechanisms promoting equity in education systems, the level of education of parents still has an impact on success in higher education, and that people whose parents have a high educational level have better chances of accessing and completing tertiary education than others. Furthermore, the share of students whose parents have a low educational level graduated from tertiary education in some countries is below 10 percent. This report identifies that the continuing transmission of disadvantages through family backgrounds tends to affect men and women equally. But, at the same time, that young people from low educational family backgrounds have better chances of graduating than their elders did in the past.

As regards the most current trends on social make-up of the students' body, the *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent IV 2008–2011* (2011) report reveals that, in many countries, more than 50 percent of all students come from households with parents who have had no experience of higher education. In comparison, in the case of the average OECD countries, this share is 66 percent (OECD, 2012, p. 103).

Interestingly, the EUROSTUDENT's last report reveals that the higher education systems which have been more successful in recruiting and retaining students from a low social background are those providing alternative routes into higher education, and those offering a more flexible route through the higher education system (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2011, p. 200). This finding is consistent from the results from an OECD report (2008, p. 66) that shows that when gaining access to tertiary education, more disadvantaged students enroll in greater proportions in lower-status and vocationally-oriented tertiary education institutions. Most likely, these institutions have lower academic criteria and provide students with more flexible modes of study. The survey also revealed that around two out of three students are enrolled in Bachelor courses across Europe, and also that a high share of them originate from a low social background (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2011). Respectively, this report shows that students from a low social background are underrepresented in many countries in both Master's and the remaining national programmes, which have yet to be made compatible with the Bologna structures. As regards the

¹⁰⁴ This report uses diverse data sources: EU-SILC, EU-LFS, EUROSTUDENT III, etc.).

distributions within fields of study, this study reveals that in many countries Bachelor courses in humanities and arts seem to be more supportive of social mobility than in engineering, manufacturing and construction subjects.

The Eurostudent survey includes an alternative measure referring to the occupation of parents and, more specifically, whether it is a 'blue collar' occupation or not. Using this measure, it turns out that this social group is more heterogeneous than the one defined by low education background. Furthermore, in about 1/2 of the EUROSTUDENT countries, around 1/3 of students' fathers have a 'blue collar' occupation (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2011, pp. 53-57).

One of the peculiarities of the students from low social background that this report outlines is that they are likely to have had a delayed transition to higher education, and to study de facto part-time. In this sense, the share of students entering higher education through delayed transition routes is at least twice as high among students from low education background than among students from high education background in Romania, Austria, France, Finland, the Czech Republic, Ireland, The Netherlands and Norway (Orr, Schnitzer, & Frackmann, 2011, pp. 51-53).

Inclusion aspect

In order to capture the inclusion aspect of equity, the shares of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment in the studied countries are considered (See Fig. 7.9.).

In fact, the expansion of higher education has undoubtedly led to an increase in the number of higher education graduates in the economy. However, despite the expansion of higher education, Bulgaria still lags behind other European countries in terms of the proportion of graduates aged 30-34; having only 27.3 percent graduates among the group aged 30-34. It is far below the ET 2020 benchmark that, by 2020, the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40 percent and from its national target of 36 percent. Despite that, the policy relies on the widening access only, and no activities are initiated to increase this target. In contrast to Bulgaria, Estonia has already reached the target of 40 percent.

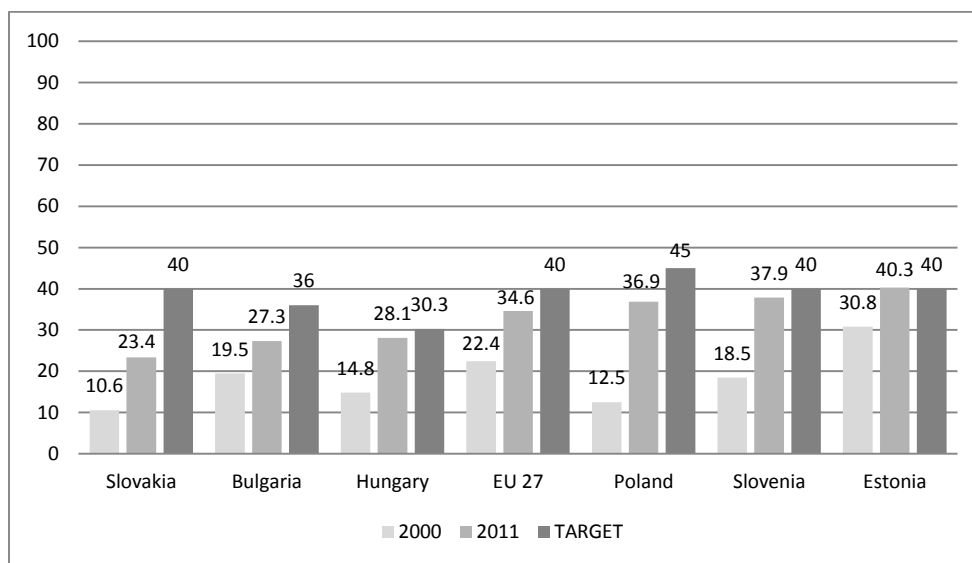


Fig. 7.9. Tertiary educational attainment¹⁰⁵, age group 30-34, total in six countries in 2000 and 2011, (%).

Source: Eurostat, Extracted on 25.5.2013.¹⁰⁶

Among the six countries studied, the Estonian higher education system seems to be the most inclusive, whereas the Slovakian one seems to be the most exclusive in terms of tertiary educational attainment. These results suggest that, whereas the equity in higher education in terms of inclusion in Estonia is associated with equity in terms of fairness, these two aspects do not go hand-in-hand in Bulgaria and Slovakia. The tendencies identified point to the need for taking into account both aspects of equity, given that they may not always go in one direction.

7.3. Inequality in graduate employability

This section presents the results of the analysis of graduate employability. This analysis follows a predominantly comparative perspective. At national level, it uses the following measures: 1) Benchmark on employability, 2) Occupational status and 3) Qualification mismatch. Then, the section employs regression analysis for the analysis of inequalities in graduate employability at

¹⁰⁵ The share of the population aged 30-34 years who have successfully completed university or university-like (tertiary-level) education with an education level ISCED 1997 (International Standard Classification of Education) of 5-6. This indicator measures the Europe 2020 strategy's headline target to increase the share of the 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40 percent in 2020.

¹⁰⁶ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/headline_indicators.

individual level. The final subsection of the paper provides an analysis of graduate employability at institutional level. Due to a lack of data, this analysis will be limited to data for the Bulgarian case.

7.3.1. Analysis of graduate employability at national level

The analysis of the benchmark on employability for recent graduates reveals that, overall, the employment rates among graduates in all countries studied are relatively high – around 80 percent (Fig. 7.10.). At the same time, there are considerable differences in these shares between countries, the lowest share being in Slovakia for 2013 (76.7 percent), and the highest, in Hungary (85.6 percent). Despite that, there is a trend towards a decrease of employment rates in Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia and the EU 28 average between 2010 and 2013. In contrast, these rates increase in Hungary, and very significantly in Estonia.

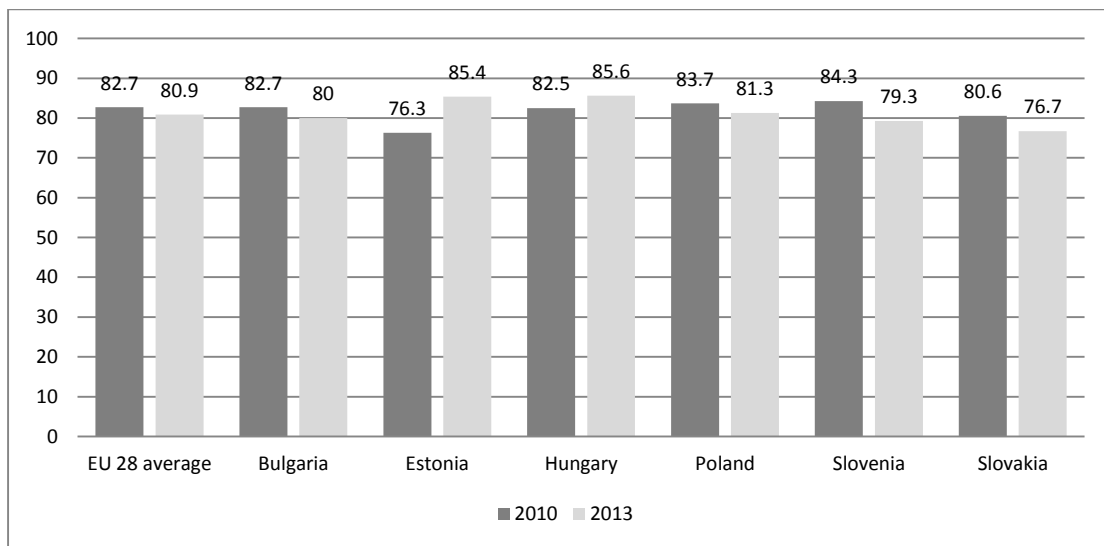


Fig. 7.10. Employment rate of recent graduates (age 20-34) having left education 1-3 years before reference year, ISCED 5-6 in six post-communist countries (2010 and 2013), (%).

Source: European Commission (2014, p. 2.)

As regards occupational status, Table 7.2 shows that in the countries studied, the differences in the mean scores for the occupational status gained by the young graduates are not very large. The

highest average ISEI score is observed in Poland (60.63), while young graduates in Estonia gain, on average, only a score of 56.56.

Table 7.2. Occupational status of employed graduates, aged 25-34 years, in six countries.

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovenia	Slovakia
<i>Average ISEI score (st.dev.)</i>	59.30(13.59)	56.56(15.13)	59.03(12.85)	60.63(13.21)	57.83(14.33)	60.05(12.82)

Source: ESS, 2006-2010 (own calculations), weighted data (dweight), No. of observations 1132.

Regarding the vertical education-job mismatch among young graduates, the results show differences in this indicator between all the countries studied (Fig. 7.11.). Thus, the lowest shares of graduates aged 25-34 who were employed below their level of education, among all who are employed and at the same age, are observed in Hungary (18.43 percent) and Slovakia (18.66 percent) whereas the highest are in Estonia (26.48 percent) and Slovenia (25.27 percent).

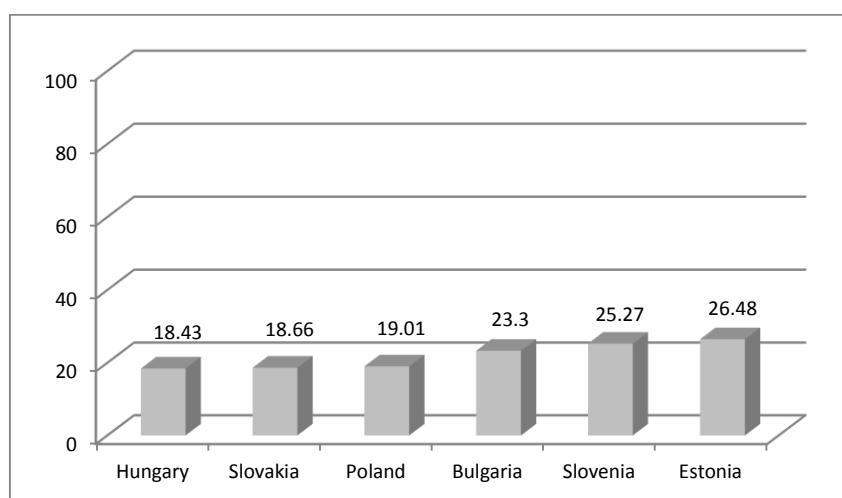


Fig. 7.11. Vertical education-job mismatch among graduates, aged 25-34 years, who are part of the labour force¹⁰⁷, (%). *Source:* ESS, 2006-2010 (own calculations), weighted data (dweight), No. of observations 1130.

¹⁰⁷ In the labour force I included people who in the last 7 days report of being in paid work or are unemployed and are actively looking for a job.

Overall, these results show that, regardless of the measure used, graduate employability does vary by country. Although the post-communist countries are often considered as a homogenous group, obviously the opportunities for graduate employment and for working in more prestigious jobs also differ. In this regard, I also expect that there are differences in graduate employability by different tertiary degrees and fields of studies. Due to data constraints related to the low number of cases of young graduates, the fact that information on the fields studied is only available for ESS round 3 and 4, and data on the type of programmes in ESS round 5, I analyzed the differences by different tertiary degrees and fields of studies for the graduates, aged 25-64.

