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**Accountability in tertiary education in the  
Czech Republic**

*Diploma thesis*

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## **Abstract**

The diploma thesis „Accountability in tertiary education in the Czech Republic“ is based on the concept of accountability, which is defined as a social relation between two actors, where one actor is obliged to justify his conduct and behavior to another. This diploma thesis has been mainly written on a theoretical base – the accountability concept, which will be applied in the Czech tertiary education. The main aim of the presented diploma thesis is to find out, whether the concept of accountability in the Czech Republic will contribute to the expansion of a professional knowledge in tertiary education system. The set aim further allows verification, if accountability as a concept might be beneficial for further research in this field. The objective of this diploma thesis will further describe how accountability is applied in the tertiary education and outline such a complex network of relations between actors. Following the set aim, this thesis is conceived as a theoretical study covering the specific country - the Czech Republic. The diploma thesis is logically divided into seven chapters, which are divided into subchapters. Aims and research questions are presented in the beginning of this thesis, followed by a detailed definition of the concept of accountability, which is crucial for the whole thesis. The next chapter is devoted to methodology, in which several analysis of the public policy documents were used, as well as explorative interviews with selected representatives of actors. The fifth chapter deals with the Czech tertiary education system, its characteristic features, as well as the main actors and the funding. The following chapter discusses captured accountability relations within the Czech tertiary education, which can be divided into two groups: formal and informal. This chapter further examines, who is responsible to whom, for what and how, as well as possible sanctions that can be used. The final chapter is discusses research findings and the complex overview of accountability relations, which are typical for tertiary education in the Czech Republic.

**Keywords**

Accountability, tertiary education, the Czech republic, actors, analysis, theoretical study, qualitative interviews

**Characters:** 191 648

## **Declaration**

1. I declare that I wrote the presented diploma thesis on my own and that I used only listed literature and sources.
2. I declare that my diploma thesis has not been used for obtaining another degree.
3. I agree that my diploma thesis can become public for all study and research purposes.

In Prague, May 19th 2017

Bc. Veronika Hrtánková

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**Inštitút sociologických štúdií**  
**Téza diplomovej práce (výskumný projekt)**



**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE**  
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**Teze diplomové práce (výskumný projekt):**

**A. vymezení výskumného problému**

Education is one of the fundamental, and recently, one of the most important values, not only for individuals, but for society as well. As we grow, we learn in kindergarten, we spend our time self-studying and we study in various educational institutions. In these educational institutions we spend substantial time of our lives and therefore we expect the highest quality. This quality applies mainly to universities which prepare students to be professional experts in different fields for the rest of their lives. Higher education institutions consist of groups or individuals, such as professors, administrative workers, other school staff and students themselves. But higher education policy also consists of other actors who are actively interested in education.

As Bovens states: „*accountability is usually defined as a social relationship in which actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his conduct to some significant other*“ (Bovens, 2007, p. 6). Application of the theory of accountability in the system of higher education in the Czech republic will help to identify who is responsible for the

educational institutions, its development and objectives, as well as the quality of studies and offered services.

## **B. Cíle diplomové práce**

The main aim of this diploma thesis is to analyze the formal mechanisms of accountability in the system of higher education in the Czech republic, as well as to identify the relevant actors of the system. The thesis will primarily focus on very detailed analysis of the identified actors and the specific relationships between these actors. The form of their responsibility, which affects the setting and functioning of the system of higher education will be studied in this thesis.

## **C. Výzkumné otázky**

Which accountability relationships exist within the higher education?

Who are the major actors in the system of higher education? Who is responsible to whom and how?

Which mechanisms of accountability are applied in practice?

Who is responsible for the quality of the institutions of higher education?

In which areas of the system of higher education is accountability missing?

Are there any implemented sanctions in the context of accountability of the system of higher education?

## **D. Teoretické východiská**

The theory of accountability is a concept that has to deal with the diversity of meanings from many authors. Accountability itself plays a big role, as it is taken as a direct, fixed and formal reaction to demands, which were generated by particular group or institution (Dubnick-Romzek, 1987). More specifically, accountability can be defined and understood as a type of social relation between actors, where one of the actors is obligated to justify and demonstrate his behaviour to another substantial actor. This justification and demonstration consist of three various steps. Firstly, the actor has to contribute some diverse data about the tasks and procedure he did, as well as the final outcomes. Secondly, the actor has to provide information about failures, if there are any, and this is an essential part of the justification. The third step take the substantial actor,



who can proceed a verdict about the behaviour of the actor. The final verdict can either approve or condemn the actor's behaviour or policy (Bovens, 2007). As this diploma thesis focuses on the education, the theory of accountability will be used in the conditions of the system of higher education in the Czech republic.

### **E. Výzkumný plán**

Research questions set in this diploma thesis will be answered through the theoretical framework and the analytical part. The theoretical part of the thesis will utilize the theory of accountability in order to achieve the bigger understanding of the theory, its components and key factors. The analytical part of the thesis will be based on analysis of the relevant public policy documents related to higher education. The most important legislative document is the Act No. 111/1998 on Higher Education Institutions, which sets the platform for the rules and formal mechanisms of the functioning of the system of higher education in the Czech republic. The other relevant documents represent strategies and concepts of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, as well as the internal regulations of universities. Analysis of these documents will help to identify the relevant actors and to define their relationships and forms of accountability. The analysis of the documents will be augmented by qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts in higher education in the Czech republic.

The thesis will also use the case study design on a particular university, considering that the case study allows a deeper understanding and clarifying how accountability is applied in practice in the system of higher education in the Czech republic. The case study will be mainly qualitative and it will consist of interviews with the important actors of the particular university. The purpose of these interviews is to show how the formal mechanisms work and influence the actors, as well as the life of the university in practice.

### **The expected structure of the diploma thesis:**

1. Introduction
2. Theoretical framework
3. Methodology
4. Analytical part
5. Conclusion

## 6. Bibliography

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## **List of abbreviations**

ACCR	Accreditation Commission Czech Republic
CRC	Czech Rector's Conference
HEA	the Higher Education Act
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
NAB	National Accreditation Bureau for Czech Republic
PPD	Public Policy Documents
Council	Council of HEIs

# 1. Introduction

Education is one of the parts of society's life and has an impact on each of us. It does not stand in isolation, but it is strongly influenced by all social changes and, conversely, it has a significant role in the development of our society. Education is provided on many levels, but higher education institutions (HEIs) represent the highest degree of knowledge and creative activities. HEIs prepare students for their professional career, as well as research work, and they help to increase a life-long learning among the society. One of their main missions is to also contribute to the development of our society. And in the same time, these institutions and tertiary education contribute together with their activities to the European and international cooperation, which is very important nowadays.

The education in the Czech Republic, especially tertiary education, has gone through a major transformation over these past 20 years. After a significant revolution in 1989, tertiary education had to face different changes – and not only in terms of structure and conception, but also by an increasing number of HEIs and students. However, the most important change was the type of HEIs control, where the state supervision model replaced the state control model. Thus, the state lost the direct control over the development of tertiary education. After the revolution, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) has become an actor, who focuses on general strategies of development of tertiary education and who is the provider of financial sources. Nevertheless, funding of HEIs by the MEYS is based on continuous monitoring and evaluation of activities and quality results of HEIs (Šebková-Kohoutek, 2007).

After the revolution, HEIs have begun to function in autonomous regime, which means that, for example, they have their own property, manage all of their financial sources and autonomously decide about numbers and rights of their students, organization of studies and they have their own bodies. The highest interest of these institutions is the most effective process of education and quality educational results. Autonomy of HEIs has resulted in a completely new structure, where these institutions are no longer strictly managed and controlled by state. It does however not mean that the mutual commitment has disappeared. Contrariwise, this autonomy only increases the requirements of the state and other actors for responsibility of HEIs – for all their activities and mostly for the quality of their work, for which they are funded. The setting of this relationship further caused the formation of quality assurance

mechanisms in the Czech educational system (Šebková-Kohoutek, 2007). Thus, HEIs are, despite their autonomy, accountable to different forums, which often have different opinions, values and expectations. The HEIs have to meet various formal norms, as well as achieve great results and continually develop their knowledge and research.

Hence, there comes the question: who is really responsible for higher education and its quality? As it was mentioned above, the Czech Republic is a textbook example of rapid transition from the state control to the state supervision model, where HEIs have their autonomy, but in the same time, they are still funded by state, which is in charge of creating the strategy for tertiary education. Besides these two actors, there are also other actors, who actively participate in tertiary education and affect it either directly or indirectly. It can therefore be stated that there is no simple and general answer to this question.

Additionally, responsibility and quality are concepts that are often used in different legislative or strategic documents about education. They are usually associated to certain goals or desired values. Quality is rather vague and not very specified in these publications. Quality education, respectively quality in education is a topic, which interests many Czech and also foreign authors, but understanding the concept may vary from one to another. It is the same problem with the concept of responsibility, which is part of important Czech documents, but is usually not further defined. According to M. Bovens: *“it is one of those evocative political words that can be used to patch up a rambling argument, to evoke an image of trustworthiness, fidelity, and justice, or to keep critics at a distance”* (Bovens, 2003, p.1). In other countries, responsibility is often linked to the term accountability.

