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Study failure at Czech universities in an international context

Introduction – Study failure and similar concepts

Why is the term academic failure used and what is meant by it? The completion of the study in the given study program before its successful completion. However, there are more terms in the Czech language that indicate unsuccessful study. We can come across names such as *failure rate*, *incompleteness*, *interruption*, *mortality* or *outage*, which causes complications not only for our own research on this issue, but also for the overall grasp of the topic. The topic of academic failure is also defined in various ways in professional foreign literature. There we can encounter many concepts, which often differ only in subtle differences in understanding or measuring study failure. The English term *drop-out* is closest to naming study failure.

Table No.1: English terms for naming academic (in)succes

Concept	Explanation
Drop-out:	Students who leave school before its completion (with the possibility of returning to study)
Non-completion, non-continuation, attrition rate:	Non-completion or non-continuation of the study (the student will not enroll or advance to the next section of the study)
Stop out:	A student who discontinues his studies
Persistence Student:	He who completes his studies in spite of all complications
Retention, survival rate:	Emphasis on the institution's responsibility to retain and lead the student to successful completion.
Student mobility / transfer, student success:	Focus on student success

(Source: Quinn, 2013)

The OECD and EUROSTAT define study failure as the completion of education without obtaining the first qualification (Hraba, Hulík, Hulíková Tesárková, 2015). This definition again suggests a different concept of the problem of academic failure.

Recent studies suggest that definitions vary both globally and at European and national levels (Vossensteyn et al., 2015).

Study failure can be viewed from three perspectives. From the point of view of the state, from the point of view of the institution (university) and from the point of view of the individual (student).

The first level: the state (public higher education policy) – bears the greatest responsibility for financing the entire system and for granting consent to the operation of public universities. From this point of view, it may seem that a high rate of academic failure devalues the provided public funds.

The second level: the view of institutions – public universities (or parts thereof). With the current method of financing universities (where the key element in the subsidies' calculation is the number of students), a high rate of academic failure means a certain loss of funds. This may be the reason why universities deal with academic failure. Unfortunately, this is often not because the primary goal of universities would be to educate, educate and prepare their graduates for future life.

Third level: the individual himself, i.e. a university student. It is important to note that the structure of students entering a university is changing, mainly due to the openness of universities. There are many more graduates than before. However, not only due to the absence of tuition fees, students often do not have enough will and motivation to complete their studies. On the other hand, unsuccessful study can have a significant impact on the student's life, such as employment or further personal life, and at the same time, thanks to this experience, unsuccessful study can cause a person's reluctance to further education. (Vlk et al., 2017).

Although the topic of academic failure at Czech public schools in the Czech Republic has become the subject of debate in the last few years, relatively little has been written about it. Much more within this topic is discussed in foreign literature. In the following section, we will focus on **publications, public policy documents and scholarly papers** in this area.

Study failure in foreign materials

The research of study failure in the United States has a long tradition. The beginning of its research was recorded as early as around 1600 and since then it has been divided into nine time periods running to the present day (Berger, Lyon, 2005).

The theoretical models of academic failure are usually related to its causes. The best known is Tinto's sociological-anthropological model (Tinto, 1975, 1993). According to him, the study failure is influenced by institutional conditions, which play a large role in the integration of the student into the university environment. According to Tint, social and academic integration influences the student's future (in)success or motivation to study together with the individual characteristics of the student (socioeconomic status, personality characteristics, previous education, determination to study...). Furthermore, Tinto divided study failure into voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary is one in which the student decides to leave school of his own free will. Involuntary is most often the result of non-fulfillment of study obligations. Like Tinto, Pascarella (Pascarella, 1980) dealt with institutional elements, placing great emphasis

on informal contact between students and academics. There are also several other theories, such as Bean's Organizational Perspective (Bean, 1982), which deals with factors influencing the satisfaction and commitment of an institution. At the same time, he is aware that the student is very significantly influenced by extracurricular activities (e.g. job opportunities). In their socio-cultural theory, Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2002) and Boudon (Boudon, 1974) address the discrepancy between the social and cultural capital of the student and the university environment. By this they mean, for example, the support of the family or its tradition in higher education. Economic theory can be applied to the issue of study failure (St. John et al., 2000), in which the individual decides whether to remain in the study based on the benefits and costs that the study brings. Last but not least, there is also the theory of human capital (Becker, 1993) and psychological theories (Bean, Eaton, 2000).