Table 7.3 shows that there are also considerable differences in the occupational status that may be gained by graduates who studied in different fields of studies. These differences are very large. Thus, for instance, whereas graduates who studied law in Bulgaria gain on average a score of 73.12, this score among the employed graduates who studied a Service programme is only 50.63. Similar differences are also observed for other countries. Overall, the employed graduates who studied law have the highest occupational status, whereas graduates who have a degree in services or in agriculture have the lowest occupational status.

Table 7.3. Occupational status of employed graduates, aged 25-64 years, by field of study, in six countries, (*Average ISEI score*).

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Education	57.54	62.07	59.53	59.1	64.45	60.39
Art	58.42	55.14	47.23	59.83	56.76	70.5
Social sciences & business	61.61	58.1	57.45	59.26	61.88	58.68
Science	60.99	60.51	53.27	66.3	63.95	66.56
Engineering	59.04	50.25	60.96	61.72	57.24	57.27
Agriculture	52.37	50.34	53.77	55.69	54	46.56
Health	56.49	58.26	59.55	71.52	68.54	57.63
Services	50.63	44.53	47.24	51.1	49.35	65.8
Law	73.12	67.14	81.08	69.97	79.4	62.2
Humanities	59.37	59.68	59.6	64.02	62.67	62.62

Source: ESS, 2006-2008 (own calculations), weighted data (dweight), No. of observations 2375.

As regards the differences in graduate employability by type of tertiary programme, Figure 7.12 clearly shows that when we measure employability via the occupational status of employed graduates, we see that those who studied in longer programmes, such as Master's or PhD, have, on average, a higher ISEI score. This is a trend common for all countries studied. This shows that undoubtedly in situation of expanded and differentiated higher education systems, long tertiary programmes equip people with more skills and give them advantages on the labour market. This suggests that qualitative differences in the degrees do matter for graduate employability, as they allow graduates to obtain higher educational status, even though they are all employed.

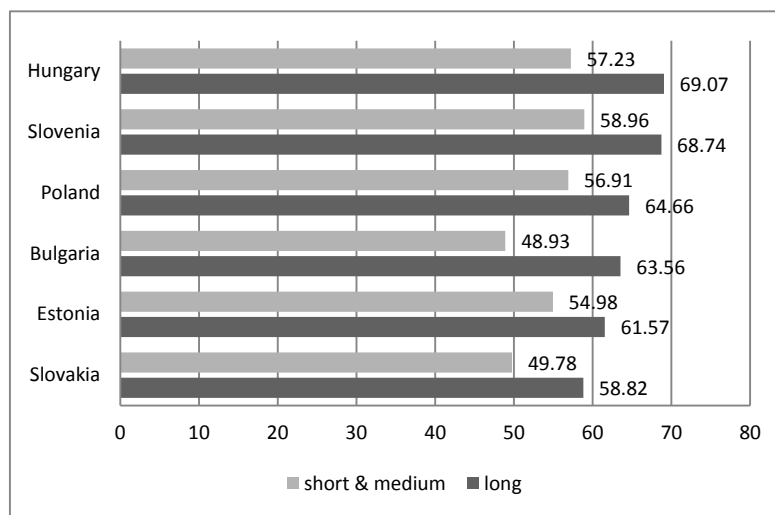


Fig. 7.12. Occupational status of employed graduates, aged 25-64 years, by type of tertiary programme, in six countries, (Average ISEI score). Source: ESS, 2010 (own calculations), weighted data (dweight), No. of observations 1424.

Similar differences in graduate employability by field of study can be observed when graduate employability is measured with the shares of vertical education-job mismatch of graduates who are part of the labour force. Thus, whereas the proportion of vertically-mismatched graduates among the graduates who are part of the labour force and who have a degree in medicine in Bulgaria, is only 7.32 percent, this proportion for those who studied in the field of services is more than four times higher (33.5 percent). Although the data show that people who studied law, on average, have the highest occupational status in Bulgaria, it seems that this is accompanied by high levels of vertical education job-mismatch. The explanation for this is hidden in the huge

institutional diversity of the Bulgarian higher education system, where law may be offered by very high prestige education institutions but also by some with very low prestige (more attention to this is given in section 7.3.3.). Huge differences in the levels of vertical mismatch are also observed in the other five post-communist countries. Overall, the levels of vertical mismatch among graduates who are part of the labour force are very low among those who studied in the fields of education, health and science and are very high among people who have a degree in services or agriculture. Although there are some exceptions to this trend in some of the countries, in general there are considerable differences in the levels of vertical education-job mismatch by field of study.

Table 7.4. Vertical education-job mismatch among graduates, aged 25-64 years, who are part of the labour force in six countries, by field of study, (%).

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
Education	10.39	6.76	11.3	12.53	2.72	7.32
Art	14.41	28.57	69.97	0	0	0
Social sciences & business	11.09	18.35	24.72	24.77	17.29	25.95
Science	8.21	15.38	29.88	3.42	10.15	2.94
Engineering	13.59	39.89	15.36	7.74	13.37	27.12
Agriculture	12.44	39.13	33.1	27.42	22.83	50
Health	7.32	13.51	0.11	4.97	7.02	11.76
Services	33.5	66	45.58	41.85	47.04	20
Law	20.26	14.29	0	0	8.76	0
Humanities	11.27	14.29	19.62	11.92	17.19	12.5

Source: ESS, 2006-2008 (own calculations), weighted data (dweight), No. of observations 2,348.

Finally, the analysis show that there are differences in the vertical education-job mismatch by type of tertiary programme. Figure 7.13 clearly indicates that these differences are common for all six countries and are in favour of graduates who studied on longer and more prestigious programmes. Thus, overall, people who studied in Master's programmes are undoubtedly more employable, both in terms of having higher occupational status and of having lower probability to be employed in jobs non-commensurate with their level of education.

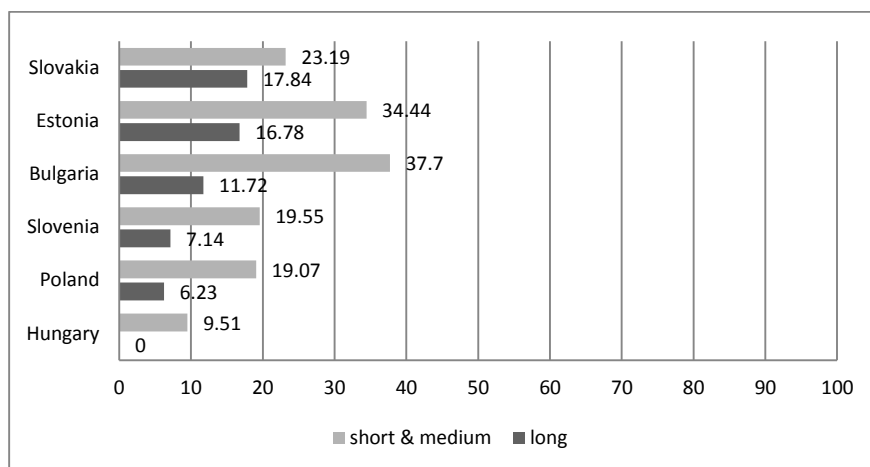


Fig. 7.13. Vertical education-job mismatch among graduates, aged 25-64 years, who are part of the labour force in six countries, by type of tertiary programme, (%). *Source:* ESS, 2010 (own calculations), weighted data (dweight), No. of observations 1455.

The differences in graduate employability at national level can be partly explained by the different capacity of the labour markets in these countries to create graduate jobs, but may also be due to the fact that expansion of higher education in these countries resulted in increasing the number of graduates and a more heterogenous graduate body. In this situation, the employers have a larger pool of candidates and they choose the graduates with the longest and the most prestigious programmes. In this sense, the field of study and the type of programme serve/function as a signal for the employers, more than the mere information of higher education attainment. At the same time the longer programmes and some of the fields of study may enhance the students capabilities for work in a greater extent than the shorter and other fields of study.

7.3.2. Analysis of graduate employability at individual level

In this section, I present the results from the multiple regression analyses which refer to individual level. Due to the low number of graduates in the 25-34 age group, in the consequent models I included people aged 25-64, and the age group 25-34 is used as a reference category.

Model 1 tests whether there are significant differences in the occupational status attained by people who studied in different fields (Table 7.5). The estimates provide support that there are such differences. Thus, graduates with a qualification in law, education, humanities, sciences, engineering, health, social sciences and art attain, on average, much higher occupational status in

comparison with graduates who have a degree in services. The difference between these scores ranges between being 6.5 higher for graduates with a qualification in engineering to 20.16 for graduates with a degree in law, in comparison with graduates who have a degree in services, given the other covariates. In line with the specificity of the ISEI index, people who have a degree in law attain, on average, the highest level of prestige.

Table 7.5. Occupational status of employed graduates aged 25-64 years in six countries.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coeff.	R.S.E.	Coeff.	R.S.E.
<i>Field or subject Ref.: Services</i>				
Education	10.44***	(1.806)		
Art	6.805*	(2.807)		
Social sciences & business	9.527***	(1.760)		
Science	12.83***	(1.987)		
Engineering	6.499***	(1.787)		
Agriculture	3.512	(2.563)		
Health	9.756***	(2.215)		
Law	20.16***	(2.353)		
Humanities	11.43***	(1.860)		
<i>Duration of the tertiary programme Ref.: Short & Medium</i>				
Long			9.830***	(0.830)
<i>Gender Ref.: Male</i>				
Female	0.304	(0.685)	0.0935	(0.742)
<i>Age Ref.: 25-34</i>				
35-44	2.236**	(0.769)	0.594	(0.893)
45-54	1.785*	(0.797)	-1.247	(0.971)
55-64	1.238	(0.980)	0.494	(1.115)
<i>Socioeconomic background Ref.: None of the parents with higher education</i>				
At least one of the parents with higher education	3.825***	(0.648)	3.131***	(0.725)
<i>Round. Ref.: Round 3 (2006)</i>				
Round 4 (2008)	-1.166+	(0.600)		
<i>Country Ref.: Bulgaria</i>				
Estonia	-2.468**	(0.931)	1.009	(1.228)
Hungary	-1.388	(1.104)	5.799***	(1.193)
Poland	2.961**	(0.978)	2.986**	(1.052)
Slovakia	2.645*	(1.049)	-2.798*	(1.233)
Slovenia	0.284	(1.034)	7.089***	(1.284)
<i>Constant</i>	47.61***	(1.975)	51.16***	(1.268)
No. of observations		2300		1371
R-squared		0.098		0.134

Source: ESS, Model 1 (2006-2008), Model 2 (2010), (own calculations), unweighed data.

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance at: + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The analysis of the control variables reveal that socioeconomic background significantly raises a graduate's occupational status above the field of study they have completed. This suggests that, although some people with low socioeconomic background succeed in gaining access to higher education, they are still less advantaged on the labour market in terms of lower occupational status compared to their peers with high socioeconomic background. The results of regression analysis also reveal that there are no differences in the occupational status gained by women and men, holding all other variables constant. Age is not a significant factor for determining the occupational status of graduates. The only exception are graduates aged 35-44 years, who gain higher occupational status scores in comparison to those aged 25-34 years, given the other covariates. The estimates also indicate that in 2008 graduates had significantly lower occupational status in comparison with the prestige of graduates in 2006, holding all other variables constant.

Furthermore, the results indicate country differences between the occupational status of higher education graduates. Thus, graduates from Estonia attain, on average, lower occupational status than Bulgarian graduates, given the other covariates. In contrast, Polish graduates and those from the Slovak Republic attain, on average, higher occupational status than Bulgarian graduates. The estimates reveal no significant differences between the occupational status that may be gained by Bulgarian and the status gained by Hungarian and Slovenian graduates.

Model 2 shows that there are significant differences in the occupational status between people who studied in tertiary programmes of different duration. Thus, the occupational status of graduates who attained a degree in programmes of short and medium durations is significantly lower than that gained by graduates in longer programmes, given the other covariates. The results also reveal that high socioeconomic background contributes to a higher occupational status score. As regards the other control variables, with some exceptions, they are insignificant. Age does not generally prove to be a significant factor in explaining the variability in occupational status.