Despite the fact that accountability is an extended term in the western European countries and in the United States, in the Czech Republic is quite known but not very used. The history of accountability goes back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, where all the citizens of England had to provide information about their property to the ruler of the country (Dubnick, 2002). However, the concept of accountability has changed over the years, because citizens are not anymore those who have to render account. M. Bovens links accountability to: *“a symbol for good governance”* (Bovens, 2003, p. 1). Furthermore, accountability now represents the form of control, which ensures citizens that all public institutions provide quality and effective work. The concept of accountability can be understood in a narrow sense as a social relation between two various actors, where one actor has to render account to another one for everything he did (Veselý, 2013).



Summarizing the above-mentioned facts, this diploma thesis will deal with forms and mechanisms of accountability in the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic, and more specifically within educational activities of public HEIs. To reach this aim, the concept of accountability will be understood as a social relation between various actors, since this understanding is probably the most useful concept for the aims of this diploma thesis. The diploma thesis will further focus on the actors of the system of tertiary education, in order to clarify who is accountable to whom, for what and how. This thesis will try to outline the complicated network of relationships between actors who have strong influence on the Czech educational system.

The thesis is divided into 7 chapters, which are systematically divided into subchapters. Research objectives and questions are established in the beginning of the thesis, followed by the definition of a conceptual framework, which is crucial for the whole work. The next chapter is dedicated to data and methods, which were collected and used in this thesis for analysis. The following chapter deals with tertiary education in the Czech Republic and its short history, current structure and organization, as well as the main actors in the system. The findings of the analysis, more specifically, the concrete forms and mechanisms of accountability, which exist in the Czech Republic, are represented in the chapter 6. This chapter is followed by a discussion of the findings. The diploma thesis will be closed with a final chapter – conclusion, which represents the whole result and general overview of this diploma thesis.

The diploma thesis uses mainly foreign literature and sources, which are dedicated to the concept of accountability. The leading sources are articles written by M. Bovens, M. Dubnick, R. Mulgan and others. The diploma thesis also refers to two articles about accountability, which are written by the Czech author A. Veselý. Since the diploma thesis focuses on the Czech Republic, it further uses Czech publications and documents dedicated to tertiary education. The most important sources are public-policy documents, because they set up the environment in which education takes place. For instance, these documents are the Higher Education Act, long-term strategies and long-term goals set by the MEYS, as well as the annual reports from the HEIs or the National Accreditation Bureau for the Czech Republic.

The main reason why I chose the topic of accountability in tertiary education was the strong interest I had during the whole master's studies for educational policy. Another reason was the fact that the concept of accountability is not very used in the Czech Republic. Working on this issue thereby represented a personal challenge for me.

## **2. Research aim and research questions**

Tertiary education in the Czech Republic has been studied from many different perspectives, but the concept of accountability has not been used and examined in detail until now. As A. Veselý states in his publication, the Czech authors have mainly dealt with the lack of accountability in the Czech Republic (Veselý, 2012).

Therefore the main aim of the presented diploma thesis is to find out, whether the concept of accountability in the Czech Republic will contribute to the expansion of a professional knowledge, especially in tertiary education system. The set aim further allows verification to if accountability as a concept might be beneficial for future research in this field.

Furthermore, the set aim will allow an identification of the main actors in tertiary education system and an analysis of the particular relations between them, as well as their interests pursued within the system.

Few partial goals will help to achieve the main aim, which has been set. The first partial goal is to precisely describe the Czech system of tertiary education, which further sets the environment in which educational policy takes place and then - to identify the major actors, who affect the setting and functioning of the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic. The second partial goal is to identify accountability relationships and its content between identified actors. The third objective is to find out the mechanisms and functions of the accountability that are applied in practice. The last goal is to find out the areas of the system of higher education, in which accountability is missing, as well as possible problems and implemented sanctions.

The aim of the diploma thesis will be reached through the following sets of the research questions:

### **1. How does the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic look like?**

- What is the structure of the system of tertiary education?
- Who are the major actors of the system of tertiary education?

### **2. Which accountability relationships exist within the system of tertiary education?**

- Who plays the role of the actor and has to justify his behaviour?
- To whom does the actor have to justify his behaviour? Who plays the role of the forum?

- 3. What is the content of accountability relations in the system of tertiary education?**
  - For what does the actor has to justify his behaviour?
- 4. Which mechanisms of accountability are applied in practice?**
- 5. What are the main functions of accountability within the system of tertiary education?**
- 6. In which areas of the system of tertiary education is accountability missing?**
  - Are there any implemented sanctions in the context of accountability that are applied in practice?

### 3. Conceptual framework

This chapter deals with conceptual framework, on which methods for the research are based and set. The beginning of this chapter defines accountability as a social relation and further defines its main characteristics and features. Since this diploma thesis is devoted to tertiary education, it is valuable to mention the concepts of accountability and quality in education.

#### 3.1 *Accountability as a social relation*

Everyone tends to emphasize the different aspects, characteristics and features of accountability, hence the number of various interpretations, definitions or explanations for this term. According to the extensive literature and various authors, accountability can be understood in many different ways. The first can be related to Dubnick's good governance and democracy, where accountability is: "*a form of governance that depends on the dynamic social interactions and mechanisms created within of such a moral community*" (Dubnick, 2002, p.7). Moreover, in terms of good governance, accountability can be understood as a linguistic tool that is usually mentioned in political documents. Accountability is rarely defined in these documents, but the main idea is to convey an illustration of good governance in order to assemble its supporters (Dubnick, 2002). The second understanding perceives accountability as either an informal or formal mechanism. These mechanisms typically regulate and assure the quality of the different public institutions, in order to fulfil the citizens' needs and demands (Veselý, 2013). To prove that accountability is one of the most important concepts within the democracy, Stapenhurst and O'Brien state: "*evaluating the ongoing effectiveness of public officials or public bodies ensures that they are performing to their full potential, instilling confidence in government and being responsive to the community they are meant to be serving*" (Stapenhurst - O'Brien, 2016, p.1).

One of the interesting understandings of the accountability concept is defined in J. Mansbridge's statement: "*accountability has become synonymous with punishment. When angry citizens and consumers demand accountability, they want someone's head on the block*" (Mansbridge, 2014, p. 55).

Another, yet very popular definition is the understanding of accountability as a social relation. This definition seems to be the most useful one, since it allows to be

empirically tested (Vesely, 2013). One of the authors, who are worth to mention, is Mark Bovens. As M. Bovens states: “*accountability is usually defined as a social relationship in which actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his conduct to some significant other*“ (Bovens, 2003, p. 4). M. Bovens states additionally in his other publication, that accountability is an operation of institutional arrangements rather than the behaviour of public institutions. Furthermore, accountability does not really focus on accountable behaviour of actors, but whether a forum can appeal to actors to be accountable ex post (Bovens, 2010).

This relatively “simple” definition further encompasses elements, which deserve to be clarified. The first element is the actor. By an actor we can understand either one person (for example a government official) or a public organization. The second element is the forum (typically called accountability forum), which can be an institution (court or parliament), community or general public, but it can also be one particular person (minister, manager, journalist, etc.). The social relationship between these two elements – actor and forum, has normally three phases (Bovens, 2003).

Firstly, one of the actors is obligated to justify and demonstrate his behaviour to another substantial actor – to forum. The actor’s obligation can be either formal or informal. The formal obligation is typical for actors, who regularly have to give obligatory accounts. The informal obligations are usually done through discussions, conferences or public hearings (Bovens, 2003).