In recent years, there has been smaller focus on theories in comparison to **causes of academic failure**. Kuh (Kuh et al., 2006) distinguishes the causes of study failure into three categories: causes before entering university, causes during university studies and causes on the side of university as an institution. Further, Vossensteyn (Vossensteyn et al., 2015) divide the causes into the level of national policy, institution, individual or labor market. This typology is similar to the above-mentioned views on academic failure. The causes at the individual level are still the most investigated (Larsen et al., 2013; Vossensteyn et al., 2015), as such information is largely contained in students' registers. These include age, gender, ethnicity, financial situation, socioeconomic situation (family income, parents' education, prestige of parents' employment), etc. (Quinn, 2013; Kuh et al., 2006). Vossensteyn (Vossensteyn et al., 2015) also mention the degree of social integration, i.e. whether the student is involved in student activities, whether they are in contact with academics, other students, etc. Furthermore, it can be elements such as size and selectivity of the institution, organizational structure of the university, qualification structure of employees, etc. (Larsen et al., 2013; Kuh et al., 2006; Vossensteyn et al., 2015; Araque et al., 2009). The last category is the influencing factors with respect to the higher education system. Its conditions at the national level can have an impact on academic failure through general public policies and through the economic and social situation of the country, such as openness to higher education, flexibility of education (transitions between institutions, programs, disciplines or credit transfer), financial conditions for students (Vossensteyn et al., 2015).

The **effects of academic failure** are much less studied than causes. Larsen (Larsen et al., 2013) set out the criteria according to which the effects of study failure can be viewed: (non-) voluntariness of unsuccessful graduation, timing of failure and (non) acquisition of knowledge and skills applicable in further activities. Furthermore, we can classify the impacts again according to the three mentioned categories. Impacts at the level of the individual can have, for example, an emotional character, when due to involuntary termination they are mostly negative. On the contrary, in the case of voluntary departure, this may have the opposite effect, when the student realizes what he expects from life and sets out on the "better path". Impacts on individuals can also be economic in the form of a waste of time and money. Impacts at the level of the institution (university) can be either academic (the effort

and time of academics will be wasted) or economic (academic failure as an indicator of performance or impact on funding). Impacts at the societal level are reflected in the economic efficiency of higher education, as funding from the state budget is wasted, or more must be spent if the student, for example, extends his studies. Study failure can also have an impact on the development of the economy, when there are fewer graduates who would help with this positive phenomenon (it is more common for people with lower education to be unemployed, retire early or be dependent on state social benefits).

European area

At the European level, the European Commission was one of the first to address academic failure, especially in terms of the efficiency of public spending. It perceives high academic failure as a waste of public funds. The European Commission is including the topic of academic failure in its strategy papers, forcing Member States to take an interest in it as well. Since 2000, several strategic documents of the European Commission have been created, which deal with study failure. In this context, the accountability of universities, the efficiency and transparency of public finances are often mentioned. The Commission also mentions several other consequences that academic failure can have (e.g. hindering social mobility and limiting the transformation of European countries into knowledge-based economies). In the paper titled *Europe 2020*, one of the goals is to reach at least 40% of the university-educated level. However, this situation depends on the number of people entering tertiary education and the rate of academic failure (EC, 2010). Study failure is also addressed in the *Bucharest Communiqué* (EC, 2012), where reducing it has become one of the priorities of the Bologna Process.