Regarding the country differences, the estimates of this model reveal that the occupational statuses of graduates from Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are significantly higher than those attained by Bulgarian graduates. There are no significant differences in occupational statuses gained by graduates in Bulgaria and Estonia. In the case of Slovakia, though, the estimates reveal that graduates from this country attained, on average, lower occupational status in comparison to

Bulgarian graduates. Nevertheless, it is not possible to assess whether these are due to the effects of the economic downturn in 2008 or to the fact that the duration of the tertiary programme as an independent variable is included, instead of fields of study.

The estimates of Model 3 reveal that the odds of being employed in jobs that do not correspond to their level of education among graduates differ tremendously by fields of study, holding all other covariates constant (Table 7.6). Thus, graduates with degrees in social sciences and business, engineering, agriculture, law, arts, science, education, humanities and agriculture are less likely to be vertically mismatched than those with a degree in services. This is an interesting finding given the growing share of the service sector in Europe. This might suggest that the service sector itself is not able to create graduate jobs in the post-communist countries. It also points to the fact that there might be some problems in the curricula and the teaching in these programmes, which do not allow the graduates from these fields to be as employable as their peers from other fields.

Based on the estimates in Model 3, the odds of being vertically mismatched are 31.7 percent lower for graduates from high socioeconomic background than for graduates from low socioeconomic background. Furthermore, the odds of being vertically mismatched are estimated to be lower for older graduates than the younger ones, holding all other variables constant. In fact, model 3 is the only model where the influence of age is so explicit. It also shows that, in the period 2006-2008, the odds of being employed in a job which is below graduates' level of education were higher for graduates from Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia than for Bulgarian ones. In the case of Poland and Slovenia, no significant difference in comparison with the reference category are observed.

The estimates derived from Model 4 reveal that graduates who studied in tertiary programmes of shorter durations are more likely to experience vertical education-job mismatch than those who studied in longer programmes, such as Master's and PhD. The estimates also reveal that, if at least one of the parents has been in higher education, graduates' odds of being vertically mismatched are lower than for graduates with no parents having been in higher education. In this model, age is not a significant factor determining the likelihood of whether a graduate will be vertically mismatched or not. The only exception refers to graduates aged 35-44, who appear to

be less likely to be employed below their level of education than graduates aged 25-34, given the other covariates.

Table 7.6. Vertical education-job mismatch among employed graduates aged 25-64 years in six countries.

	<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>	
	OR	C.I.	OR	C.I.
<i>Field or subject Ref. : Services</i>				
Education	0.118**	0.066,0.210		
Art	0.325*	0.137,0.768		
Social sciences & business	0.265**	0.163,0.433		
Science	0.118**	0.059,0.237		
Engineering	0.331**	0.203,0.539		
Agriculture	0.511*	0.265,0.984		
Health	0.113**	0.057,0.221		
Law	0.097**	0.039,0.239		
Humanities	0.178**	0.096,0.330		
<i>Duration of the tertiary programme Ref.: Short & Medium</i>				
Long			0.342**	0.244,0.480
<i>Gender Ref. Male</i>				
Female	0.972	0.753,1.255	1.022	0.743,1.407
<i>Age Ref. 25-34</i>				
35-44	0.598**	0.445,0.804	0.579**	0.387,0.868
45-54	0.657**	0.491,0.879	0.761	0.509,1.137
55-64	0.652*	0.462,0.921	0.724	0.457,1.149
<i>Socioeconomic background Ref.: None of the parents with higher education</i>				
At least one of the parents with higher education	0.683**	0.530,0.880	0.622**	0.449,0.861
<i>Round. Ref.: Round 3 (2006)</i>				
Round 4 (2008)	1.110	0.885,1.392		
<i>Country Ref.: Bulgaria</i>				
Estonia	2.048**	1.436,2.920	1.162	0.767,1.759
Hungary	1.759*	1.133,2.730	0.169**	0.084,0.342
Poland	1.039	0.679,1.590	0.396**	0.233,0.673
Slovenia	0.948	0.586,1.532	1.054	0.636,1.747
Slovakia	1.582*	1.049,2.385	0.482**	0.294,0.789
Constant	0.960	0.524,1.758	0.715	0.446,1.145
No. of observations		2269		1397
LR chi2		148.476**		101.438**
Nagelkerke R Squared		0.073		0.123

Source: ESS, Model 3 (2006-2008), Model 4 (2010), (own calculations), unweighted data.

Note: Robust standard errors used. C.I.: Confidence intervals.

Significance at: +p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

The estimates derived through this model indicate that graduates from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are less likely to be vertically mismatched than Bulgarian graduates, holding all other variables constant. However, one cannot make direct comparisons across models, regarding this likelihood. Thus, it is not possible to assess with certainty whether these changes in the odds ratios between Models 3 and 4 are the results of the crisis or are due to the fact that the results are controlled for the duration of the graduates' tertiary programme.

7.3.3. Analysis of graduate employability at institutional level

The data from the Bulgarian Universities Ranking System ¹⁰⁸ (<http://rsvu.mon.bg/rsvu3/?locale=en>) show that there are tremendous differences in employability (in terms of unemployment rates, insurance income and applicability of the degree acquired) among graduates from a particular professional field but who graduated from different universities in the last five academic years. Nonetheless, it was not possible to evaluate if these differences are determined by socioeconomic factors.

Despite that, if we take 2012 as a reference year and compare the graduates with a Master's degree in law from five Bulgarian Universities who all offer only Master's degrees in law, it is seen that the unemployment rates among them vary between 1.35 to 5.72 percent across universities. The graduates' insurance income also differs from 685.44 to 1096.06 BGN. The same trend is seen if we compare the applicability of the degree, defined as the percent of socially-insured graduates who are employed in jobs which require higher education. Specifically, this percentage differs between 43.38 and 71.85.

In the case of economics, which absorbs a quarter of all students (Boyadjieva, 2012), when we compare the three most prestigious higher education institutions with the three least prestigious ones (which offer studies in this professional field), we see huge variations as regards these three

¹⁰⁸ The Bulgarian Universities Ranking System contains information on the accredited universities in Bulgaria (51 in total), which offer education in a variety of majors grouped into 52 professional fields. Specifically, it compiles rich data on different indicators that measure different aspects of university activities, including teaching and learning, university environment, welfare and administrative services, science and research, prestige, career development and relevance to the labour market. The indicators have been developed on the basis of statistical data collected from different sources, including sociological surveys.

indicators: the insurance income varies from 1546.54 to 514.63 BGN, the unemployment rate between 0.53 and 6.68 percent and the applicability ranges between 81.33 and 10.07 percent.

As regards general engineering, we observe some surprising trends. Despite the demand for specialists in engineering, a relatively low proportion of graduates are socially insured in jobs which require higher education. From 46.23 percent in the most prestigious university which offers this professional field to 10.42 percent in the least prestigious higher education institution which offers education in this professional field. The unemployment rates also differ tremendously. Thus, if we compare the three most highly-ranked universities with the three lowest-ranked universities, the unemployment rates among graduates in general engineering also differs: between 2.65 to 8.74 percent. The graduates' insurance income ranges between 1124.42 to 542.42 BGN depending on the university.

These examples clearly show that graduate employability depends not only on the field of study and the duration of the tertiary programme (as logistic regression analyses also revealed), but on the prestige of the higher education institution as well. An additional layer of explanation may be added - the regional dimension of the professional realization of graduates, given the huge regional inequalities¹⁰⁹ in Bulgaria and, most likely, in the other five countries studied. If we look at the Regional GDP per capita in the EU27 in 2010, we see that regions from Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland are among the twenty regions with the lowest GDP per capita (Eurostat, 2014). These regional differences are also present when the opportunities for employment are considered. Thus, although for 2012 the official statistics report that the average unemployment rate in Bulgaria of those aged 15-64 is 12.4 percent, this percentage ranges between districts. The lowest unemployment rate is registered in Sofia district (6.5 percent) and the highest in Shumen district (26.8 percent).

Thus, the data from the Bulgarian University Ranking System show that the prospects of graduates to be vertically mismatched differ considerably; not only between different fields of study and types of tertiary programme, but also that they differ significantly between universities and districts, keeping the professional field constant. These results are consistent with a recent study on graduate employability in Bulgaria, based on data from the Ranking System of Bulgarian Universities for 2013, which provides solid evidence that institutional diversity in

¹⁰⁹ See Kozhuharova-Zhivkova, 2011.

higher education *does* matter for graduate employability (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2015). More specifically, it explores the relationship between institutional profiles, analyzed as consisting of three different modes of differentiation: structural, quality-related and symbolic, and the graduate employability of people who graduates in the period between 2010 and 2012. The study demonstrates that graduate employability varies considerably across professional fields and universities. At the same time, it shows that there are remarkable differences in graduate employability of people who studied in the same courses but in different higher education institutions. The study also reveals that the higher the degree level attained, the better the employability, measured by graduates' income and vertical education-job mismatch.

7.4. Conclusions and discussion of the results

Drawing on data from the ESS, Eurostudent, the official statistics – NSI and Eurostat and the Ranking System of Bulgarian Universities, this section has provided evidence for the dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education, the dynamics of equity in higher education and inequalities in graduate employability in six post-communist countries.

7.4.1. Identified trends as regards the inequalities in access to higher education and equity in higher education

The analysis of the inequalities is complemented by putting them in a broader framework when assessing qualitative inequalities in access to higher education in terms of people's capabilities. Although a perfect measure of inequalities and equity has yet to be found, several measures have been combined in this chapter in order to assess their level. The research has shown the potential of using a set of indicators when analysing the inequalities in access to higher education. Nevertheless, the work on specifying the indicators and collecting data should continue.

In summary, the following trends were identified with regard to inequalities in access to higher education:

- There is a common trend of decrease in the inequalities among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds in all countries studied born in the most recent cohort (1976-1985). As far as this trend refers to a period of expansion of higher education, it

is in line with the conclusion that expansion contributes towards inclusion, meaning “that more students from all strata, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are carried further into the education system, and for the cohort as a whole inequality is reduced” (Arum, Gamoran, & Shavit, 2007, p. 28). This finding provides evidence in favour of *Hypothesis 1a*.

- In all post-communist countries studied we can see, on average, an increase over time in the inequalities in educational attainment among people born in the first four birth cohorts (1936/1945, 1946/55, 1956/1965 and 1966/1975), measured using father’s and mother’s education as independent variables. Parents’ education seems to be a strong and constant predictor of the chances of gaining access higher education institutions. Thus, the study findings support the hypothesis of socialist transformation, according to which the “socialist reforms of educational systems, and the corresponding policies (particularly the implementation of the so-called quota system), brought about an initial reduction in the effects of social origin on educational attainment. However, as soon as the new elite secured privileges for themselves and took control of the educational system, they ensured educational advantages for their own children” (Matějů, 1993; Matějů, Řeháková & Simonová, 2003, p. 306). It provides support in favour of *Hypothesis 1c*.
- In all post-communist countries there are qualitative inequalities in access to higher education, i.e. inequalities in: a) the range of opportunities of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds to have access to higher education in terms of fields of studies, and b) the opportunities children from different socioeconomic backgrounds have to access the same type of degree. These results allow corroboration of the hypotheses that the socioeconomically advantaged are more likely to study in longer tertiary programmes (*Hypothesis 2.1.*) and in more prestigious tertiary programmes (*Hypothesis 2.2.*). Thus, this study finding supports the hypothesis that, in the context of diversification, the socioeconomically advantaged will obtain qualitative advantage in access to higher education (*Hypothesis 2*).