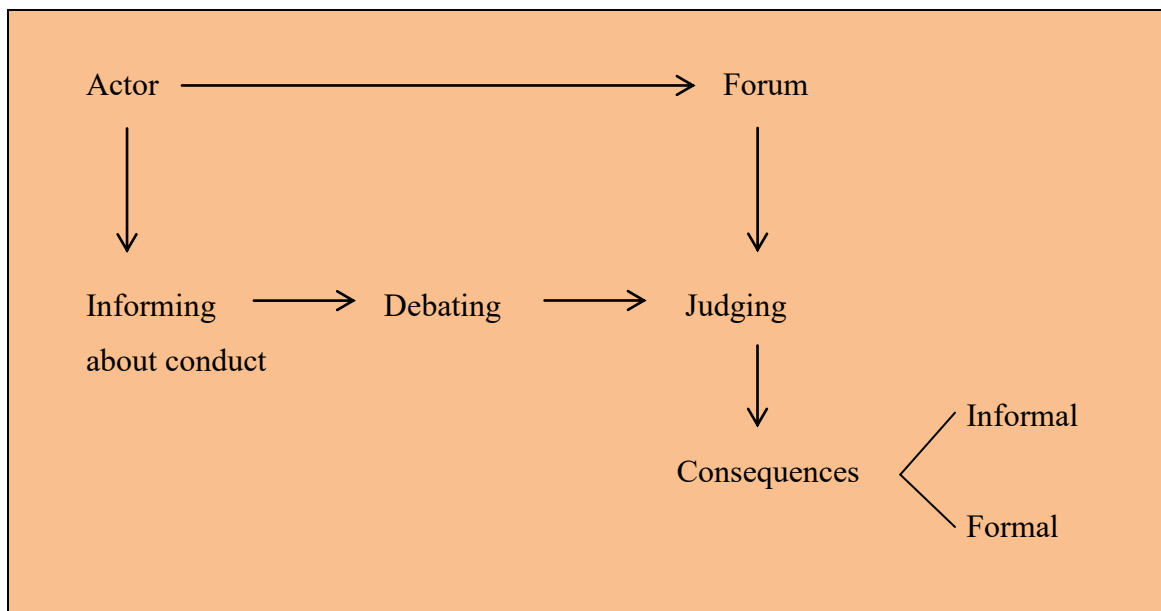
This actor’s justification and demonstration consist of three various steps. First, the actor has to contribute some diverse data about the tasks and the procedure he did, as well as the final outcomes. Secondly, the actor has to provide information about failures, if there are any, and this is an essential part of the justification. The third step takes the substantial actor, who can proceed to a verdict about the behaviour of the actor. The final verdict can either approve or condemn the actor’s behaviour or policy (Bovens, 2007).

It is necessary to mention, that the vital part of this social relation between an actor and a forum are sanctions. The forum has the right and is able to impose the sanction to the actor. According to Lindberg, these sanctions should meet the standards and should be measurable (Lindberg, 2009). More specifically, Lindberg says: “*there must be some form of evidence of accountable behaviour*” (Lindberg, 2009, p.10). Even though it is undeniable that actors have to face their actions, M. Bovens prefers consequences rather than sanctions. Sanctions could, according to him, negatively influence the scrutiny and

could exclude the other forums, which do not have the right to impose the sanctions (such as ombudsman). That is the reason consequences are a more usable concept. Again, even consequences can be formal and informal. These formal consequences are composed of traditional rules, formal penalties or remedies. Informal consequences can for example cause the decay of someone's career (Bovens, 2010).

A short summary of accountability as a social relation, more specifically, the relation between an actor and a forum can be found in the following table:

**Table No.1 Accountability as a social relation**



Source: Accountability, Figure 1 (Bovens, 2007, p. 454).

Even though accountability as a social relation seems to be easily understandable, there are basic questions that help to classify these relations (Bovens, 2007):

- Who are the forums?
- Who are the actors?
- Which accountability relations do exist between forums and actors?
- What is the content of accountability? (Bovens, 2007).

Accountability has many appearances and that is the reason why the answers to the above questions are crucial to understand the concept.

### 3.1.1 Who are the forums?

Accountability as a social relation is based on the existence of actors and forums. These forums can, one from another, have different expectations, as well as norms for passing their judgement. As M. Bovens states that five various types of forums and at least five particular relations exist within democracy (Bovens, 2003). Following this, these forums could be:

1. *Political forum*: such as politicians, various political parties and representatives. A political forum is also taken as one of the most important in terms of democracy. People usually delegate their power to elected representatives, who subsequently delegate their power to ministers. A minister is therefore accountable for the parliament (Bovens, 2007). As R. Mulgan and J. Uhr further add: „*ministerial responsibility thus provides the key link in a hierarchical chain of command and accountability, from the individual public servant, up through the departmental hierarchy to the secretary, and thence to the minister, to Parliament and ultimately to the electorate*“ (Mulgan-Uhr, 2000, p.1). What is definitely worth mentioning is that the media has recently grown as one of the political informal forums. Even A. Meijer states: „*journalists can function as the fire alarm*“ (Meijer, 2014, p.516).
2. *Legal forum*: legal forums usually contains of courts. Legal forums are very explicit, since they are based on the legislation and rules of a particular country. Romzek and Dubnick further add that legal forums are: „*in a position to impose legal sanctions or assert formal contractual obligation*“ (Romzek-Dubnick, 1987, p.228). Nowadays, the importance of legal forums grows, because people put their trust into courts rather than into the parliament. These legal forums may vary from country to country, but typically these are civil, administrative or penal courts (Bovens, 2007).
3. *Administrative forum*: this type of forum works closely with legal forum and usually contains auditors and controllers. Administrative forums represent independent and exterior inquiries (either financial and/or administrative) based on an inevitable set of standards. Furthermore, this type of forum can function on three levels – on an international, national and local level (Bovens, 2007).
4. *Professional forum*: this type of forum consists of professional associates. More specifically, associates such as professors, doctors, policemen etc. There are,

within this type of accountability relation, some standards that are mandatory to all professional associates, and in case of violation, they can face disciplinary trials. Related to that, the accountability is usually done in those public organizations in which professional associates work – educational institutions, hospital or police office (Bovens, 2007). In addition to that, Romzek and Dubnick understand professional forums as a: “*placement of control over organizational activities in the hands of the employee with the expertise or special skills to get the job done*“(Romzek-Dubnick, 1987, p.229).

5. *Social forum*: can be all other stakeholders, for example general public, various donations or interest groups. The citizen’s trust for authorities has recently decreased and this explains why the role of various interest groups and appropriate stakeholders has grown. The role of this type of forum is not only to regulate a particular policy, but also to be accountable for everything they do (Bovens, 2007).

### **3.1.2 Who are the actors?**

While trying to characterize all actors within the social relation, many authors face the so-called problem of many hands. One of the most important authors who deal with this problem is D. F. Thompson. According to him, the problem of many hands could be characterized as follows: „*many political outcomes are the product of the actions of many different people whose individual contributions may not be identifiable at all, and certainly cannot be distinguished significantly from other people’s contributions*“ (Thompson, 1980, p. 907). Thus the question: who should then render the account? The answer could be four main strategies that forums can use in order to avoid this problem. Based on that, four actors are identified (Bovens, 2007):

1. *Corporate actor*: this actor understands the organizations that work as a whole. These types of organizations mostly functions as a separate legal entities, which in case of a problem render account to a legal and administrative forum, but still as a whole (Bovens, 2007).
2. *Hierarchical actor*: typically refers to a statement one stands for everyone. This type of actor can render account to all types of forums, but most often to a political one. Accountability is based on the existence of a hierarchy and typically starts from the top. It means that those who render account are usually



in the leading positions, for example a particular minister who represents the ministry. In regards to the hierarchy, accountability can be external, but also internal. It means that a supervisor of a particular department is responsible for all of his subordinates (Bovens, 2007).

3. *Collective actor*: often refers to a statement that all stand for one. Specific forums could theoretically select just one person from all officials and ask this single person to be accountable for the behaviour of an entire organization. Such accountability would then be quite efficient and fast, but on the other hand, morally inappropriate. Therefore, collective accountability is appropriate only in certain specific conditions, for example if it is a small public institution (Bovens, 2007).
4. *Individual actor*: also known as every man for himself. While forums are passing the judgment, it also takes moral factors into consideration. Individual actors usually render account to a professional forum. Forums pass judgments based on an individual's real behaviour and not on his formal status. It means those individuals are responsible for themselves and they really cannot refer to an organization, in which they normally function (Bovens, 2007).

### **3.1.3 Which types of relations do exist between forums and actors?**

The particular type of accountability relation is based on rendering account, more specifically, if an actor has to or is willing to do so. Based on that, three types of accountability relations can be found in the literature.

The first type is the vertical relation, which is quite predominant among the others. Vertical relations have existed for many years and are mainly used in parliamentary systems. The main feature is the power that forums have and use over a particular actor. This power is a result of hierarchical organizations. Vertical relations typically refer to ministries (Bovens, 2007).

The opposite of the vertical relation is the social relation – usually referred as the horizontal relation. In this type of relation, actors normally feel the moral necessity to render account. Horizontal relations, in fact, have a lack of hierarchy and legal obligation (Bovens, 2007). A. Veselý further adds that horizontal accountability can even exist between two individuals, where one actor perceives his role to voluntarily render account to another one (Veselý, 2012).

The third type is the diagonal relation, which is somewhere in the middle of the vertical and horizontal relations. What is interesting in this relation is the fact, that one public organisation has to render account to another organisation, even though there is no hierarchy between them. Ministers or parliaments constituted these organizations, in order to ensure control of bureaucratic agents by a principal (Bovens, 2007).

### **3.1.4 What is the content of accountability relations?**

Accountability as a social relation is based on the existence of a particular actor and forum. As this theory describes various types of actors and forums, only one universal relation does not exist. The content of this relation mainly depends on the type of forums, to which an actor has to justify his behaviour. M. Bovens illustrates these relations as follow: *“political and administrative accountability frequently involve several aspects. An audit by the chamber of Audit, for example, may be classified as financial accountability if the focus is on the financial property of the audit, as legal accountability if the legality of the conduct is at issue, or as administrative if the central concern is the efficiency of the policy of the organisation”* (Bovens, 2006, p.19).