So far, the most detailed material on study failure prepared in Europe is the above-cited study *Drop-out and Completion in Higher Education in Europe* (Vossensteyn et al., 2015), which is the output of the HEDOCE project. This project was commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture in 2014 for a consortium led by the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at the University of Twente and the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation. The aim of the study was to map the development of study failure in 35 European countries and to conduct in-depth case studies in eight of them. And finally, to examine the effectiveness of policies and measures at country level. The survey found that academic success in European higher education policies is important. Of course, there are differences between countries, 12 countries do tackle this problem more and 13 less. The study shows that only 12 out of 35 European countries publish their national completion rates. It can be deduced that countries that have a high degree of academic success in their political agendas and a clear vision of what they want to achieve have more effective tools than countries that do not take the issue very seriously. There are over 170 proposals for tools and measures, and they can be divided into three more general areas. The first group of measures is financial (rewards and sanctions). The second area concerns information and support for

students – providing information or other non-financial support (counseling, career guidance on studies and future job opportunities, tutoring, etc.) in order to improve their decision-making and behavior. The third group of measures supporting study success is study organization, e.g. period of study, types of study levels (short, bachelor's, master's), quality assurance and accreditation.

The study also summarized the most effective measures that the researchers found to be the best. The basis for institutional action should be student monitoring. Their individual and social characteristics have a significant impact on the probability of success in higher education, and therefore it is good to identify these risk groups of students and prevent their failure through subsequent institutional interventions (e.g. through counseling). The social inclusion of students also has a certain effect on academic failure. To facilitate integration, many institutions across Europe are implementing student introduction programs, promoting peer counseling - a tutoring system, etc. It has been found that students need to develop a sense of belonging that leads to higher academic success. Furthermore, it has also been shown that public and clear information about the university helps students and institutions to make the right decisions. Informing potential students contributes to their better decision, which results in fewer circumstances that may surprise them and cause them to drop out early.

Based on the results of the study, the authors identified general recommendations that provide a wide range of proposals for future policymaking at the European, national and institutional levels. Firstly, there is a need to highlight the issue of study failure at the European level and to create a single coordinated approach. As a result, further comparative studies are needed to establish a European platform of best practice at national and institutional levels. Secondly, national governments need to have set priorities, tools and the expected impacts of academic failure based on systematic data collection. All data on academic failure should be publicly available. Furthermore, national governments should use as many tools as possible that could influence the failure rate of students and enable universities to monitor individual students and their progress. Third, universities are encouraged to set a comprehensive strategy to increase academic success and to propose appropriate measures. It is particularly necessary to conduct their own surveys and monitor the progress of students through studies. Based on these elements, the university should be able to create its own strategy that corresponds to their own conditions (Vossensteyn et al., 2015).

Research in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic research related to academic success does not have such a long tradition as, for example, in the USA. However, since 1990 some studies and documents have appeared. Since then, it is possible to map mainly several studies, which deal with study failure more generally - in most cases they provide information within individual universities, faculties or individual study programs. Apart from one publication (see below), no document is a larger comparison between universities or a summary of what it looks like in the Czech Republic with study failure.

The first comprehensive publication on study failure written in Czech was published in September 2017, namely a book entitled *Study Failure at Universities: Theoretical Basis, Empirical Findings and Recommendations* (Vlk et al., 2017), which combined the existing theoretical and conceptual knowledge on study failure. The main task of the publication was to summarize the basic findings and thus contribute to the discussion on the topic of study failure in the Czech Republic. The conclusions of the book draw attention to several facts, which the authors then tried to reflect in the recommendations. At the national level, for example, they recommend launching intensive discussions on academic failure, conducting regular collection, evaluation and publication of data on academic failure, financially motivating individual institutions to address academic failure, etc.

According to the authors, all these recommendations should be in synergy with other policies and it should always be emphasized that educational activity is still the primary mission at universities. At the institutional level (university / faculty and discipline level), the following recommendations are proposed:

- carry out further empirical studies and analyses of academic failure within each institution and its components,
- -actively convince students that the university studies make sense,
- sufficiently inform students and especially applicants about the study,
- pay increased attention to students in the first days, weeks, but also in the first year of study,
- promote social and academic integration,
- promote quality teaching,
- reflect established measures.

In conclusion, the authors state that there is a need to create an environment “in which students feel comfortable and want to stay in it for as long as possible”, but “mere determination to solve a problem does not guarantee positive results” (Vlk et al., 2017).