- There are both common trends and national-specific peculiarities in how inequalities in the access to higher education have been changing over time in the post-communist countries. However, the levels of inequalities that are due to socioeconomic background differ considerably by country. This provides evidence in favour of *Hypothesis 3*. Among these six countries, Bulgaria stands out as a country with the highest level of inequalities in access to higher education.
- The results from the dual approach to measuring equity applied in a dynamic perspective suggest that, despite the expansion of higher education in Bulgaria, the inequity among students from high education background persists over time. This result allows us to reject *Hypothesis 4.1*. The results also reveal that the levels of inequity among students with a low education background increase over time. Thus, we may also reject *Hypothesis 4.2*. However, whereas similar trend of an increase of inequity is observed in Slovakia for the period between 2007 and 2011, in Estonia the equity of the higher education system, for the same period, increased. These results suggest that, whereas the equity in higher education in terms of inclusion in Estonia is associated with equity in terms of fairness, these two aspects do not go hand-in-hand in Bulgaria and Slovakia. The tendencies identified point to the need for taking into account both aspects of equity, given that they may not always go in one and the same direction.
- The differences in chances of children from different social background attaining higher education are still high in all post-communist countries studied (except Slovenia). However, the level of underrepresentation of students with low educational backgrounds is different in different countries. This underrepresentation is most pronounced in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian case definitely stands out among the countries studied, which poses the question as to the nationally-specific trajectories of higher education development. In this respect, a thorough analysis is needed that would take into account, not only the specificity of the higher education system and the adopted higher education policies, but also the specific features of the wider social and cultural environment.

These results also lead to questions about the barriers which limit the development of young people of unprivileged socioeconomic background. The problem should be seen neither only in terms of giving them the same opportunities to access higher education institutions as those of their peers with a high social background nor only as a possibility for upward mobility, but also in terms of enhancing their opportunities to access (and complete) the same range of fields of studies as are accessible to people from a privileged social background. A second question refers to the type of tools acceptable to be used for overcoming these barriers.

As regards the dynamics of equity in Bulgaria, following the study of Kwiek (2008) which provides evidence for the *equity “success story”* of Poland, which can be viewed as an example of good practice for a transition economy in which the enrollment gap with major OECD economies is not decreasing: both the total number of students and the percentage of them with a disadvantaged background (especially in the last five years) have increased in Poland substantially, it seems that the equity position of Bulgaria looks like a “failure” story.

The application of the capability approach in the analysis of the changes of inequalities in access to higher education between people from different socioeconomic backgrounds allowed us to take into account their qualitative side, and in this way to enrich the picture of their dynamics. It also revealed that widened access to higher education was not sufficient for reducing the inequalities in access to higher education over time, especially when these are seen as inequalities of opportunities that groups from different social backgrounds are really able to make use of. Thus, our results are in line with the view that diversity of students in higher education cannot be taken as an indicator of greater ‘equality’ within the system, and that “unevenness persists with regard to who studies what and where” (Archer, 2007, p. 646), and support the *effectively maintained inequalities hypothesis* by showing that the effects of social background on access to higher education occur in at least two ways: (1) they determine who completes it, and (2) they determine the kind of higher education persons will receive (Lucas, 2001, p. 1681).

7.4.2. Identified trends as regards the inequalities in graduate employability

As regards the inequalities in graduate employability, the analysis also outlined that the problems which higher education graduates experience on the labour market are not negligible and they do

not start with the economic crisis in 2008 but, to a great extent, seem to be exacerbated by it. Most likely, the reasons are that the post-communist countries had already experienced austerity due to the transition process from a planned to a market economy.

In summary, the following trends were identified in this respect:

- There is a clear status hierarchy in terms of occupational status that may be gained by graduates from tertiary programmes of different durations.
- There are considerable differences in the occupational status by fields of study.
- Vertical education-job mismatch is a widespread phenomenon, in all countries studied, among the group of graduates aged 25-34 years. In addition, we identified a decrease in employment rates among graduates in the period 2010 and 2013. Thus, our results support *Hypothesis 5a*. However, this period coincides with the effects of the economic crisis and it is hard to distinguish its effects from the expansion trends.
- Graduates who received Master's and PhD degrees are less likely to be vertically mismatched in comparison with those who completed shorter tertiary programmes.
- Graduates who have completed different fields of study have different chances of being vertically mismatched.
- Graduates who have graduated from different higher education institutions have different employability.

These results allow us corroborating hypotheses: *Hypothesis 6.1*, *Hypothesis 6.2* and *Hypothesis 6.3*. In addition, we found support in favour of *Hypothesis 7*, according to which graduate employability varies across countries. To a great extent, the identified trends are consistent with the conclusions from a recent study on school-to-work transitions in transition countries (Kogan, Noelke, Gebel, 2011), which state that treating tertiary graduates as a homogenous group in the labour market is not appropriate in the case of expanded and diversified systems, and that higher education differentiation has introduced new forms of social (LM) inequality. Furthermore, the results are in line with the conclusions of another comparative study, which provides evidence that educational expansion also affects return to fields of study (Reimer, Noelke, & Kucel, 2008). Thus, consistent with previous research, the study results suggest that the problem of differences

of labour market outcomes of people who graduated different tertiary programmes should be taken into account in the discussion about social justice in higher education, since these differences may signal problems for the most highly-qualified – either on the supply side, related to the lack of particular skills and enough specialists from a particular professional field; or on the demand side, related to lack of opportunities for graduate employment.

The results of another comparative study have clearly demonstrated that Western countries tend to have much higher average levels of occupational status than the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Andersen & van de Werfhorst, 2010), for higher education in CEE countries tends to have a much stronger impact on occupational status. In addition, the present study has shown significant differences in the occupational status and the chances of graduates to be vertically mismatched within the six CEE countries which were studied. Unfortunately, due to insufficiency of data, it was not possible to estimate these differences in controlling simultaneously for the field of study and the duration of the tertiary programme. Thus, it is not quite clear if the differences in the patterns of occupational status and vertical education-mismatch observed in 2006 and 2008, and those observed in 2010, are due to the effects of the economic crisis, or to the educational expansion, or to the fact that different variables to capture the variety of tertiary programmes in which people graduated are used. Nonetheless, having in mind that the proportion of people with higher education credentials has been expanding for the period of the study in all six countries, the findings are in line with the conclusions of Paul Attewell (2010) and Michael Tomlinson, that “while common trends are evident across national context, the HE–labour market relationship is also subject to national variability” (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 408). Thus, the study results suggest that graduate employability may also be context-specific.

The study results clearly show that high socioeconomic background adds an advantage for graduates in terms of higher occupational status score or in terms of decreasing the likelihood of being employed in a job below one’s level of education. It suggests that, among graduates from different socioeconomic backgrounds, there are huge differences with respect to the ability to be employed. These differences show that, in these six countries, there are inequalities in graduate employability due to socioeconomic background. These inequalities seem to be hidden behind the high employment rates among the most qualified, especially when these rates are compared with those of the people with lower levels of education. The study demonstrates that the graduates

from lower socioeconomic background are more vulnerable as regards having jobs below their level of education or occupations of low occupational status. Thus, their opportunities and chances for graduate employment and high occupational status are constrained to a limited range of employment possibilities. Thus, socioeconomic background may be conceptualized via the capability approach lens as a conversion factor. It may act as an enabling factor for higher occupational status and higher chances for graduates to be employed in a job that is commensurate with their level of education in cases where they come from a high socioeconomic background, and as a constraining one when graduates are from a lower socioeconomic background. This finding raises the question whether graduates with a lower socioeconomic background have really chosen their jobs because they have reason to value them or because the jobs in question are the only options they have, and also touches upon the social justice aspect of graduate employability.

In this respect, it should be noted that a study on job quality across Europe has revealed that overall job quality in CEE countries is very low (Davoine, Erhel, & Guergoat-Lariviere, 2008). This may be one of the reasons why higher education graduates accept jobs that require lower levels of education, especially in times of crisis. Furthermore, a recent comparative study has demonstrated that, despite the crisis, the levels of job quality in these six countries, although very low, have been stable and even slightly increased between 2005 and 2010 (Leschke, Watt, & Finn, 2012). Slovenia is the only country among the countries studied with a job quality index higher than the EU 27 average.

Another layer of explanation for the current differences in graduate employability is that graduates received their degrees from higher education institutions of different levels of prestige. Thus, as evidenced by the data of the Bulgarian Universities Ranking System, there are large differences in graduate employability among people who studied in different higher education institutions, as regards unemployment rates, insurance income and applicability of the degree acquired, among graduates in the same professional field but who graduated in different universities in the last five academic years.

Overall, the empirical evidence in this study demonstrates the usefulness of conceptualizing graduate employability as a *capability*. Seen as a capability, graduate employability has an *absolute aspect* that refers to skillsets and valuesets developed as a segment of higher education

studies; in most cases, in interaction with the familial and educational environment. It also accounts for its *relative aspect*, which refers to opportunities provided for graduates' employment by the economic development and needs of the country, the quality of jobs, employment protection legislation, as well as the state of the economy and the state of higher education (incl. higher education institutions, level of massification, structure of graduate body, etc.). From this perspective, the results have clearly shown that graduate employability is embedded in different institutional arrangements, such as the higher education system and the labour market, that are usually nationally specific. Furthermore, the application of the capability approach allowed the taking into account, in the analyses of graduate employability, dimensions such as quality, social justice and context.

CONCLUSIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND A WAY FORWARD

The present study started as a pursuit of social justice in the context of the current developments of higher education and the labour market in Bulgaria and the overall lack of research on this issue in the area of higher education research. It was provoked by the unprecedented worldwide expansion of higher education in recent decades and the controversy in the views about the social justice implications of this growth. Given the broadness of the issue, I focused only on two aspects of higher education, its *entry* and *exit*. I did so because these aspects were identified as encompassing significant social justice issues and as relevant spaces in which the distribution of economic and social benefits and of social and economic advancement for individuals and their families take place.

The *aim* of the research project was twofold. First, to examine the mechanisms through which the higher education expansion influences social justice in *access* to higher education in Bulgaria. Second, to explore the mechanisms through which the expansion of higher education influences the distribution of labour market *outcomes* of higher education in Bulgaria. To achieve this aim, I explored the level of inequalities in *access* and *labour market outcomes* of higher education in the context of higher education expansion and economic crisis in Bulgaria in static, dynamic and comparative perspectives. The static perspective referred to the most recent inequalities. The dynamic perspective included the period of the most recent decades for which it was possible to find relevant data. The comparative perspective tried to highlight how Bulgaria fares with respect to the other post-communist countries with regard to the level of these inequalities. A special emphasis was placed on the qualitative side of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes by taking into account that access and labour market outcomes may have different meanings and differ in terms of their quality. The results from the analysis were interpreted in the light of the social justice theoretical framework of the capability approach, to the extent that it allowed me to conceptualize and evaluate the level of these inequalities.

In the following sections of this concluding chapter, I go through the main steps I have taken from its start till the end. More specifically, I try to show how I answered my research question

and outline the main study findings and the contribution of the thesis to scientific knowledge. In the end, I draw policy implications based on these findings and formulate several directions for further research.

Answer to the research question

The present thesis has addressed the following question: *What is the influence of the expansion of higher education in Bulgaria on social justice in higher education?* Bearing in mind the complexity of this question, in the introduction I have formulated seven main tasks, with which to guide my research in providing an answer. Below, I present how these tasks have been accomplished within this study, each of them being developed in a corresponding chapter.

The first task was to present an overview of the developments in higher education and the labour market in Europe in the recent decades, in the light of their social justice implications. This overview was important to the extent that it highlighted the wider context of this research. It showed that the quantitative growth of students who gained access to higher education was accompanied by many diversification trends which might have different effects on the level of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education in European countries than the one which expansion itself had. More specifically, the following trends were discussed: the growth of the private sector, the horizontal (associated with different fields) and vertical (related to the different types of degrees and the prestige of higher education institutions) differentiation of higher education, the diversity of higher education systems in terms of their structural characteristics (eg. the existence of unified, binary and diversified systems) and the broader scope of missions that higher education has (teaching, research and innovation). A central challenge, in this context, became how to isolate the effect of one development from the effect of another. Despite that, all these trends point to the fact that, in the context of higher education expansion, higher education has become very heterogeneous in its nature. It also suggests that graduates would also have quite different advantages on the labour market and a different capacity to deal with the changing employment conditions (eg. those associated with growing job insecurity and transformation of labour market opportunities). Last but not least, these advantages may be constrained by the overall economic development and job quality in a given country. Given this, the concern about the routes of expansion and the labour market constraints for the professional

realization of graduates in a given country should be seen as relevant for the evaluation of the impact of expansion on social justice. In addition, I identified the need, when we try to explore social justice in relation to higher education, to seek an adequate understanding of social justice that considers the differences in the quality of higher education in these complex settings.