According to A. Veselý, an actor can render account mainly for inputs, processes, outputs and effects (Veselý, 2012).

On the other side, M. Haque relates the content of accountability relations to criteria. These criteria are more specific; these are mainly ensuring equal opportunities and human rights, integrity, equity, as well as welfare, employment and law maintenance (Haque, 2000).

As mentioned above, the theory of accountability is a “relatively” understandable concept, which involves different relations between many actors and forums. A short summary of the main features of accountability as a social relation can be found in the following table.

**Table No.2 Summary of the main features of accountability**

Who is the forum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political representatives</li> <li>• Courts</li> <li>• Public administration</li> <li>• Professional peers</li> </ul>
Who is the actor?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government and local government</li> <li>• Institutions of public sector</li> <li>• Non-profit organizations</li> <li>• Profit organizations</li> </ul>
Which types of accountability relations do exist between forum and actor?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vertical</li> <li>• Horizontal</li> <li>• Diagonal</li> </ul>
What is the content of accountability relations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inputs</li> <li>• Processes</li> <li>• Outputs</li> <li>• Effects</li> </ul>

Source: author according to Veselý, 2012.

### **3.1.5 What are the functions of accountability?**

Every theory or concept has some basic functions and the theory of accountability is not an exception. A. Veselý highlights, that particular functions of accountability are associated with different objectives. Among the other things, it is also related to the fragmentation of literature. While accountability is associated to control in traditional public administration, accountability is related to separation of powers (executive, legislative and judiciary) in political sciences and it is connected to an effective public services and learning processes in current literature of management (Veselý, 2012).

As it was mentioned before, accountability is in close relation with democracy and governance. If we talk about accountability in terms of democracy, a social relation can

be understood as some kind of circle. Citizens delegate their power to an elected representative, who usually gets the cabinet's trust. The cabinet delegates its power to members of the civil services. These members further delegate a certain power to quasi-independent public authorities, which perform relevant public policies to citizens (Bovens, 2003).

According to M. Bovens, accountability can have at least four functions (Bovens, 2003):

1. The most important function of accountability is a control of democracy. Using the example of the circle, each of the people who delegate its power to another person wants to have the opportunity to require rendering account. The circle begins and ends with citizens, who in the beginning delegate their power and can pass their judgment in the end. The possibility of public accountability is the most essential part of democracy, since it allows citizens to see how efficient or effective all elected representatives were.
2. The second function is the principle of good governance. Public accountability helps to fight against incorrect behaviours, such as corruption, favoritism or power abuse. Furthermore, interest groups, journalists or other officials can prevent all type of misusing of power.
3. The third function can be an improvement of performances. As M. Bovens states: "*accountability is not only about control, it is also about prevention*" (Bovens, 2003, p. 14). This further means that all norms are constantly changing and all public officials need to be aware of these changes in case it comes to rendering account.
4. All previous functions lead together to the fourth function – legality. The term legality can be also understood as a receptivity, transparency and liability. All these could together help citizens to perceive the role of public officials, whom the work is not always assumed (Bovens, 2003).

These four functions are usually taken as the leading ones; however, many other authors try to define the functions of accountability. According to P. Aucoin and R. Heintzman, accountability can serve at least for 3 purposes: the misuse and abuse of power control; the guarantee of effective use of all public source; and the continuous learning and improvement of public organizations (Aucoin-Heintzman, 2000).

### **3.1.6 What are the mechanisms of accountability?**

Mechanisms are, together with the definition of actors, forums and functions, one of the important parts of the accountability concept. These mechanisms could be understood as tools, through which accountability is set. Actually, mechanisms are also important for exercising the control over the conduct of public institutions (Bovens, 2006). As R. Mulgan remarks: “*without mechanisms for demanding explanation, applying judgment and imposing sanctions, institutions that are designed to control will fail to achieve their purpose*”(Mulgan, 2000, p. 566). Dubnick additionally comments that these mechanisms can be either formal or informal and together lead to a better democracy in state (Dubnick, 2002).

Based on what was mentioned above, it is clear that mechanisms represent one of the important parts of accountability. One of the most useful classifications of mechanisms comes from M. Haque, who defines mechanisms as the following (Haque, 2000):

- a) Exterior – formal, which include legislative and executive tools and court trials and processes.
- b) Interior – formal, which include hierarchy, rules and behaviour codes.
- c) Exterior – informal, which include public opinion and hearing, control by media and interest groups.
- d) Interior – informal, which include ethics and culture within an organization (Haque, 2000).

### **3.1.7 What are the problems with accountability?**

Despite the fact, that the concept of accountability might be relatively comprehensive, certain problems and shortcomings can occur in it. As M. Bovens states in his publication: “*accountability may be a good thing, but we can certainly have too much of it*” (Bovens, 2003, p. 15).

The first problem could be accountability overload. Overload usually arises when there are some demands that need to be done in short-term, or when there are many evaluation criterions that are in conflict. Overload is directly connected to the accountability trap, which is defined as a situation where people and organizations are evaluated regularly and intensively, in which the set requirements are met quite fast.

These requirements do however not have to mean any improvement of situation or achievement of the set objective. Another problem could be a professional confusion, when a particular actor is in a situation where he has to face different requirements from different forums. The actor's behavior will in this situation never be ideal. This further means that if an actor wants to meet the requirement of one forum, he will never be able to meet the requirements of another (Veselý, 2013).

On the other side of an excess of accountability is the lack of it. The most problematic part is in the executive power, where those who are in leading positions, typically ministers, do not have enough requirements or are not called by forums (political, professional, social, etc.) to render account (Bovens, 2003).

It is obvious that both overload and lack of accountability are problematic parts. A. Veselý recognizes the third problematic part, which he calls “*asymmetry of accountability*” (Veselý, 2013, p. 319). This asymmetry refers to a situation when accountability is not equal between various actors – one's accountability increases while the other's decreases (Veselý, 2013).

### ***3.2 Accountability in tertiary education***

The concept of accountability can be used in different fields of our society and field of education is not an exception. Before conceptualizing accountability in the system of tertiary education, it is necessary to state, why we even should pay attention to it.

Education has a positive impact and not only to individuals' life, but also on the whole society. It is an essential part of the political and cultural life, the economy and the market (Desjardins, 2015). An education can thereby be: „*seen as an engine of empowerment as well as a means of cultural and economic development*” (Leveille, 2006, p.9). In addition to that, education is also perceived as a contribution to human capital because it leads to the development of society (Psacharopoulos-Woodhall, 1985). The investments have recently grown in the field of tertiary education, which becomes very important nowadays. Many countries have invested in education, mainly because of undeniable benefits of quality education. Well-educated individuals play a key role on the labour. A better performing labour help increasing a country's competitiveness, based on which employment and income are growing (OECD, 2012). Not only tertiary education, but education in general should also be considered as a society's value and everybody should actively participate in it.

Accountability in the system of tertiary education is widely known all over the world. Some countries have established accountability mechanisms, while others are facing some issues with setting this “phenomenon” in their conditions (Huisman-Currie, 2004). Author J. C. Burke likens accountability in tertiary education to many faces. Furthermore he says: “*accountability is the most advocated and least analyzed word in higher education. Everyone uses the term but usually with multiple meaning*” (Burke, 2004, p.5). The accountability’s faces herewith represent the specific relations within the system of tertiary education. There are at least 4 “faces” in the literature and these typically are upwards, downwards, inwards and outwards. While upwards means traditional relations such as vertical and administrative accountability, downwards usually refers to hierarchical accountability. Inwards is focusing on a professional accountability and outwards is concentrating on society, media and other external stakeholders (Vidovich-Slee, 2000, p. 3). Simultaneously, authors D. Figlio and S. Loeb state: “*accountability in education is a broad concept that could be addressed in many ways, such as using political processes to assure democratic accountability, introducing market-based reforms to increase accountability to parents and children, or developing peer-based accountability systems to increase the professional accountability of teachers*” (Figlio-Loeb, 2011, p. 384).

It is obvious that accountability can be understood in many ways and it only depends on different actors’ perspectives and views. Over the time, the true meaning of accountability in tertiary education has changed. It has started with the efforts to establish an effective system, followed by quality education, then managerial competencies and least but no last – responsiveness of the public institutions to all demands from the market and society as well (Burke, 2004).

The definition and purposes of accountability in the system of tertiary education are quite important, but we cannot forget to mention another important part – the stakeholders. Many actors with different opinions, values and demands are interacting within the system of tertiary education. HEIs as an integral part of the system have to deal with both internal and external stakeholders. These stakeholders can represent just one person or a whole group or community (Jongbloed-Enders-Salerno, 2008). Internal stakeholders usually represent the HEIs itself. These can be faculties, teachers, academic staff and students. External stakeholders are government, various business partners, market, profit or non-profit organizations, as well as media. Many stakeholders obviously participate in the system of tertiary education and to assure accountability,

they have to become strong partners with each other (Burke, 2004). Strong partnership further supports author D. E. Leveille's statement: *"Successful "accountability" requires communication—presentation, discussion, disagreement, negotiation, compromise, and so on"* (Leveille, 2006, p.10).