On impulse of the European Commission, study failure has also become an research interest for the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the entire national higher education policy. Study failure has appeared in their documents since 2000. The Long-Term Plan of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for 2000-2005 already mentions that the goal is to reduce the study failure rate, which is uneconomical from the state’s point of view but also has negative effects on unsuccessful students. The task was therefore to support the permeability of studies within the entire tertiary sector and to meet the needs of students if their initial choice was not correct (MŠMT - Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2000).

The current Long-Term Plan for 2016-2020 mentions specific measures that should be introduced to reduce academic failure. As part of the new institutional accreditation, an analysis of study failure should be carried out, and the university should also provide counseling services to students and evaluate the progress of studies. In the future, the Ministry is committed to improving the collection and availability of data on academic failure and to analyzing the causes and subsequent recommendations for universities. One of the goals and indicators is 60% of successfully completed Bachelor’s degree. studies in the standard period of study increased by one year (MŠMT, 2015). The latest Long-Term Implementation Plan

for 2018 wants to use the outputs of the project “Determining the procedure for calculating the failure rate of students at Czech universities” and to propose other specific measures (MŠMT, 2017). The Czech Republic was thus forced by external influence to carry out a deeper analysis of academic failure.

Among other things, it should also be noted that the rate of academic failure is reflected in the financing of universities in the Czech Republic. Funding, together with accreditation rules, is the only tool for regulating the higher education system. Every year, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports publishes a document entitled Rules for the Provision of Contributions and Subsidies to Public Universities, which sets out the rules for the distribution of funds. Even today, funding based on the number of students and the coefficient of economic intensity of the field of study still predominates. The first indicator also considers, among other things, academic failure.

Most studies written in the Czech Republic examine the causes or factors that can affect or cause study failure. According to the authors, the most common causes are: dissatisfaction with the form of study and the form of teaching, low motivation to study, dissatisfaction with the choice of field, high difficulty of study, inability to adapt to the university environment or change of priorities. In their quantitative part of the research, Švec, Kolářková and Yakutina (Švec et al., 2014) found that 54.4% of students at the faculties of economics did not have any serious study problems that would cause them to fail their studies. Half of the students unsuccessfully completed their studies based on their own decision. This fact was also confirmed in their research by Fučík and Slepíčková (Fučík, Slepíčková, 2014). The authors of other studies (Menclová et al., 2003; Vajlent, 2011) examined the study failure in technical study programs, which appears to be the highest in comparison with other fields. The largest number of failures is in the first year. The reasons were similar to those mentioned above - dissatisfaction with teaching, excessive requirements for some subjects or too great a difference compared to high school. The only comparative study in the Czech Republic in the field of student success at universities is the research of Beneš and Závada (Beneš, Závada, 2009). It compares 12 Czech universities and states in its conclusions that its rate is between 50-85%. The range is therefore relatively large due to the diversity of individual institutions, faculties and study programs and fields.

The authors Hraba, Hulík and Hulíková-Tesárková (Hraba et al., 2015) dealt with the study failure from a completely different perspective - from the point of view of the calculation methodology - within the KREDO project. They found in their research that the method of calculation has a great influence on the degree of study failure, and therefore it is necessary to consider the data we work with. This fact is also pointed out by the work of Vlk, Stiburek and Švec (Vlk et al., 2016) dealing with the calculation of the study failure rate and the tools introduced against it in the Czech Republic. At the end of another article by Švec, Vlk and Stiburek (Švec et al., 2015), which dealt with the behavior of universities and their ways of adapting to external influences in connection with academic failure, the authors state that the implementation of various measures may not lead to the intended goal. This is mainly due to the way public universities are financed. Stiburek (Stiburek, 2015) examined academic failure in connection with national higher education policy. In conclusion, he states that despite the fact that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has

been dealing with study failure in its documents since 2000, very few measures have been taken to reduce its rate, even at university levels.

Current state of study failure in the Czech Republic

In the Czech environment, there are several studies that deal with study failure. For example, the Institute of Sociology in 2004 (Matějů et al., 2004) dealt with first-year students of universities. According to the report, students see low motivation and lack of continuity in practice as a weakness of public higher education. The authors see primarily the discrepancy between the program studied and the student's true wish, behind them leaving the studies. Such a justification for learning failure is linked to the specific situation of supply and demand for studies and loses its relevance at a time when university education is available to the broader population.