My second task was to find an understanding of social justice that will be appropriate for its study in the specific context of higher education. In so doing, I tried to link the prevailing approaches and concepts in the analysis of access and labour market outcomes of higher education to the ongoing discussions about social inequality and social justice. Thus, in Chapter 2, I looked back at the most dominant contemporary theories of justice in social sciences, trying to find an appropriate definition of the term which can be relevant to the higher education context. The overview revealed that social justice is a complex and multi-faceted notion, the meanings of which may differ in different contexts, and the nature of which may transform over time. However, overall there is a lack of clarity about what social justice actually means and how it may be pursued, because most of the theories focus on different dimensions (either distributional or beyond merely distributional, or look at it as a virtue) or either attach it to the individual or to institutions. Some opponents of the term even state that the pursuit of social justice is impossible and incompatible with capitalist society. The working definition which was chosen is that *social justice is about distribution of goods*. This choice implies that I will focus only on the distribution aspect of justice and that I will conceptualize higher education as a good.

Given this, by drawing upon the model developed by Unterhalter and Brighouse (2007, 2010), an extended model for perceiving higher education as a good was proposed. This model adheres to a multi-dimensional view of higher education which implies that it should be understood as a good which comprises three dimensions – *private*, *public* and *positional*. Each of these dimensions intersects with the terrain of freedom, and one dimension may prevail over another, depending on the settings. This is why the view shared in this thesis is that *social justice in education is country-specific* and thus can only be understood within specific contexts of interpretation and enactments. I also paid attention to two aspects of social justice, *equality* and *equity*, which were identified as important in the debate of social justice in education. The ideas of equality and equity are both intertwined with the distributive dimensions of justice and represent two different principles of justice against which the achievement of social justice may be assessed. Whereas *equality* refers to the equality of distribution of goods and services to different groups, *equity*

plays the role of a correcting principle with regard to unforeseen consequences of the kind of application of the principle of equality that ignores certain structural characteristics of the particular society as a whole. I have focused on three axes around which the discussions of *equality* and *equity* in higher education may be subsumed: equality of educational opportunities vs. equality of educational outcomes, equity as fairness vs. equity as inclusion, and equity as analyzed at a particular moment vs. equity as a dynamic term.

I also considered two aspects of distribution *equality* and *equity* through higher education which have been recognized as important in the debates about social justice in relation to higher education, and for which there is a lack of conceptual writings. In order to fill this gap I first discussed equality and equity of employment outcomes of higher education and then paid special attention to the term “employability” as one that encompasses significant social justice issues. As a result of the overview of different definitions of, and approaches to, graduate employability, the term was defined as *not simply related to graduates’ abilities to find employment but also to graduates’ abilities to find employment of specific quality*. In addition, I discussed the need for a context-sensitive approach that might take into account the embeddedness of employability, and which explains the differences in graduate employability across different settings.

Overall, the discussions around higher education as a good and graduate employability implied that there is a need to search for social justice approaches that are sensitive to diverse settings and which are freedom-oriented, so that we can evaluate whether a given distribution of higher education in its entry and exit is just under concrete conditions.

The third task was to explore the heuristic potential of the theoretical framework of the capability approach for the study of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education. To do that, in Chapter 3 I discussed two accounts of the capability approach: Sen’s and Nussbaum’s, as they are both social justice oriented and use (a special kind of) freedom, called capability, which refers to *people’s freedom to choose to live the life they have reason to value*, as a relevant informational basis for justice. However, whereas Sen’s version of the approach could be accepted as a general framework focusing on information about individual advantages judged in terms of opportunity, rather than on a specific design for how a society or institutions should be organized, Nussbaum’s account of justice implies that the structure of social and political institutions should be chosen with a view to promoting at least a threshold

level of human capabilities. She endorses a list of ten central capabilities which could only give the basis for determining a decent social minimum in a variety of areas. Thus, although both approaches provide valuable contributions towards the evaluation and the advancement of justice, Sen's approach is oriented towards justice at the individual level, whereas Nussbaum's approach focuses on the assessment of the extent to which the state has provided a threshold of central capabilities. Given these differences, I focused only on Sen's account of justice and intend, in future studies, to also apply Nussbaum's.

Among many of the advantages which Sen's interpretation of the capability approach has, I focused on three which, in my opinion, are important for the evaluation of the inequalities in access to, and in the labour market outcomes of, higher education and in pursuing social justice in higher education. *First*, the capability approach broadens our understanding of how higher education may be understood. This understanding goes beyond the narrow human capital agenda in which human lives are viewed only as means to economic gain, but looks at people and their well-being as an end. Thus, it allows us to take into account all three aspects of higher education as a good – private, positional and public, and to acknowledge its heterogeneous nature in the current settings. *Second*, the capability approach offers a framework for how equality in access and labour market outcomes of higher education could be measured, namely by focusing on the capabilities people have to achieve what they have reason to value. Thus, it allows us to capture the qualitative side of inequalities in access and labour market outcomes of higher education. *Third*, the capability approach provides a framework to engage in reducing unfairness and inequalities in higher education, via public reasoning.

Using the capability approach language, I conceptualized how access to and outcomes of higher education will be interpreted in this study. Firstly, I conceptualized '*being able to access higher education*' as a *capability* which people have to access higher education and distinguish it from '*being enrolled/accepted in a tertiary programme*', which may be conceptualized via the capability approach lens as a *functioning*. Secondly, I conceptualized employability of graduates as a *capability* and define it as '*being able to be employed*' (or '*having the freedom to be employed*'). I differentiate it from '*being employed*', which I conceptualize as a *functioning*. The way I conceptualized access and graduate employability focused on the plurality of options which access and employment entail, which may be qualitatively different. In both capability spaces: '*being able to access higher education*' and '*being able to be employed*', I put the freedom

people have to choose to live the life they have reason to value in the centre.

Thus, I was concerned, not so much with the choice itself and how people take decisions, but whether there are factors which are constraining this choice and whether the opportunities people have are valuable enough and of the same quality. In this regard, the present research is particularly interested in the patterns and trends of differences between the outcomes achieved by people with different socioeconomic background.

The fourth task was to discuss and critically review the main theories and hypotheses concerning the dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education, inequity in higher education and in the labour market outcomes of higher education over time. This review focused on the studies of the dynamics of educational inequalities, which were mainly carried out in the area of sociology of education and stratification research. However, it highlighted that there is a lack of consensus about the influence of the expansion in higher education on inequalities in access to, and outcomes of, higher education. As regards inequalities in access to higher education, two strands of studies are identified. Whereas the *first group of studies* provides evidence for a decrease of inequalities of educational opportunity that may be due to the social origin of students, the *second group* suggests stability and persistence of the effect of socioeconomic background on school success, despite schooling expansion. The discussion of these studies has outlined that most of these theories and studies focus on evaluating inequalities either in the space of opportunity or in the space of outcomes in the context of the expansion. As regards the studies on dynamics of inequities in higher education in the context of educational expansion, it turned out that there is a very limited body of literature and data despite the increasing significance of this issue. Furthermore, the overview of these studies could not find an unambiguous answer to the question of whether the expansion of higher education has reduced inequity in higher education or not. The overview of the existing studies on the dynamics of the labour market outcomes of higher education highlighted the need for taking into account both horizontal and vertical aspects of diversification, which have resulted in a growing inequality among higher education graduates, when evaluating the influence of higher education expansion on graduate employability.

Overall, this overview identified a huge lack of studies which focus on qualitative inequalities in the discussion of the influence of educational expansion on levels of educational inequalities. Furthermore, it highlighted the fact that these problems are under-researched in Bulgaria and in

general in Central and Eastern European countries. Despite that, this overview was important to the extent that it helped me to formulate hypotheses which will be tested in the thesis.

The fifth task was to explore the specific country-context of this research, in the light of historical developments and experience which Bulgaria has had over time. To do so, I investigated the trends in higher education in Bulgaria in two periods: communist and post-communist. More specifically, I focused on the main developments related to the two aspects of higher education – admission policies and funding mechanisms via which different social justice norms of social justice have been implemented. I also explored the routes of expansion of higher education in Bulgaria in these two periods and the main developments in graduate employment in Bulgaria, seen in a wider comparative perspective of Central and Eastern European countries at that time.

In fact, this overview confirmed that Bulgaria provides an interesting case for research, given the experience of the country with different ways of understanding and implementing the distribution of opportunities for access to higher education and for employment opportunities at the exit of higher education in these two periods. The experience of the country with different ways of understanding and implementing the distribution of opportunities in access to higher education and as regards employment opportunities at the exit of higher education in these two periods provide an opportunity for comparing alternatives which may be useful in public debates as to how social justice in higher education may be enhanced. Thus, whereas in the communist period the focus was on equality of outcome and educational inequalities (at the entry and exit of higher education) as such were regulated by means of egalitarian social policy and resource redistribution, the post-communist period was marked by liberalization of education policy and further emphasis on equality of opportunity. However, given the great socioeconomic inequalities and the problems which the country experienced in the transition period (after 1989), it is doubtful whether this new policy enhanced social justice or not. The problems which the country experienced in the transition period were related to growing levels of poverty and inequality in the country. In fact, although all post-communist countries were exposed to similar challenges after the collapse of socialism (eg. how to transform their economic model, or how to meet the requirements for accession to the European Union), Bulgaria was among the countries which adopted an unfavourable path to this transition. Despite the many changes in the country, it still lags behind other post-communist countries on many indicators.

The analysis of the expansion of the studied period (1944-2011) revealed that, despite the differences in the communist and post-communist period in terms of the criteria for admission and funding models, some common trends can be identified. Thus, I found that the expansion in Bulgaria was implemented by the gradual inclusion of more women in higher education, by offering students part-time modes of studying and that it took place in particular fields of studies. At the same time, the routes to expansion in the democratic period became more diverse. Thus, the analysis revealed that expansion involved more studying in the private sector and an increase of Master's students. The routes of expansion were recognized as important, especially when evaluating the inequalities in access and outcomes of higher education.

The sixth task was to operationalize how the concepts of access to higher education and graduate employability can be analyzed through the lens of the capability approach, and to suggest a way that these concepts can be measured in the context of this research. The operationalization of concepts, which is described in more detail in Chapter 6, outlined the importance of taking into account the plurality of alternative outcomes which access or employability entail. It is essential when one considers evaluating inequalities in access to higher education and graduate employability in the space of the capability. In fact, as an evaluative space, capability is not directly observable and therefore it is hard to measure. This is why, in line with the work of other researchers, further analysis will stick to the analysis of the outcomes/functionings, and this information will be used to draw conclusions about the space of capability.

Given this, I operationalized '*being enrolled/accepted in a tertiary programme*', which was conceptualized via the capability approach lens as a *functioning* as being enrolled in different fields of studies, tertiary programmes and higher education institutions. As regards the other concept, graduate employability, I operationalized '*being employed*', which was conceptualized via the capability approach lens as a *functioning*, as being employed in jobs which are of different quality, and graduates may have different reasons to value them or not (eg. positions with different occupational status or positions that are commensurate with their level of education or not). As regards equity, it was operationalized in two of its dimensions, *fairness* and *inclusion*.

The measurement of these concepts was made using secondary data analysis and had a primarily quantitative focus. The main source of data chosen was the European Social Survey (2006-2010). Although it is not designed specifically for the purposes of my study, it contains rich data which

can be used in the analysis of inequalities. Among its many advantages, it allowed me to give a comparative perspective of my findings by placing Bulgaria among other five post-communist countries: Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Although these countries shared a communist past, they differ considerably in terms of the social inclusiveness of their higher education systems and state of the economy. These data were complemented by data from the Eurostudent survey (III & IV), Bulgarian Universities Ranking System and the official statistics – the National Statistical Institute (NSI) in Bulgaria, and Eurostat. Two levels of analysis of social justice in higher education were applied: national-level and individual-level data analysis. Thus, whereas for equity, I relied mainly on aggregate data at national level, for the inequalities in access to higher education it was possible to use both types of analysis.