If education is seen as an investment to a human capital, it is necessary to increase these investments, so that educational institutions can achieve required quality. On the other hand, it is not just the state that has to invest. Even educational institutions need to play their role, in order to meet the expectations from the state. This role consists of constant improvement of quality, as well as comparison of the outcome with set expectations and clear demonstration of the achieved results (Leveille, 2006).

HEIs need at least some degree of independence so they can achieve expected results and quality. This independence is often understood as an autonomy, which allows HEIs to manage investments and resources from the state (Figlio-Loeb, 2011). It is therefore adequate to state that autonomy of HEIs allows to: *"local authorities, school governing boards and schools a greater degree of freedom in decision making. Yet despite increasing decentralisation, central governments are still held responsible by the general public for ensuring high quality education"* (Hooge-Burns-Wilkoszewski, 2012,p.5). On the other side, accountability mechanisms then evaluate the entire process taken by the HEIs (Figlio-Loeb, 2011). Authors D. Figlio and S. Loeb further mention, that accountability mechanism: *"frequently include explicit sanctions for schools not meeting the expectations. Examples of these sanctions include the withdrawal of autonomy"* (Figlio-Loeb, 2011, p.388). It is although necessary to mention that the state is just one stakeholder that could measure the performance of the HEIs and as mentioned above, there are also other external and internal stakeholders who can measure it as well.

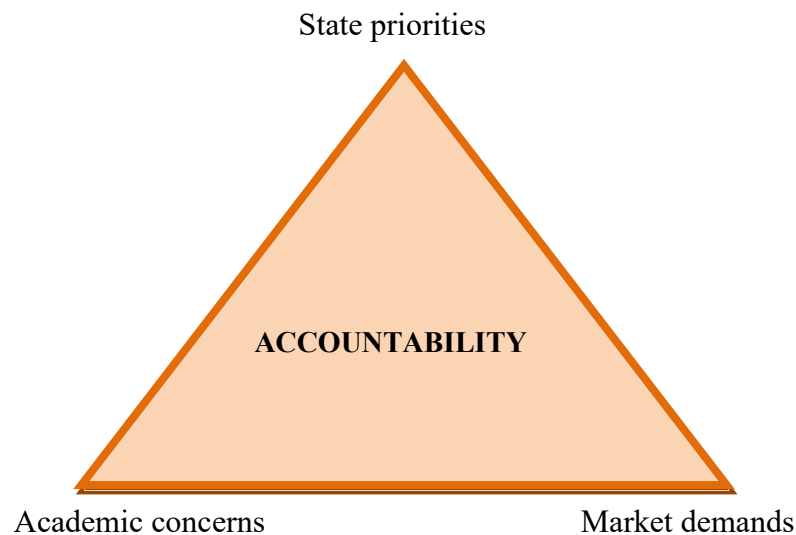
Accountability in the system of tertiary education is a very discussed topic and many authors dedicate their time to study the balance between accountability and autonomy, which are both needed in education. Both are a vital part of education, yet they are different. Not only the state, but also HEIs need to find a common agreement, which will be somewhere between accountability and autonomy (American Council., 2004). As J. C. Burke additionally states: *"as is often the case, balance is the key"* (Burke, 2004, p.24).

It is worth to mention the author B. Clark, according to whom three dominant forces exist within the tertiary education. These three forces represent important models and



are usually referred to the triangle of accountability. The first model of the triangle is a state priority, which mirrors citizen's thoughts and aspirations on tertiary education. State priority is normally declared through elected representatives. The second model is academic matters, which include professors and academic staff's interests. The third model is market, which covers demands from various actors, such as students, business customers and other clients. Each of these models is very important as it reflects different field (political, academic and market) and the midpoint of the triangle represents the point of adequate accountability (Burke, 2004).

**Table No. 3 Accountability triangle**



Source: Author according to Burke, 2004.

### ***3.3 The concept of quality***

When it comes to tertiary education, it often interferes with terms such as „quality education“, „improving quality“, or „quality assurance“. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what is the role of quality in education, particularly in the system of tertiary education.

The concept of quality is in a general overview relatively simple. For example, F. Ježek states that: *“quality is understood as the capacity to meet a pre-determined goal”*

(Ježek, 2007, p.90). It means that if we want to speak about quality, we need to have some goals we want to achieve. But if we talk about the field of education, particularly tertiary education, then quality is one of those elusive concepts, which are easy to understand, but hard to define (Harvey-Green, 1992). As H. Šebková states: “*there is no single concept of quality in higher education; it is a multi-dimensional concept*” (Šebková, 2007, p. 108). There is simply not only one concept that could provide a comprehensive definition. In the field of tertiary education, there will always exist different interests, values, goals or opinions of stakeholders, who will understand quality differently (Šebková-Kohoutek, 2007). Despite this fact, quality can be classified as follows:

- a) Perfection, where quality means excellence, which has always been a part of a higher education institution.
- b) No errors, where quality focuses on the main processes of higher institutions, such as teaching and research.
- c) Adequate for its purpose, where quality can be measured by the degree of reached targets.
- d) Transformation, where quality means the transformation of inputs into outputs. In other words, the basic knowledge of students is changing into a qualitative one (Tremblay-Kis, 2008).

Additionally, L. Harvey adds that quality is often overlapped with standards. In this particular case, quality is related to processes, while standards to outcomes. More specifically: “*quality refers to how things are done whereas standards are used to measure outcomes*” (Harvey, 2006, p.2). Within the system of tertiary education, at least 4 types of standards can be found:

- a) Academic – usually related to students’ performances and their grades.
- b) Competences – are related to technical skills, which students need for their profession.
- c) Services – are related to processes provided by the educational institutions.
- d) Organizational – are understood as procedures held by institutions, in order to assure a relevant learning (Harvey, 2006).

According to H. Šebková and J. Kohoutek, there are few main reasons why the quality of education is such a phenomenon. The first and also main reason is a higher

degree of decentralization in countries. Institutions of higher education have become more autonomous, while the state's influence has become restricted. Thus, HEIs, with newly acquired autonomy, have started to expand not only in numbers of students, but also abroad. This expansion has led to an internationalization of the education, where students all over the world have many opportunities to study in a new ways (Šebková-Kohoutek, 2007). One of the studies, done by Eurostudent, also points out that the term quality is not only applied to professors, teachers and academics, but also to administrative employees, who also take part in the quality assurance in education. Their part is to provide excellent student services, as well as to assure a good quality in the teaching and school research. Another, very interesting task is to provide a good management for the particular faculty and its communication with the public (Eurostudent, 2015). These reasons together led to a situation, where quality assurance is needed. H. Šebková and J. Kohoutek further add, that the quality assurance can be done through two mechanisms: internal and external (Šebková-Kohoutek, 2007).

Ministries and national agencies, but also international organizations are interested in education and its quality. This is the reason why a wide range of national and international projects exists. The most known project, guide for quality assurance, is "The standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher education Area (ESG)", which was approved during the Bologna process<sup>1</sup> by all the European ministers. This guide is revised and according to EHEA: "*the ESG 2015 reflects consensus among all the organisations and ministries involved on how to take forward quality assurance*" (EHEA, 2016). The list of standards can be found in the attachments (attach.No.1).

It cannot be denied that the assurance of quality is needed, although, it is worth to mention its connection to accountability. Many discussions about these two concepts can be found in the literature. Some authors state that quality assurance and accountability are incompatible, while others say that both concepts are needed in tertiary education. These debates about quality assurance and accountability are also known as "*accountability-improvement dilemma*"<sup>2</sup> (Kohoutek, 2008, p.20). K.

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<sup>1</sup> Bologna process includes many important stakeholders, who focus on improvement of tertiary education within the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Accountability-improvement dilemma is undoubtedly very interesting topic, but there is no space to include the concept to this diploma thesis. Those, who are interested in this topic, can read publications from authors K. Tremblay, V. Kiss or A. I. Vroeijsstijn.

Tremblay and V. Kis summarize these discussions by saying: “*they advocate the combination of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to build on their complementarities*” (Tremblay-Kis, 2008, p.294).

While applying concepts of quality and accountability in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to say that while quality and its assurance is commonly known between the actors of the system of tertiary education, accountability is known, but not very used. The concept of accountability within the Czech Republic will be discussed in chapter seven.

## 4. Methodology

The goal of this chapter is to explain and describe the methods used in this research, which helped to achieve the main aim of this diploma thesis. Qualitative research will be used for this diploma's research topic. One of the main reasons why qualitative research is suitable for the thesis is that it is mainly used in the cases, where the aim is to describe, explore or explain something (Veselý, 2011). Qualitative methods and data will be extended by quantitative data, especially in the case of official statistical and economic data related to tertiary education in the Czech Republic. These quantitative data will be used mainly for illustration.