The research by Mouralová and Tomášková (Mouralová, Tomášková, 2007) was based on qualitative data from 17 unsuccessful students and also from the analysis of articles and discussion papers on the Academia server. The authors also used many secondary data to construct ideal types, model cases of leaving the studies. They point to a different sequence of voluntary and formal termination. Students' decision to terminate their studies may be preceded by a failure to fulfill their duties, which then appears to be the cause of their termination of studies, sometimes the student may rather finish their studies before the faculty does. Thus, the official form of termination of the studies (by faculty or student) does not give any indication of the real reasons or who initiated the termination. Among the students' mentioned reasons for termination are most often dissatisfaction with study (disappointment at the level of lectures, poor teaching concept), inappropriate selection of the field, preference for other activities, inability to manage multiple disciplines at once or planned narrowing of the field to the more interesting (delayed choice), admission to the dream major and termination of alternative choice, lack of motivation for successful completion of studies, which is seen as a temporary solution to a situation (effort to maintain student benefits, postponement of employment), difficulty of the study, intervention of external factors and others. The authors also mention incompatibility with the university environment as a frequent factor in the termination of studies emerging in foreign research, which is gaining the importance in the Czech Republic when a significant part of the population reaches higher education institutions, including students with low cultural capital. In their own research, such incompatibility has been described as, for example, the inability of self-study (Mouralová, Tomášková, 2007).

Some documents at the national level deal with the state of academic failure in the Czech Republic in more detail. The issue of study failure was also included in the international Eurostudent survey organized by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports with the support of the European Union's Erasmus + program, in which the Czech Republic also participated. This survey was conducted in 2016 for the sixth time. The main goal was to find out the attitudes and living conditions of university students in all study programs. The main classification variables were: age, gender, subjective evaluation of study results, current status of the student (especially a student, working student, occupied mainly by other activities), form of study, groups of fields of study, type

of study program or type of school. Current university students in the Czech Republic participated in the research. The main conclusion of the survey is that almost a quarter of current students have unsuccessfully completed their studies in the past. Most often they were those who work at the same time while studying (Fischer et al., 2016).

Eurostudent VI examined the reasons (or causes) of previous failed studies. The authors state that there can be many, and they can overlap. As can be seen from the table, the most frequently mentioned cause is dissatisfaction with the content of the study and then the high difficulty of the study. However, we must realize that the survey involved unsuccessful students in the past, who then returned to study. In fact, there may be many more reasons, and especially in different percentages.

Table No. 2: Causes of study failure according to the Eurostudent VI study

Causes	Response rate (%)
Dissatisfaction with the content of the study	45.3
High study intensity	38.6
Dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching	19.6
Insufficient social integration	17.2
Completed studies as a „backup variant”	15.9
Need to work to cover living costs	15.1
Family problems	12.9
Health problems	9.3
Labor market opportunity	8.4
Other	16.8

(Source: Author according to Fischer et al., 2016)

For men, reasons such as high demands on studies and opportunities in the labor market were most often mentioned, while women most often unsuccessfully completed their studies due to health or family reasons, or due to studies as a backup option. Older students mentioned job opportunities, the need to work while studying or family reasons as causes. In contrast, students aged 21 and under most often reported dissatisfaction with the content of the study, insufficient social integration, or study as a backup option. Students who were mainly engaged in their studies most often stated that the reasons for drop-out are directly related to their studies, while working students stated the reasons are related to their work. Furthermore, 47% of public university students stated that if they had more information about the form and content of the selected study programme, they would not even apply for it (more often for respondents aged 21 and under). This reason was most often cited by students of the arts, humanities and social sciences. On the contrary, more information about the study would not help students of health, medical and pharmaceutical sciences. Almost 10% of students also stated that they had interrupted their studies for at least one year, again most often due to low motivation (44.3% of students). Thus, the

Eurostudent VI survey partially questions the understanding of study failure viewed primarily and only as a student failure (Fischer et al., 2016).