Given this, a set of indicators has been proposed which can be used in the analyses of inequalities in access to higher education, equity of higher education and graduate employability at nation-level. More specifically, three measures were selected to study the dynamics of equity in higher education in Bulgaria at national level in both of its aspects: *fairness* and *inclusion*. These were: 1) Educational equity index (EEI), 2) Typology of social inclusiveness of higher education systems, and 3) Tertiary attainment level. Three more measures were proposed for the analysis of *inequalities in access to higher education*: 1) Modified Inequality Index, 2) Share of graduates from higher education institutions in field of subject of study with a high educational background, and 3) Share of graduates from higher education institutions in different tertiary programmes with a high educational background. Thus, a special emphasis was placed on the qualitative side of these inequalities. In addition, a set of indicators has been chosen in the case of measuring *inequalities in graduate employability* at national level: 1) Benchmark on employability, 2) Occupational status, and 3) Qualification mismatch. The last two were also identified as appropriate in the case of institutional-level analysis of graduate employability. For individual-level analysis of inequalities in access to higher education and graduate employability, the study has chosen regression models.

As regards the dynamic perspective, the analysis of the inequalities in access to higher education exclusively used the European Social Survey (2006-2010) and was based on cohort analysis which covered all respondents born between 1936 and 1985 in all six countries. These people were divided into five birth cohorts. For the analysis of equity, though, I combined three data sources. Specifically, I used data from National Statistical Institute to calculate the share of the

general population of males aged 40-59 with higher education degrees as of the years of the Bulgarian national censuses in 1965, 1975, 1985, 1992 and 2001 and combined this information with the share of people aged between 18 and 23 (since these years are indicative of schooling in higher education) calculated on the basis of the European Social Survey (2006-2010) as of the moment of these censuses. For 2007, I used the ready inequity index based on data from the Eurostudent survey (2007). This survey was also implemented in some of the other countries as well and, thus, it allowed us to see how Bulgaria fares with respect to the other countries in terms of equity. As regards the analysis of inequalities in graduate employability, it was not possible to cover such a wide period of time and relied mainly on the ESS data for the period 2006 and 2010 and data from the Bulgarian Universities Ranking System as of 2012.

The seventh task was to apply the framework of the capability approach to investigate the current levels of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education in Bulgaria in the context of the dynamics of these inequalities, and to explore the levels of inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education in a wider comparative context by placing Bulgaria among other new EU member states, and to ascertain whether there are common patterns among these countries. More specifically, the study identified that:

- Despite the fact that the expansion of higher education in Bulgaria contributed towards a greater inclusion of the population into the higher education system, the inequity among the students from different socioeconomic background persists over time. These results demonstrate that *fairness* and *inclusion* aspects of equity may not go hand in hand.
- The differences in the chances of children from different social backgrounds of attaining higher education are still high in all post-communist countries studied (except Slovenia). However, the level of underrepresentation of students with low educational backgrounds is different in different countries. This underrepresentation is most pronounced in Bulgaria.
- In all post-communist countries we can see, on average, an increase over time in the inequalities in educational attainment among people born in the first four birth cohorts (1936/1945, 1946/1955, 1956/1965 and 1966/1975), measured using father's and mother's education as independent variables. Parents' education seems to be a strong and constant predictor of the chances that one has to access higher education institutions. Thus, the study findings support the socialist transformation hypothesis, which postulates that socialist

reforms of educational systems and the corresponding policies (particularly the implementation of the so-called quota system) initially reduced the effects of social origin on educational attainment. Despite that, as soon as the new elite secured privileges for themselves and took control of the educational system, they ensured educational advantages for their own children. It resulted in a growth in the effect of social origin in the later years of the socialist regimes (Matějů, 1993; Matějů, Řeháková, & Simonová, 2003, 2007).

- There is a common trend of decrease in the inequalities among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds born in the most recent cohort (1976/1985). As far as this trend refers to a period of expansion of higher education, it is in line with the conclusion that expansion contributes towards inclusion.
- In all post-communist countries there are qualitative inequalities in access to higher education, i.e. inequalities in: a) the range of opportunities for children from different social backgrounds to have access to higher education in terms of fields of studies, and b) the opportunities for children from different social backgrounds to have access to the same type of degree.
- There are both common trends and national-specific peculiarities in how inequalities in the access to higher education have been changing over time in the post-communist countries. However, the levels of inequalities that are due to socioeconomic background differ considerably by country. Among the countries studied, Bulgaria stands out as a country with the highest level of inequalities in access to higher education. This suggests that the public dimension of higher education in Bulgaria is strongly neglected, given that measures undertaken to reduce inequalities in access to higher education in Bulgaria seem to be ineffective.
- There is a clear status hierarchy in terms of occupational status that may be gained by graduates from tertiary programmes of different durations, and considerable differences in the occupational status by fields of study.
- Vertical education-job mismatch, which “refers to the lack of correspondence between the level of the education acquired and the level required in the job” (Støren & Arnesen, 2011, p. 200), is a widespread phenomenon in all the countries studied, among the group of graduates

aged 25-34 years. As such, it seems to be more common than the problem of graduate unemployment.

- Graduates who received Master's and PhD degrees are less likely to be vertically mismatched in comparison with those who completed shorter tertiary programmes. In addition, graduates who have completed different fields of study have different chances of being vertically mismatched. The analysis also showed that graduates who have graduated from different higher education institutions experience different employability, although it was not possible to identify any patterns as regards socioeconomic background because data on socioeconomic background were not available. These findings point to the growing importance of the positional dimension of higher education, which interact with labour market conditions in a given context and shape graduates' employment opportunities. They also point to the necessity to take into account the relative aspect of graduate employability alongside its absolute one when we analyze this phenomenon via a social justice perspective.

The application of the capability approach in the analysis of the socioeconomic inequalities in access to higher education allowed me to take into account the qualitative side of these inequalities and, in this way, to enrich the picture of the study of their dynamics. It also revealed that the widened access to higher education was not sufficient to reduce the inequalities in access to higher education over time, especially when these are seen as inequalities of opportunities that groups from different socioeconomic backgrounds are really able to make use of. Thus, these findings are in line with the view that diversity of students in higher education alone cannot be taken as an indicator of greater 'equality' within the system, and that the unevenness persists with regard to who studies what and where (Archer, 2007). The findings support the *effectively maintained inequalities hypothesis* by showing that the effects of social background on access to higher education occur in at least two ways: (1) they determine who completes it, and (2) they determine the kind of higher education persons will receive (Lucas, 2001, p. 1681). To a great extent, this has become possible due to the diversification trends which accompanied the expansion of higher education and which contributed to the growth of inequalities within the student body.

The identified trends which referred to graduate employability allow us to claim that these diversification trends also had an impact on the level of inequalities within the graduate body. In

this regard, these findings are also consistent with the conclusions from a recent study on school-to-work transitions in transition countries (Kogan, Noelke, & Gebel, 2011), which state that treating tertiary graduates as a homogenous group in the labour market is not appropriate in the case of expanded and diversified systems, and that higher education differentiation has introduced new forms of social (LM) inequality. Furthermore, the results are in line with the conclusions of another comparative study, which provides evidence that educational expansion also affects the return on fields of study (Reimer, Noelke, & Kucel, 2008). Thus, consistent with previous research, the present study results suggest that the problem of differences of labour market outcomes of people who graduated from different tertiary programmes should be taken into account in the discussion about social justice in higher education, since these differences may signal problems for the most-highly qualified – either on the supply side, related to the lack of particular skills and enough specialists from a particular professional field, or on the demand side, related to lack of opportunities for graduate employment.

Thus, overall, in line with my argument stated in the introduction, the empirical results in the study provide an answer to my research question showing that *the influence of higher education expansion on social justice in higher education operates through two different mechanisms which run simultaneously*. The widened access to higher education in Bulgaria has played an important role in decreasing inequalities in access to, and labour market outcomes of, higher education and increased equity in a sense of inclusion. Thus, expansion undoubtedly contributed to the growth of people from all strata in higher education and of more highly-educated people in the labour market. However, through the diversification processes by which it was accompanied, the expansion has led to the maintaining/perpetuating of high inequalities in access, less equity in a sense of fairness in higher education system, and socioeconomic inequalities in employability of the graduate body.

The contribution of the thesis

The contribution of this research may be seen in four different directions: theoretical, methodological, empirical and practical.

The first theoretical contribution of the thesis is that it enriches the theoretical perspectives used in the study of social justice in higher education by drawing a model of conceptualizing higher

education as a good which is useful for the evaluation of social justice in higher education. The agency and well-being freedom of people is placed at the center of this model. This model requires higher education to be understood as a good that comprises three dimensions: *private*, *positional* and *public*. It has been justified that each of these aspects has social justice implications and should be taken into account in the evaluation of social justice in higher education.

The second theoretical contribution of the thesis is that it enriches the theoretical perspectives used in the study of social justice in (access to and outcomes of) higher education by applying the theoretical framework of the capability approach. Bearing in mind that the capability approach offers a freedoms-focused and equality-oriented approach for both practicing and evaluating education and social justice in all education sectors and in diverse contexts (Unterhalter & Walker, 2007, p. 251), I focused on two aspects of higher education: its *entry* and *exit* as spaces of freedom in which social justice may be evaluated. More specifically, I conceptualized *being able to access higher education* and *graduate employability* as capabilities. These conceptualizations are important to the extent that they take into account the plurality of options which both access and graduate employability may entail, and thus take into account their qualitative side when studying the socioeconomic inequalities in these two spaces, and also to the extent that they are embedded into particular settings and therefore are country and time-specific. In the present study, only those pluralities of options which capture the structural and institutional aspects of higher education have been taken into account. However, the application of the capability approach unfolds a wide range of outcomes which higher education which might be associated with, and which are important to justice. Thus, agency, critical thinking, and practical reason can also be considered, via the capability approach lens, as important to the idea of justice. However, within the limitations of the study they have not been covered.

In addition, the capability approach as such allows us, not only to take into account the plurality of options, but also a much wider range of factors than the ones used in the present study, since it acknowledges the importance of social arrangements but also the personal characteristics of people via their role as conversion factors. Given the acknowledgement of the importance of both macro and micro-level factors, it has a potential on its own to explain, and not just evaluate, the level of inequalities and thus it can also enrich one of the contemporary debates in sociology in education about structure and agency. Overall, the present study has demonstrated the usefulness

of the capability approach language when it comes to the interpretation of its results from the analysis on inequalities in access and graduate employability.

The thesis also contributes to the further development of the research on social justice in higher education by looking at the issue in a historical and cross-national perspective. It turned out that the body of literature that links graduate employability and the capability approach is quite scarce. Furthermore, the identified studies focus entirely on a single country-context. The comparative studies on inequalities in access to higher education via the capability approach are also lacking. Given the specific historical heritage of post-communist countries, an adoption of a dynamic and cross-national perspective proved to be quite beneficial. It has become possible by combining various sources of data, but mainly micro-level data from several rounds of the European Social Survey and aggregate data from the National Statistical Institute, Eurostat and Eurostudent Survey. Although these data were not collected for the purposes of the study and have not been developed using the capability approach concepts, they have provided a solid database for research into the inequalities in access and graduate employability in a dynamic and a cross-national perspective.

The methodological contributions of the thesis may be seen in its quantitative focus, which is not often applied in the study of social justice in higher education, and in the use of a set of indicators to study the inequalities and equity in order to capture different aspects of the studied phenomena in the context of higher education. More specifically, I have used regression analyses to estimate the chances of people from different socioeconomic background to access higher education and to be employed in a position with specific quality. The use of the set of indicators has demonstrated that it is important to take into account the multifaceted nature of justice. Thus, the analysis of these indicators revealed that it is important to take into account not only the *inclusion* but also the *fairness* aspect of higher education, given that they may not always go hand-in-hand and given that they are both important from a social justice perspective. The analysis also considered the importance of taking into account the qualitative side of inequalities.

Empirically, the thesis has addressed the gap in research on social justice in higher education for Eastern European countries. In fact, there is a huge gap in research on this problem in Bulgaria. The thesis sheds more light on the levels of inequalities in access to higher education and graduate employability in Bulgaria in the wider context of New EU Member states. More

specifically, the study found that there are both common trends and national-specific peculiarities in how inequalities in the access to higher education have been changing over time in the post-communist countries. However, the levels of inequalities that are due to social background differ considerably by country. Among the six countries studied, Bulgaria stands out as a country with the highest level of inequalities in access to higher education. Another finding was that, despite the expansion of higher education in Bulgaria, the inequity among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds persists over time. Last but not least, the thesis found that in all post-communist countries there are qualitative inequalities in access to higher education and in the labour market outcomes of higher education.