The presented diploma thesis is conceived as a theoretical study, in order to reach the aims of the thesis. The theoretical study covers the specific country – the Czech Republic and examines the accountability relations within the system of tertiary education.

As known, three types of HEIs can be found in the Czech tertiary education system. These are public, private and state HEIs. The study will, however, focus only on public HEIs. One of the reasons for selecting public HEIs was the fact that there are some differences in rules that are valid for state and private HEIs<sup>3</sup>. While public HEIs are “enjoying” their autonomy, they are still mainly funded from public resources. At the same time, the majority of Czech students are studying in public HEIs. The choice of examining public HEIs therefore appeared to be the best option for the research within the study.

Public HEIs provide educational and creative activities, which are further complemented with other support processes. The educational activities usually include courses, seminars or various forms of theoretical and practical knowledge. The creative activities focus mainly on research and innovations. Through these activities public HEIs further strengthen their impact on society. This impact is also perceived as a “third” role of HEIs<sup>4</sup>.

Both activities are undoubtedly important, but it is necessary to note that examining the accountability of public HEIs as a whole, is beyond the time and capabilities of the

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<sup>3</sup> While public HEIs fall under the control of the MEYS, state HEIs fall under control of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence. Private HEIs are also under the control of the MEYS, but the funding and creation of these institutions are different.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed description of the structure of HEIs can be found in chapter 5.3.3

presented diploma thesis. That is also the reason why the theoretical study will “only” cover the aspects of educational activities of public HEIs.

The theoretical study will use a theoretical concept of accountability, more specifically accountability understood as a social relation by M. Bovens. In order to mark identified relations as accountability relations, the following conditions had to be met:

1. There is an actor who has to render account.
2. There is a forum that passes a judgement on actor’s behaviour.
3. The forum can impose the sanctions to the actor for his behaviour (Bovens, 2007).

Based on this theoretical framework, the diploma thesis further focused on who is the actor and to which forum the actor has to render account, what is the type of relation, as well as what is the content and functions of the identified accountability relations.

#### ***4.2 Methods for collecting and analysing the data***

The presented diploma thesis is divided into a theoretical and an analytical part. The diploma thesis further used both primary and secondary sources.

The theoretical part consisted of an analysis of the secondary sources and was used in the beginning of the diploma thesis. As known, secondary sources are usually collected by a different person and might be collected for different purposes. It was therefore necessary to pay attention to this during the analysis, in order to only seek relevant information that was appropriate for this diploma thesis.

Analyses were mainly taken from foreign sources and literature that deal with accountability, its main characteristics and features. The basis for this diploma thesis mainly refers to publications from M. Bovens, who developed the concept of accountability in several editions. This diploma thesis however used other foreign sources, in order to supplement or compare obtained knowledge. Since this diploma thesis focuses on the Czech Republic, general articles about accountability from the Czech author A. Veselý were also used. Analyses dedicated to the concept of accountability were a very important part for this research as it allowed getting a better insight into the concept, which represents the main core of this diploma thesis.

Other secondary sources that were analysed were public policy documents (hereinafter “PPD”). One of the reasons why analysis of PPD was chosen is that these documents usually directly adjust and determine what the content of the tertiary education is, what is assessed and what are the powers and responsibilities of various actors. Thus, thanks to the formal character of PPD, it is possible to maintain a relatively high degree of objectivity, avoiding any distorted views (Veselý-Drhová-Nachtmannová, 2005). For the purposes of this thesis, different types of PPD were analyzed. The thesis used mainly legislative PPD – such as relevant laws, statutes, decrees and resolutions of Government. The diploma thesis also used strategic PPDs such as Strategy 2020 and The Strategic Plan, as well as research PPD – OECD reports.

Another valuable source of information to this diploma thesis was the 5 months internship experience at the MEYS, more specifically at the Department of Tertiary Education. Thanks to this internship, I gained a great amount of information related to tertiary education, its quality, as well as different long-term strategies, projects and accountability. I had the chance to get a deeper insight into “daily working routine”, which helped me to understand the real on-going processes at the MEYS. One of the interesting things was my personal participation on processing the monitoring indicators (such as the number of students and study programmes, budgets and scholarships, internationalization, availability of tertiary education, etc.), which I further used in my diploma thesis<sup>5</sup>. I also had the chance to meet many employees at the MEYS, who were very helpful and kindly shared diverse information I needed. Thanks to this 5 months experience I expanded my contacts, which allowed me to reach key people for my interviews.

### ***4.3 Interviews with relevant actors***

In the analytical part of the diploma thesis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with actors and experts of tertiary education policy. These qualitative interviews were the source of primary data for the presented diploma thesis. One of the

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<sup>5</sup> Monitoring indicators have not been published during the writing of this diploma thesis. Regarding to my internship at the MEYS and the fact that I was involved in the processing, the MEYS allowed me to use these data in this diploma thesis. Monitoring indicators are still not finalized and so they will be publicly available during the year 2017.

reasons why I included qualitative interviews to this diploma thesis was that these interviews have key benefits. These are mainly:

- a) access to information that are hard to obtain;
- b) quality data in a relatively short period of time;
- c) possibility to “look inside” of the institution, if an actor or an expert is a part of the institution;
- d) easier access to other actors or experts (Bogner–Litting-Menz, 2009).

#### **4.3.1 The selection of respondents and the structure of the interviews**

The respondents for the interviews were not chosen randomly. As this diploma thesis deals with accountability and the accountability relations between the actors of the system of tertiary education, elite interviews were conducted. As L. Hochschild says, elite interviews represent the term that: *„indicates a person who is chosen by name or position for a particular reason, rather than randomly or anonymously“* (Hochschild, 2009, p.1)

Elite interviews were chosen to the set aims and research questions of this diploma thesis. The selected individuals for elite interviews were representatives of the identified actors, who have a significant impact on the Czech tertiary education system. The main reason for picking specific people for the interview was also that these people could provide me valuable sources of information, as well as their reflection of accountability in the reality. Thus, the chosen respondents constituted a purposeful sample. As L. A. Palinkas et al. states, purposeful sampling: *“involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest”*(Palinkas et al, 2015, p.2).

The purposeful sample further provided me with the participant pool of individuals who represented identified actors of the Czech tertiary education. I contacted the selected individuals by email, presenting myself, my diploma thesis and its aims. Overall, 10 people were contacted by email. All respondents answered in a short time horizon, but only 7 of them were interested to be interviewed (the remaining 3 people declined the interview, due to lack of time). In order to let them prepare for the interview, I sent them the questions related to the topic of accountability.

Before conducting the interviews, the pilot verification of the questions was realized with an expert in tertiary education. The expert was asked to comment these



questions and explain how he understood them and if the questions were relevant for the purposes of this diploma thesis. The comments on semi-structured question were taken into consideration during the final adaption of the questions. Specific interview questions were based on the study's theoretical framework, which are outlined in the third chapter. The purpose of these questions was to gain the actors views of the concept of accountability - the expectations of the legislative systems, while concurrently meeting demands imposed by the complex environment in which they operate.

In the beginning of each interview, I presented once more the content and aims of the diploma thesis. Subsequently, I requested each respondent informed consent for participation on interview (see Attachment No.1). I asked each respondent whether I could record the interview and then use their statements as citations in diploma thesis. Each respondent agreed on both recording and quotation. Apart from recording, I also took important field notes from respondents, which I found relevant and important for my research.

I had a pre-set question table for each interview (see Attachment No.2), which was the basis for the whole conversation. These questions were further supplemented by other questions that naturally resulted from the conversation with the interviewed person.

All interviews were realized in March and April 2017. Nearly all of the interviews were conducted in the natural environment of the respondents – in the offices of the relevant institutions. Only 2 interviews took place outside of these institutions – in small and calm coffee places, which were suitable for an interview and recording. All interviews were conducted in private, without disruption of any other person. The duration of each interview was between 30-60 minutes.

After obtaining the information, the transcript of the recorded conversations were processed into text. The conversations were transcribed almost literally. As each respondent is understood as an “expert” in his work, the interview itself did not contain many slang or spoken words. As each interview was done in Czech language, I had to translate the transcribed text into English (in order to keep the same format which is used in the whole diploma thesis). After transcribing the obtained information, quasi-deductive qualitative approach was used. As known, quasi-deductive approach is: *“formed directly from the conceptual framework which typically includes constructs, relationships, context, and so forth”* (Latham, 2017, p.1). All interview questions were based on a theoretical concept of accountability, so I was mainly looking for reflections

of accountability features and its direct use within the tertiary education in the Czech Republic. In the same time, I have been looking for similarities and differences from the information obtained from the analysis of PPDs.

All the conducted interviews have 5 or more pages and due to their length, I do not publish these in the diploma thesis<sup>6</sup>.

### **4.3.2 Research Ethics**

The ethical aspect of a research is an important part of any qualitative research. Despite the fact that the topic of accountability in the Czech Republic is known, it is not considered as a sensitive issue. However, in the beginning of each interview I offered anonymity to all respondents. Since all respondents are members of some public institutions and in order not to damage the reputation of respondents or institutions in which they work, I considered anonymity as the right thing to do. Among other things, the anonymity further offers a wealth of information that I would probably not have gotten under normal circumstances.