Drop-out factors

The following analysis will be based on the latest research carried out on the subject in the Czech Republic (Fučík, Slepíčková, 2014). The focus was on two main topics: the subjective perception of the circumstances of withdrawal and the difficulty of the study, both the quantitatively expressible characteristics of the students (termination timing, level of study, form of study, etc.). These research questions are: (1) Who are the outgoing students, in what life situation are they at the time of withdrawal due to their personal life, work involvement or further study? (2) What role does the fact that a student is studying a field that was not his / her preferred choice play in the end of studies, and to what extent is the culmination of the student's ability to cope with the demands of a university degree that cause the drop-out? (3) How often and for which students is termination of the studies linked to leaving tertiary education as such? These are mainly subjective reasons.

Data collection took place at one of the Czech universities. A database of students terminating any of their active studies was used. The research was carried out in the form of an online survey among students who, in the time range from - to, finished their studies (or some of their studies) at one of the faculties of the university. The basic set thus defined was 6,431 people. The appeal to fill out the questionnaire was addressed to everyone (in the true sense of the word, an exhaustive selection), but the questionnaire containing ten questions was filled by 1263 respondents, which represents a 20% return rate (the selection principle for this reason closest to the survey, the researcher has no control over the choice respondents).

Here we present to the reader only one selected parameter of the performed research. It concerns factors that had an impact on premature school termination. The students selected from a series of nineteen items from which an index of problematic aspects of termination was created. Most of the respondents chose not only one reason but more reasons at the same time, hence we can compare whether specific groups of students (for example, depending on whether they are leaving university or studying further) differ in the number of perceived problematic aspects of drop-out. Relatively few respondents chose only one specific reason (around 10%).

Since most students have identified multiple reasons as important, we may ask what more general meaning clusters can be identified in these items. The factor analysis reduces the original 19 items to six more general, coherent factors that can be used. Now we shall describe the factual content of the factors more in detail, we shall present them in the order of importance given by the respondents, and we shall discuss the differences in the answers of the individual groups of students.

The "**Priorities**" factor is a cluster of items describing conflict situations in relation to non-university activities. It is evident from previous analyses that items falling into this dimension are considered the most important. The conflict of priorities is more typical for students especially in master's and doctoral studies, more often combined forms of studies than full-time forms. It is evident that students indicating these reasons

for leaving are much more likely to be in a group that has no further active study and the current departure for them means (at least for now) the end of university studies overall. On the contrary, for students who have some other active university studies in addition to the abandoned one, it is typical that, in the summary of reasons for termination, they assign more importance to items in the **“Expectations”** factor. For further students, it would be a priority. In terms of meaning, the items summarizing the conflict between assumptions and ideas regarding the study on the one hand and reality on the other. The question of the extent to which expectations are real, and to what extent universities’ informative campaigns can prevent potential discrepancies between expectations and reality, it is important in the situation of multiple studies. The results of the analysis indicate that unclear expectations and postponed choices are likely to be reflected in the inscription of multiple concurrent studies and later termination from one (or both). The level of abilities or personal prerequisites for mastering studies appear as the subjective causes of termination only in the third place of importance, and these items are summarized under the **“Coping”** factor. The importance of the factor is significantly different between bachelor students and others. It is not surprising that students entering the first block of study are having difficulty adjusting to university studies. The opposite is indicated by items in the **“Dissatisfaction”** factor. On the contrary, the reasons are found on the university side. This factor is among the less important and its variability is similar across different groups of students. The **“Circumstances”** factor, like the first described dimension of the situation, includes conflicts with non-university activities. However, it mainly differs from the first factor in that the student does not play the role of an actively voting individual in the given situation. According to the survey results, the proportion of students leaving the study due to family problems, health problems or parental responsibilities is small. The last factor is **“Formalities”** and only two items referring to the formal aspect of the study are allocated to it. Although in research interviews with the study department representatives, the researcher might have the impression that administrative errors are the cause of the termination of most students, according to the respondents themselves, these reasons are irrelevant. While it is clear that there is some formal error at the end of a substantial part of the unsuccessful studies, this is merely the result of the causes that lie deeper in the motivational structure of the concerned (Fučík, Slepíčková, 2014).