The practical contribution of the thesis is that it develops ideas about social justice in education and the labour market from a ‘bottom-up’ (rather than ‘top-down’) perspective; from problems to theory, rather than the other way round (in the tradition of public policy, related to higher education and the labour market). More specifically, these ideas are presented as policy implications in the next section of the thesis.

Policy Implications

The present study has provided theoretical reflection and empirical evidence which can be used in public discussions about social justice in higher education. It has also identified a number of implications for policy which need further public reasoning:

- Given the empirical evidence in the thesis, the main policy priority must be to take action to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in access to higher education, inequity in higher education and inequalities in graduate employability in Bulgaria and also in the other post-communist countries. It may require diverse measures to deal with these problems. However, the policies should be country-specific, given that the analysis has highlighted that graduate employability is embedded in wider country and institutional contexts. The same may be said for access. The mechanisms work mainly via changes in admission policies and funding models and by strengthening the link between higher education and the labour market.
- However, any measures will not be efficient if they are not linked with measures which aim to alleviate the socioeconomic inequalities in previous levels of education and in society as a whole. In other words, the results point to the need to improve overall social arrangements so that

they expand people's capabilities – their freedom to promote or achieve what they have reason to value doing and being. It is because the inequalities in access and graduate employability are also, to a great extent, a reflection of problems in many other spheres of life and a continuation of problems accumulated from previous levels of education. A very indicative fact are the PISA results for 2012, which show that Bulgaria definitely stands out as being one of the countries with the lowest mean scores in Maths and with the highest proportion of the variance explained by students' economic, social and cultural status (OECD, 2013b, p. 27). This trend refers to the other areas of this assessment – reading and science. Bulgaria is also among the countries with the lowest share (only about 2.1 percent) of so-called 'resilient' students. (ibid., p. 41). These are those disadvantaged students who manage to overcome difficult socioeconomic circumstances and succeed in school. Thus, in the Bulgarian context, policy measures should be introduced involving not only changes in the higher education system, but more profound changes covering many spheres of life, such as to reduce poverty and overall levels of inequalities, to improve the overall quality of employment and to strengthening the resilience of young people and help them to overcome the barrier of social background, do well in school and have good prospects to work in a job they have reason to value.

- Furthermore, the enhancing of social justice in higher education should not be at the price of lowering its quality. Quite on the contrary, it should be accompanied by measures to enhance the quality of education. The goals should be enhancing and creating the capabilities of people to access higher education and to be employed in a job they have reason to value.
- It seems that the qualitative side of inequalities is underestimated when assessing the social dimension in the Bologna process. In this sense, the present thesis has shown that the interlinkage between diversity and equality in this process should be reconsidered and taken into account in future monitoring of the social dimension of higher education. Furthermore, the capability approach could be very beneficial in generating new ideas about how educational systems in EHEA can become more convergent and fair, and not produce and reproduce inequalities in access to higher education. This involves incorporating a bottom-up approach, that acknowledges that higher education has, not only an instrumental, but also its own intrinsic value, and takes into account both the effects of historical paths and the diversity of groups, settings and (external and internal) factors that operate in different countries and higher education systems.

- The results question the benchmark on employability which was additionally added in ET 2020, since it adopts a too narrow view on employability, and propose its broadening so that it could also capture the positional/relative aspect of graduate employability.
- It should be underscored that higher education should not be perceived only as a mechanism for skill formation. It also contributes to value sets formation, to enhancing agency of people; it widens the capacity of people to make reasonable choices. In such a way, higher education graduates and higher education could contribute towards the transformation of the labour market and the world of work, and also contribute to the development of other spheres of well-being.
- In the light of the Bologna Process, these results question how the employability and personal and professional development of graduates throughout their careers could be enhanced (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012) if a new differentiated and people-centred approach is not introduced. An approach which considers not only improving the quality of higher education but also the quality of jobs and is oriented to the overall quality of life.
- Last but not least, it is important that measures should be undertaken to fill the data gap on these issues. Thus, there is a need for the collection of relevant data, better use of the national statistics data, and the design of a set of key indicators that could be used for the monitoring of these inequalities over time, given that they could provide a base for evaluation of levels of social justice in higher education and could inform policy and guide policy interventions.

Directions for further research

The present study also envisages at least five issues which could be further developed:

- The first one refers to the fact that, to a great extent, the present study has applied Sen's account of justice. It will be a worthwhile if Nussbaum's interpretation is applied as well and results obtained from both analyses compared. Furthermore, the study has not covered an analysis beyond merely distributional dimensions, such as non-labour market outcomes of higher education. In this regard, although the thesis has focused on graduate employability analyzed with regard to the labour market outcomes of graduates, it does not mean that I perceive higher education only in instrumental terms, and that higher education should be subordinated (not only

related) to labour market demands. I also think that the capability perspective towards higher education and graduate employability may go beyond labour market outcomes and encompass particular intrinsic benefits as well as social effects that they might have for society.

- The second issue relates to mechanisms that could explain the identified trends. These trends seem to be more complex than any of the theories that have been used so far in explaining employability. We lack a universal framework that may explain them. Thus, in the context of higher education expansion, neither the human capital (Schultz, 1961; Mincer, 1958; Becker, 1962), nor the positional theory (Hirsch, 1977) nor the job competition model (Thurow, 1975) could explain these trends cross-nationally and over time. At first sight, it seemed that the trends were in line with positional theory and with the job competition model. Thus, in the case of occupational status, I observed that the longer the duration of higher education, the higher occupational status graduates obtained. However, in contrast to one of the postulates of the job competition model, that people compete for training slots, the Bulgarian case clearly showed that it is not the case, given that a very low proportion of graduates received any training. Furthermore, none of these theories take into account the personal and institutional conversion factors. On the contrary, the results of the study clearly showed that social background adds advantage to graduates, in terms of higher occupational status score or in terms of decreasing the likelihood of being vertically mismatched. Moreover, the likelihood of being vertically mismatched differs for graduates employed in different industries. This fact requires further analysis on the institutional conversion factors that may constrain or widen the opportunities of graduates to be employed in graduate jobs. In contrast to these theories, the capability approach seems to possess the potential to fill these gaps and to give a much more detailed explanation of these trends.

- Future research on inequalities in access to higher education and graduate employability might also benefit from using longitudinal data and looking at the effect of socioeconomic background on the transitions to higher education and on its exit. However, so far there is a lack of such data which can be used in the case of Bulgaria. In addition, the capability approach, as such, allows us take into account a much wider range of factors than the ones used in the analysis, since it acknowledges the importance of, not only social arrangements, but also the personal characteristics of people via their role as conversion factors. Thus, it should be noted

that the list of variables in the employed models was far from exhaustive. Therefore, the work on specifying the models and collecting data should continue, including the expansion of the analysis to a wider range of countries. In this regard, further analyses may consider the use of multilevel models, which allow modelling both individual and macro-level data, to better allow us to assess how different personal, institutional or social factors influence the ability of people to access higher education and their employability. In the study this was not possible due to the low numbers of countries used for comparisons. This is why I carried out analysis of data on these levels separately. With sufficient number of cases, multinomial logistic regression analysis, which captures the variety of the outcome variable, may also be used.

- Due to the demographic decline, the quantitative growth of the number of students in some countries in the recent years has been threatened. Thus, concerns emerged that higher education was moving into a contraction phase. Basing his arguments on the Polish case, Marek Kwiek (2011, 2013b, 2013c) predicts contraction of higher education in the next decade, caused by the changing demographics in the country. Unfortunately, this problem is expected to grow in importance. Signs for contraction may be found in many countries, including Bulgaria, especially from the academic year 2009/2010 onwards, as the data show that the number of students in all educational-qualification degrees has decreased by 1.32 percent (from 287,086 to 283,294) in 2013/2014 (NSI, 2014, p. 67). The pool of secondary education graduates from general, special and vocational schools for the same reference period is also shrinking (*ibid.*, pp. 46, 51). The contraction of higher education could bring new problems which Martin Trow had not foreseen in his theoretical framework for higher education development. However, these problems may not necessarily contradict it. In other words, massification and universalization may also go hand-in-hand with contraction. However, this contraction will undoubtedly affect not only the development of higher educational systems and the providers of education, but also individuals. Thus, as we have explored routes of expansion, it will be relevant to investigate the routes of contraction. Contraction would also have significant social justice implications. However, future research will show its effects on the inequalities in access to higher education and graduate employability.

- The fifth issue refers to the changes in the funding model of higher education in recent years. Starting from June 2011, targeted funds have been annually allocated to professional fields

and higher education institutions as a direct investment from the national budget on the basis of two criteria (measured through indicators from the Bulgarian university ranking system): quality of education offered and how training matches labour market needs. This measure was the first step towards introducing performance-based financing of higher education institutions in 2014, when 14.6 percent of the budget subsidy was allocated on performance-based criteria. The Strategy for Development of Higher Education for the period 2014-2020 envisages that 40 percent of the state funding for higher education institutions in Bulgaria in 2017, and 60 percent in 2020, will be allocated on quality and performance-based indicators. In my opinion, this change will have a negative effect on social justice in higher education and will further increase inequalities within the student and graduate body. However, it is a matter of further research to see the effect of this reform on the level of social justice in the higher education sector in Bulgaria.

In conclusion, I would like to return to Sen's words, cited in the introduction of the thesis, with the belief that although we are not able to arrange an ideally-just world and solve all decisional problems, justice will continue to move people in the future, and that it is our responsibility to engage in its advancement "as far as we reasonably can" (Sen, 2009, p. 401) in order to live in a better world. In so saying, I think that the enhancement of social justice in higher education requires a permanent public discussion and critical scrutiny of the developments in higher education in each country. I hope that, with the present research, I have contributed to the sharpening of the content of social justice in higher education and have broadened, at least to some extent, the reasons for this discussion as regards inequalities in access to higher education and in graduate employability, and that my endeavour will stimulate further pursuits of social justice in the area of higher education.