For better understanding of the following text, I assigned to each respondent an abbreviation, which is relevant for the context of this diploma thesis. Abbreviations are done in a way so it is impossible to identify individuals.

Detailed specification of the individual respondents can be found in the list down below:

1. C – member of Council of HEIs
2. E – expert on the Czech educational policy,
3. E2 – researcher at CSVŠ,
4. M1 – employee of the MEYS,
5. M2 – employee of the MEYS.
6. N – member of NAB,
7. R – rector of a public HEI.

Apart from the anonymity, participants were reminded during the interviews about their right not to answer any questions they did not want to answer, as well as the fact that that they could speak off the record.

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<sup>6</sup> Transcribed interviews can be provided on a request.

#### ***4.4 Limitations for the chosen research design***

One of the limitations for this diploma thesis is in the selected design. This theoretical study deals only with the aspects of education activities, which represents only one part of HEIs activities. The aspect of science and research has not been included and the results of this theoretical study can therefore not be generalized to the public HEI as whole.

The second factor is the selection and analyses of the sources. Most of the analysed sources are PPDs, which set up the environment, in which educational policy takes place. On the other side, the analysis of PPDs cannot capture all informal relations and mechanisms of accountability. This is the reason why this diploma thesis consists of qualitative interviews with relevant actors – in order to partially include perspectives and perception of actors (or their representatives) and experts.

At the same time, the collection of primary sources was based on personal judgment, which could further cause subjective interpretations.

## **5. The system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic**

In order to apply the concept of accountability in the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to first understand how the system looks like and functions. This chapter attempts to describe its development over the past 30 years, as well as its structure, principles of funding, monitoring indicators and main stakeholders who affect the setting and functioning of the system of tertiary education.

### ***5.1 Development of tertiary education***

The system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic is influenced by many historical milestones and each of them represents various changes in education over the time. The most significant changes happened after the revolution in 1989. The violations of freedom, academic rights and autonomy, which were set by the communist regime, have been renewed and the Czech Republic became a democratic state. The Higher Education Act (hereinafter the “HEA”) was codified in 1990, which confirmed these democratic principles in the tertiary education. The HEA brought a deeper development of the system of tertiary education. New universities, research centres and study programmes have been established and the number of students has been increasing ever since. Although, the major change was renewed autonomy of HEIs, which introduced brand new elements into the system. Apart from the fact that HEIs have become more independent and without strict control from the state, new bodies were constituted as well. The HEA introduced academic senates as self-regulation bodies, which allowed HEIs to act more independently. After a short time, council of HEIs was introduced as a balance to the ministry and law. Since quality and quality assurance were the main topic at that time in the whole Europe, the HEA established Accreditation Commission (hereinafter “ACCR”). ACCR was created as an independent body that provided quality assessments. What is worth to mention is the fact, that all of these bodies were constituted in a very short time period (Beneš-Staněk-Šebková, 2006).

As the system of tertiary education has been developing over time, the HEA has had to respond to different challenges and changes in the system. Huge changes led to a new establishment of the Higher Education Act No. 111/1998 Coll., in 1998. The new HEA states in the beginning that: *“higher education institutions, as the highest level of*

*the educational system, are regarded as the culminant centres of education, independent knowledge and creative activity. Higher education institutions play a key role in the scholarly, scientific, cultural, social and economic development of society”* (sec.1 of the Act No. 111/1998 Coll.).

European Commission further adds that the new HEA also: *“brought an important change in the establishment structure: state institution status was limited only to military schools and schools of the Ministry of Interior, while other institutions became public institutions with increased autonomy. It became possible to establish private institutions”* (European Commission, 2013).

It cannot be then denied that the HEIs have an important role in the Czech tertiary education; they have to therefore fulfil their mission as stated in the HEA. As the world is rapidly changing, both the system of tertiary education and the HEIs have to become more open and flexible. Until 2017, the HEA had been amended exactly 26 times. Those amendments were mainly related to responsibilities of HEIs and their diversification, quality, internationalization, funding and others (Ministry of Education..., 2017). The current structure and organization of the system of tertiary education can be found in the following subchapters.

## ***5.2 Structure of tertiary education***

The system of tertiary education is schematically divided into two different sectors. The first type of sector provides tertiary professional education, which is done through professional institutions. These professional institutions were created after 1990 and offer courses on a level ISCED 5B. This type of school is suitable for students, who would like to continue in their post-secondary studies, but outside of the university. The length of studies is 3 years and students get a general degree after their graduation, which is not comparable with the usual bachelor’s degree (European Commission, 2013). The MEYS further states that the aim of tertiary professional institutions is: *“to fill the gap in qualifications needs between secondary and tertiary education”* (Ministry of Education..., 2012, p.26). Until today, there are approximately 180 professional schools with 30 thousands students in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Education..., 2017a). Even though these institutions are part of the system of tertiary education, this diploma thesis is devoted to public HEIs and it will no longer deal with this topic

The second type of sector includes tertiary education, which is done through HEIs, which represent the most important part of the system. HEIs offer education on a level ISCED 5A – with three recognized types of degree programmes, which are typically the bachelor, master and doctoral programmes (European Commission, 2013). Bachelor study programmes usually take three or four years and require at least 180 credits for successful completion. Students, who obtain the bachelor's degree, can directly continue in master's programmes. These usually take two or three years and require a number of credits for graduation of at least 120 credits. The students, who want to further continue with their studies, can apply for doctoral study programmes, but they can only do that if they successfully obtained the master's degree. Doctoral programmes are further: “*aimed at scientific research and independent creative activities in the area of research or development*” (Ministry of Education., 2009, p. 22). Students can attend all these programmes either as a full-time studies, distance studies or mixture of both types (Ministry of Education., 2012).

Not only the degree programmes, but also the HEIs can be divided into different types, according to the founder (Centre for International., 2016).

- a) Public institutions - are those, which are: “*established by law, and are legal entities*” (Ministry of Education., 2009, p.21). Public HEIs are fully independent in fields such as programmes of studies; tuition fees or admission processes (Centre for International., 2016). This type of HEI will be further discussed in the subchapter 5.3.3.
- b) Private institutions – are considered as legal entities. This status can be granted only by the MEYS (Ministry of Education., 2012). This type of institution is little bit different than the others, since students have to pay fees, in order to be able to study there (Centre for International., 2016).
- c) State institutions – are those, which are still fully under the state control, more specifically, under the control of a particular ministry. The HEA dedicates special chapters to these state institutions, since different rules and responsibilities are applied to them (Ministry of Education., 2012).

According to the criteria of study programmes, the Czech Republic furthermore distinguishes between two types of HEIs (Centre for International., 2016):

- a) University type of HEIs - are those, which are internally divided into various faculties depending on their area of interest. These institutions are allowed to provide bachelor's, master's and doctoral study programmes (Centre for

International., 2016). Furthermore, these institutions can: “*carry out associated scientific and research, development and innovation, artistic or other creative activities*” (Centre for International., 2016, p.5).

- b) Non-university types of HEIs - are those, which are not internally divided into various faculties. These types of institutions can provide only bachelor’s and master’s degree study programmes, and are not allowed to establish a doctoral study programmes. This type of institution is not allowed to carry out the scientific research (Centre for International., 2016).

### **5.3 Actors in the tertiary education**

One of the vital parts of the system is the various actors. These actors participate and usually shape the educational policy. Their classification depends on how they actually influence the policy itself, as well as decision making or evaluation. According to this, at least 3 main groups of actors exist within tertiary education, which further affect the on-going processes, as well as each other (Kalous, 2007).

#### **5.3.1 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**

The MEYS is one of the most important stakeholders in the system of tertiary education. Its competencies are regulated by the act of the Czech National Council No. 2/1969 Coll., on establishment of ministries and other central bodies of state administration as amended (Ministry of Education., 2017b). The MEYS fully represents the principal authority, which in the name of the state is responsible for the education in the country. It is in charge of creating strategic, declarative and legislative documents regarding to education in the Czech Republic. It is liable for all types of education, starting with nurseries and continuing with primary, secondary and tertiary institutions (Government of the., 2015). In overall, the MEYS is: “*responsible for the concept, state and development of the education system, including the area of science, youth and sports*” (Centre for International., 2014).

The MEYS is internally divided into sections, which deal with different fields of education. These sections are mainly (Ministry of Education., 2017c):

1. Section of economy,
2. Section of education,

3. Section of tertiary education, research and innovation,
4. Section of operational programmes,
5. Section of sports and youth,
6. Section of legislation and strategies,
7. Section of property (Ministry of Education., 2017c).