Conclusion

In the Czech Republic, as in other European countries, the emphasis on the need to increase the proportion of university-educated people is part of the debate on the conditions for success and competitiveness in knowledge-based or post-industrial economies (OECD 2000). The increasing availability of higher education, and hence the proportion of students participating in post-secondary education shows that students (or their parents) respond to the debate on the need for higher education for a successful career (Lehmann, 2007). Failure at this stage of the studying, however, means individual, but also social and institutional losses, and it is therefore in the interest of the universities themselves to find out under which

conditions terminating the studies happen, and whether or how to prevent them. The aforementioned research at the Czech University somewhat alleviates concerns about the increasing proportion of study failure by pointing out that much of this failure is related to focusing on another field of study and leaving one, which is perceived as less interesting. The obtained data do not confirm the stereotypically perceived causes of leaving the study (such as the reevaluation of one's own abilities or the study of the non-preferred field) and point to the considerable heterogeneity of the outgoing student population, which is manifested, among other things, by different termination timings. The data showed that a significant proportion of drop-outs (approximately 40%) are a postponed option. These students were admitted and joined more studies and gradually abandon one of them but remain on another. These terminations are mainly motivated by unfulfilled expectations and ideas of studying in a deserted field. It is, therefore, a clash between the student's expectations and the offer of the studied field, which can be mitigated by the University's clearer communication on the content and requirements of individual study programs and their link to the demands of the field or later employment. This clash occurs more often in undergraduate bachelor students. While these terminations seem to increase by academic failure, they do not, in fact, mean that students are dropping out of university and are likely to be planned or expected by the students themselves. Thus, they mean the failure of a particular field of study or institution, but not the failure of an individual to achieve higher education. The most disturbing ones for the university itself are those terminations, which mean a transition to another educational institution.

The second type of termination is when students leave tertiary education and other priorities related to a professional career, family, or personal values appear as a motive for withdrawal. Even in this case, the primary reason is not the coping with the requirements or the limited ability to pass through the study. For most respondents (at least on a declarative level), the primary factor is the collision of priorities, and only when it comes to the difficulty of loosening the study and failing to meet the requirements that lead to study abandonment. In both of the above-mentioned types of termination, the collision (whether the student's expectations and the study reality or the conflict between the demands of the study and other life fields) leads to a lower motivation to graduate, which then manifests itself as a non-mastering of study requirements. Thus, university interventions in these groups of students should focus on, for example, more transparent and effective communication on the content of individual study programs. Study programs should also reflect the diversity of students' life situations and their needs, and also accommodate those types of students who combine their studies with other private and business activities. Here, it makes sense to focus on the formal aspects of going through the study (for example, the length of study, the structure and amount of study requirements) or the study offer.

However, there is also a very small but very important group of resigning students whose motivation to complete the studies is high, yet they terminate the study. This, approximately a quarter of the outgoing students, is the appropriate addressee of the university's intervention to help with the management of study demands. As in the case

of the previous two groups of students, it is important that the university copes with the growing heterogeneity of students, not only in relation to their different educational needs. The question is how to combine two conflicting processes: 1. A generous offer of universities that reflects the emphasis on higher education in national education policies and makes university education universally accessible and massive. 2. The need to diversify study and adapt it to individual and diverse students, while maintaining a level of education as well as satisfactory proportions of completed studies. Thus, as research has shown, a relatively high percentage of unsuccessful studies is not just about situations when students leave tertiary education. Half of the respondents, who were approached in connection with their unsuccessfully completed studies, also participated in tertiary education at the time of interviewing. For this group, based on the results of the sample survey, it is possible to look for the causes of study failure rather as a collision in the priorities between education and possible employment or other values, to prioritize other activities, and only in addition to unfulfilled expectations of study. From this point of view, drop-out is not primarily a problem for education but it is related to wider socio-cultural changes (Quinn, 2004).

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the issue of academic failure of university students. First, the concept of academic failure and other related terms are defined. Next, three perspectives are explained through which one can look at study failure. Much space is devoted to the analysis of foreign, European and Czech research, publications and professional studies in this field. We shall point out the factors that are most involved in school dropout.

Keywords: drop-out, students, universities, research, factors, European Union, Czech Republic

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