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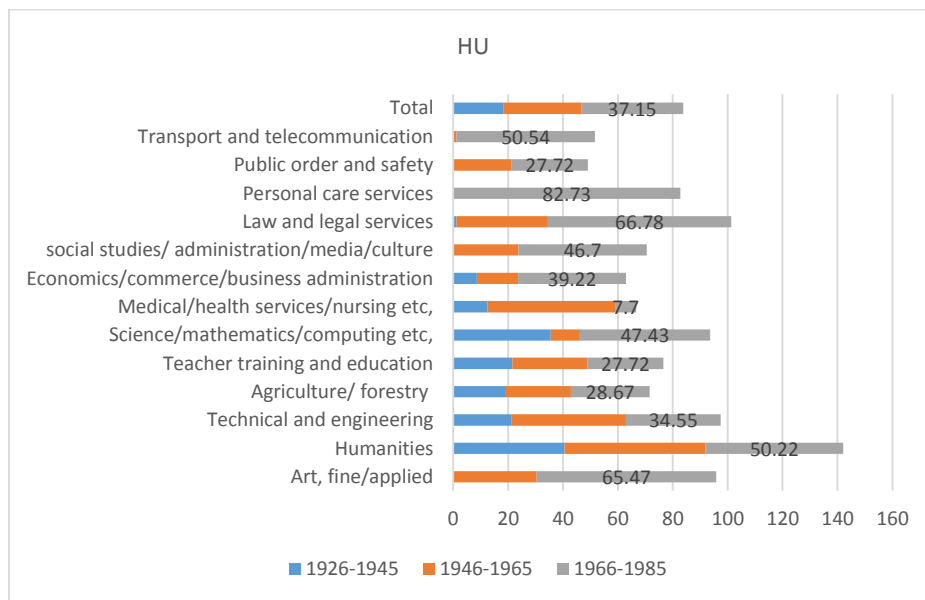
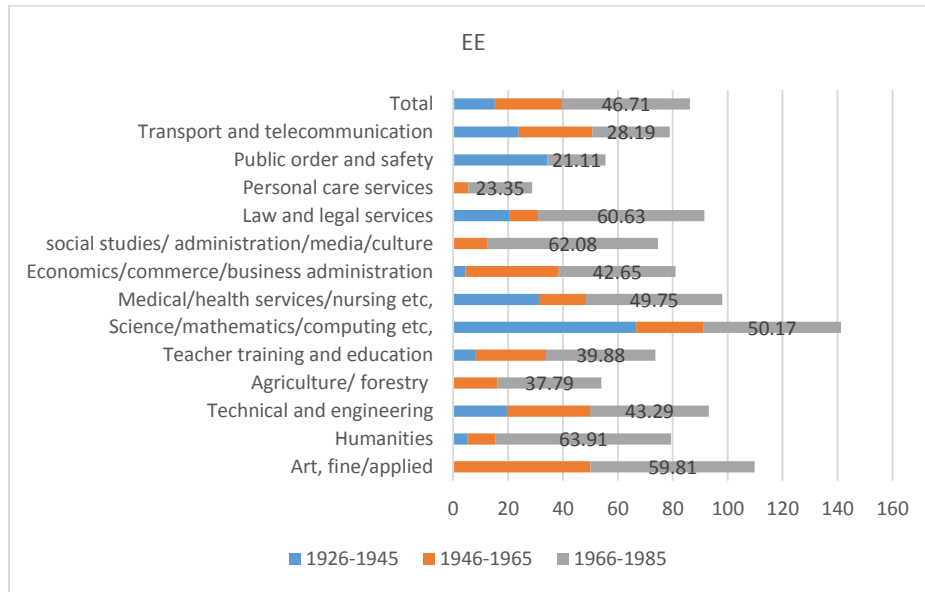
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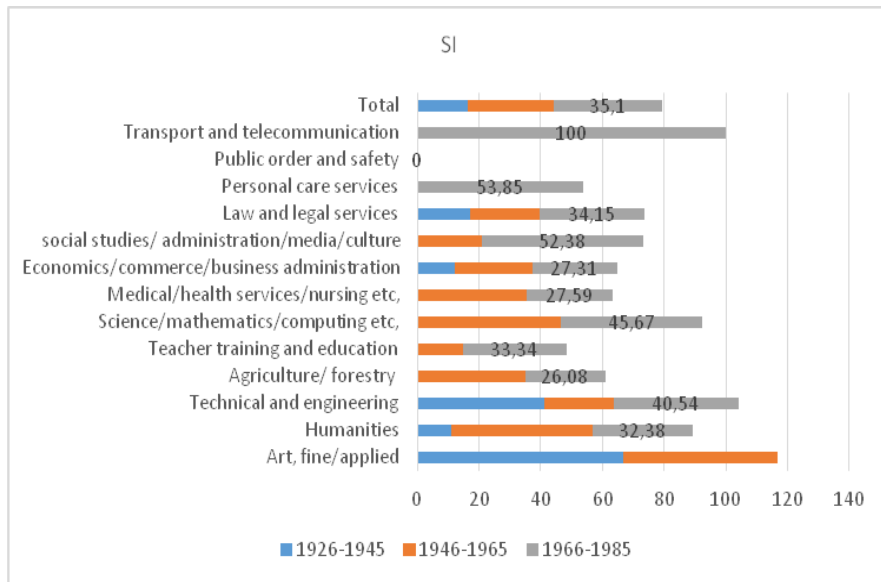
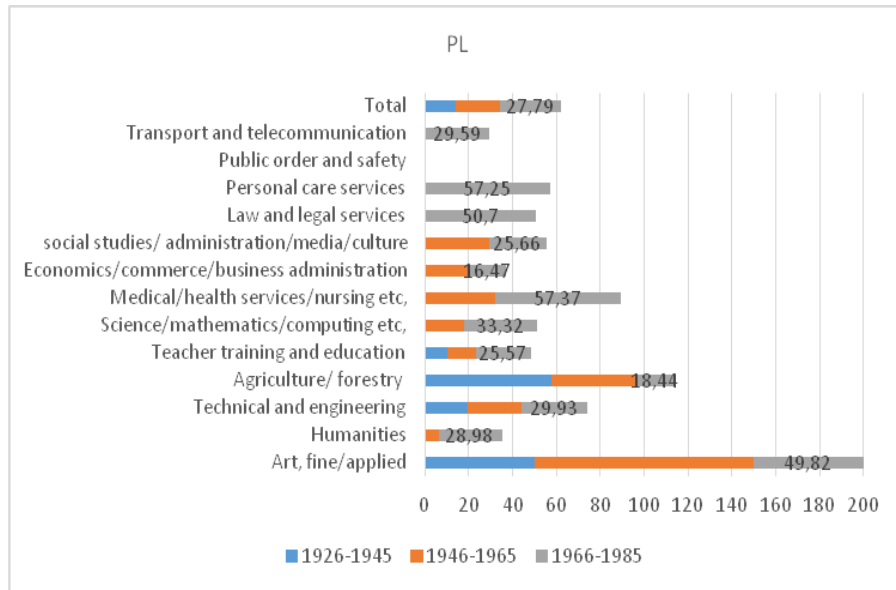
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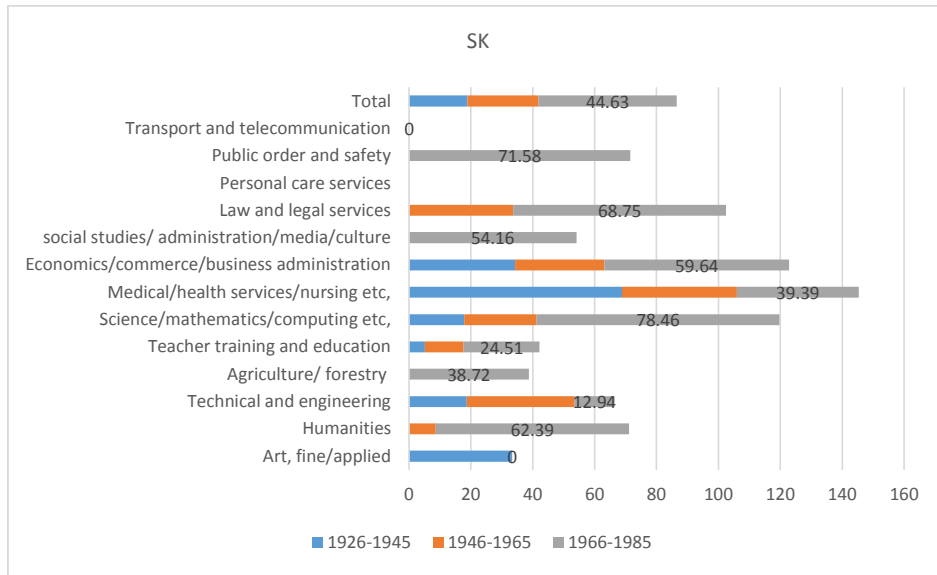
Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Figures A. Graduates from different fields of study who were born between 1926/1985, with at least one parent having higher education, (%).







Source: Own calculations based on cumulated data from ESS (Rounds 2006-2008), unweighted data.

APPENDIX 2

Path of harmonizing the country specific variables in ESS 2006, 2008 & 2010.

Highest level of education, EDULVLA:

(Based on ISCED-97, categories 0 - 1, and 5 - 6 are collapsed)

Coding frame

- 0** - Not possible to harmonise into 5-level ISCED
- 1** - Less than lower secondary education (ISCED 0-1)
- 2** - Lower secondary education completed (ISCED 2)
- 3** - Upper secondary education completed (ISCED 3)
- 4** - Post-secondary non-tertiary education completed (ISCED 4)
- 5** - Tertiary education completed (ISCED 5-6)
- 55** – Other
- 77 Refusal
- 88 Don't know
- 99 No answer

Highest level of education, EDULVLB:

- 000 Not completed ISCED level 1
- 113 ISCED 1, completed primary education
- 129 Qualification from vocational ISCED 2C programmes of duration shorter than 2 years, no access to ISCED 3
- 212 Qualification from general/pre-vocational ISCED 2A/2B programmes, access to ISCED 3 vocational
- 213 Qualification from general ISCED 2A programmes, access to ISCED 3A general or all 3
- 221 Qualification from vocational ISCED 2C programmes of 2 years or longer duration, no access to ISCED 3
- 222 Qualification from vocational ISCED 2A/2B programmes, access to ISCED 3 vocational
- 229 Qualification from vocational ISCED 3C programmes of duration shorter than 2 years, no access to ISCED level 5
- 311 Qualification from general ISCED 3 programmes of 2 years or longer duration, no access to ISCED level 5
- 312 Qualification from general ISCED 3A/3B programmes, access to ISCED 5B/lower tier 5A institutions
- 313 Qualification from general ISCED 3A programmes, access to upper tier ISCED 5A/all ISCED level 5 institutions
- 321 Qualification from vocational ISCED 3C programmes of 2 years or longer duration, no access to ISCED level 5
- 322 Qualification from vocational ISCED 3A programmes, access to 5B/lower tier 5A institutions
- 323 Qualification from vocational ISCED 3A programmes, access to upper tier 5A/all ISCED level 5 institutions
- 412 Qualification from general ISCED 4A/4B programmes, access to ISCED 5B/lower tier 5A institutions
- 413 Qualification from general ISCED 4A programmes, access to upper tier 5A/all ISCED 5 institutions

421 Qualification from ISCED 4 programmes without access to ISCED level 5
 422 Qualification from vocational ISCED 4A/4B programmes, access to ISCED 5b/lower tier 5A institutions
 423 Qualification from vocational ISCED 4A programmes, access to upper tier ISCED 5A/all ISCED level 5 institutions
 510 ISCED 5A programmes of short duration, intermediate certificate or academic/general tertiary qualification below the bachelor's level
 520 ISCED 5B programmes of short duration, advanced vocational qualifications
 610 ISCED 5A programmes of medium duration, qualifications at the bachelor's level or equivalent from a lower tier tertiary institution
 620 ISCED 5A programmes of medium duration, qualifications at the bachelor's level or equivalent from an upper/single tier tertiary institution
 710 ISCED 5A programmes of long cumulative duration, qualifications at the master's level or equivalent from a lower tier tertiary institution
 720 ISCED 5A programmes of long cumulative duration, qualifications at the master's level or equivalent from an upper/single tier tertiary institution
 800 ISCED 6. doctoral degree
 5555 Other
 7777 Refusal
 8888 Don't know
 9999 No answer

The syntax path provided by ESS researchers responsible for distribution of the data

EDULVLA can be produced for round 5 on the basis of EDULVLB by following the current logic:

(SAS)

```

data xx.xx;
set yy.yy;
array edubrfm {3} EDULVLB EDULVLFB EDULVLMB;
array eduarfm {3} EDULVLA EDULVLFA EDULVLMA;
do j = 1 to 3;
if 0 <= edubrfm {j} <=129 then eduarfm {j} = 1;
else if 212 <= edubrfm {j} <= 229 then eduarfm {j}= 2;
else if 311 <= edubrfm {j} <= 323 then eduarfm{j} = 3;
else if 412 <= edubrfm {j} <= 423 then eduarfm {j} = 4;
else if edubrfm {j} = 510 or edubrfm {j} = 520 then eduarfm {j} = 5;
else if edubrfm {j} = 610 or edubrfm {j} = 620 then eduarfm {j} = 5;
else if edubrfm {j} = 710 or edubrfm {j} = 720 then eduarfm {j} = 5;
else if edubrfm {j} = 800 then eduarfm {j} = 5;
else if edubrfm {j} = 5555 then eduarfm {j} = 55;
else if edubrfm {j} = 7777 then eduarfm {j} = 77;
else if edubrfm {j} = 8888 then eduarfm {j} = 88;
else if edubrfm {j} = 9999 then eduarfm {j} = 99;
end;
  
```

APPENDIX 3

F6a CARD 48a *In which one of these fields or subjects is your highest qualification?*

- Available only for ESS 2006 & ESS 2008.

- 01 General or no specific field
- 02 Art – fine or applied
- 03 Humanities – languages, classics, history, theology, etc.
- 04 Technical & engineering, including architecture and planning, industry, craft, building trades, etc.
- 05 Agriculture & forestry
- 06 Teacher training or education
- 07 Science, mathematics, computing, etc.
- 08 Medical, health services, nursing, etc.
- 09 Economics, commerce, business administration, accountancy, etc.
- 10 Social & behavioural studies, public administration, media, culture, sport and leisure studies, etc.
- 11 Law and legal services 11
- 12 Personal care services - catering, domestic science, hairdressing, etc.
- 13 Public order and safety – police, army, fire services, etc.
- 14 Transport and telecommunications