The section that is mainly responsible for the system of tertiary education is the Section of tertiary education, research and innovation. It is further divided into 4 different departments. These deal with strategic programmes, support the HEIs, as well as deal with tertiary education in terms of research, innovation, concepts, infrastructure and legislative (Ministry of Education., 2017c). The MEYS in cooperation with this section creates the key strategies for the development of the system. The most essential strategies are Strategy 2020 and The Strategic Plan<sup>7</sup>. The Strategy 2020 was accepted in 2014 as: *“an umbrella strategic document defining the starting points for strategic plans at all stages of the educational system, including higher education, and other conceptual materials”* (Ministry of Education., 2016a). Strategy 2020 has three main objectives that will together create an effective system of education, which will accomplish required quality and will be accessible for everyone (Ministry of Education., 2016a). The Strategic Plan has also three objectives, which will make tertiary education more appropriate to the set purpose, more efficient and more available. The MEYS through this strategy declares its activities for the up-coming years (Ministry of Education., 2016a):

- a) MEYS assures budget for the HEIs, in order to support their research and educational activities. Distribution of the budget will further support overall quality and balance of the HEIs.
- b) MEYS assures continuous implementation of the HEA.
- c) MEYS supports quality, diversification and internationalisation of the Czech tertiary education.
- d) MEYS supports the HEIs in their development by carrying out various surveys, comparisons or benchmarks.
- e) MEYS sets the methodology for annual evaluations of the HEIs.

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<sup>7</sup> The full title is The Strategic Plan for the Scholarly, Scientific, Research, Development, Innovation, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2016-2020.



- f) MEYS strongly supports research by further investments, improvement of material base.
- g) MEYS increases public knowledge about tertiary education and cooperates with other ministries in order to assure close cooperation (Ministry of Education..., 2016a).

### **5.3.2 National Accreditation Bureau for Czech Republic**

It is necessary to mention right in the beginning, that in 2016, the National Accreditation Bureau for Czech Republic (hereinafter “NAB”) replaced the ACCR, which was originally created by the HEA in 1990 (Accreditation Commission..., 2013). Although the ACCR does not exist anymore, it is crucial to mention all of its functions, missions and actions, which were valid until the end of the year 2016.

The ACCR was a sovereign body that was established to control the quality within the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic. The main aim of the ACCR was to carry out the complex assessment of all activities that have been taken by the HEIs. In the same time, the ACCR cooperated with the HEIs in developing their own internal quality mechanisms. Given the fact that the HEIs are autonomous institutions, the ACCR fully respected the fact that these institutions are responsible for their quality at the first place. The second main aim was to carry out inspections in the system of tertiary education, which were requested by the MEYS. The former ACCR consisted of 21 members, who were assigned by the Government of the Czech Republic for 6 years (Accreditation Commission..., 2015).

The NAB took over the responsibilities of the former Accreditation Commission and has also brought new features. The new NAB is an independent institution, which is established by the HEA. Apart from the fact, that the NAB is independent, it materially and financially is supported by the MEYS. The NAB is not a government organization, but regarding to its competences, it is taken as a public authority. It cooperates within its competences, which are essential for the sooth implementation and evaluation of educational and creative activities, with the MEYS, Council of Research, development and innovation, as well as with bodies of the HEIs and possibly with all other relevant agencies, institutions and organizations (Národní akreditační..., 2016).

The NAB has also constituted its own internal structure. The executive body of the NAB is the Council of NAB, which consist of 15 members and an operational body is

the Board of NAB. The body of NAB, which mainly decides on appeals against decisions of the Council, is the Review Committee of the NAB and has 5 members (Národní akreditační., 2016). Members of the NAB are mainly people, who have great experiences from academic environment – those will be mainly representatives of professional chambers established by law (Ministry of Education., 2016c).

All the activities of the NAB are taken according to the HEA, NAB's statute and other legal regulations. The main activities of the NAB are (Národní akreditační., 2017):

- a) To decide about accreditation of study programmes, institutional accreditation in the field of education, appointments of professors and habilitation processes. The former ACCR could not decide independently, since approval of the MEYS was always needed. This activity then represents higher independence of the NAB.
- b) To perform compliance control while implementing activities of accreditation.
- c) To perform external control of educational activities, as well as scientific, research, development, innovative and creative activities of HEIs (Národní akreditační., 2017).

Other additional activities of the NAB are:

1. Giving opinions on the type of HEIs, non-European and foreign HEIs and on confirmation of the state approval.
2. Administrative proceedings at the first instance.
3. Control and external evaluation of the HEIs.
4. Recommendations of the best practices and methods for evaluation (Národní akreditační., 2016).

### **5.3.3 Public Higher Education Institutions**

The HEIs are a unique part of the system of higher education. Until today, the HEIs have greatly contributed to the development of not only education, but also of the whole Czech society. It is however important to continue with this development. Each HEI is specific, especially in the area of interests, methods and activities it performs. The HEIs are the place, where people of different nationalities and cultures meet to exchange their various opinions, ambitions and expectations. The basis of each HEI should be an academic community, which includes not only teachers and school's staff, but also

students. The HEIs should therefore support relations between academic communities, but also between different academic disciplines and partners – and partners could be understood as employees' associations, profit or non-profit organization, as well as international partners. By maintaining active contacts, the HEIs create a society that is democratic, tolerant and competitive. And to reach this goal, they carry out educational and creative activities, through which they further strengthen the social impact (Ministry of Education., 2016a). This impact is also known as third role, thanks to which: *„HE institutions contribute to spreading knowledge and values in the society in many different ways and they themselves carry out professional activity in their field. Along with other stakeholders they co-create the space for public discussion and they contribute significantly to its openness, critical approach, professional level and sophistication“*(Ministry of Education., 2016a, p.3).

As it was mentioned, the law establishes the public HEIs. As autonomous institution, the public HEI is in charge of (The Higher Education Act):

1. Organization of institution, official bodies, study programmes and of all objectives regarding to research, development and innovation.
2. Decision making about numbers of students, their rights and responsibilities.
3. Establishment of positions and salaries for employees and habilitation processes.
4. Maintaining good relationships with other HEIs, as well as local and global entities.
5. Regulation of financial administration and student's fees (The Higher Education Act).

Thanks to the high level of autonomy, the HEIs can further provide educational and creative activities. An educational activity is understood as all ongoing processes in the HEIs. They can have different forms, such as courses, seminars, various forms of e-learning or theoretical and practical knowledge. The results of these educational activities are improved student's skills and knowledge, which further allow them to evolve and use their competencies in a real life. On the other side, creative activities lead to a direct development of the society. These activities usually include researches, which result into innovations or various publications. For ensuring relevant creative activities, the HEIs cooperate with various partners. What is necessary to mention is the

fact, that creative activities should not be measured or evaluated according to the numbers, but quality, professionalism and relevance (Ministry of Education., 2016a).

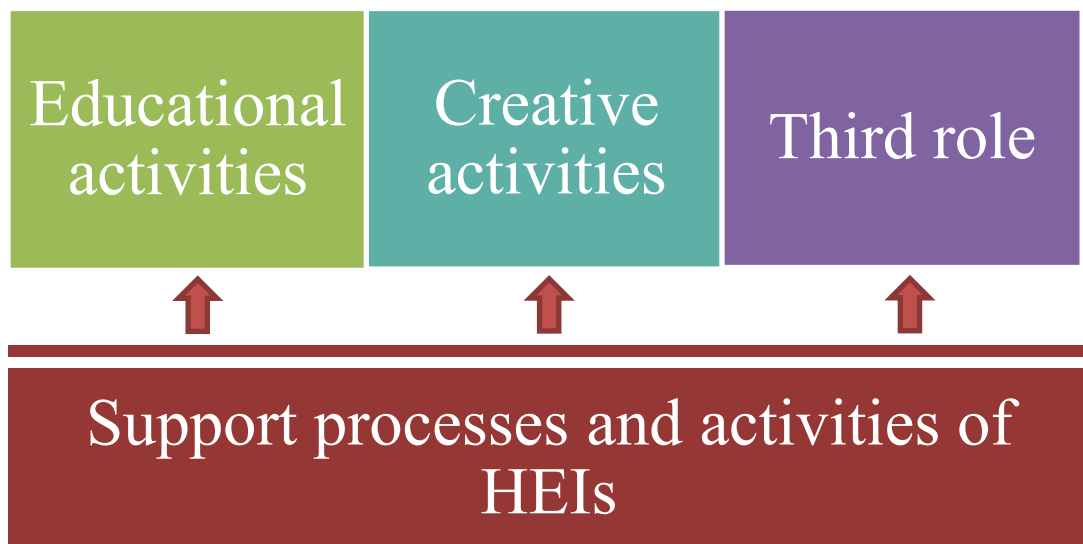
Each public HEI has its own internal structure – official autonomous bodies. These official bodies are (The Higher Education Act):

1. Rector - is a representative of the institution, who decides about all the issues concerning the institution.
2. Academic senate – is an autonomous body, which consists of members, including students. Academic senate decides about all internal matters, such as budget, strategic plans or regulation and evaluation of institution.
3. Scientific/artistic board – consists of inside/outside members of the institution, who are in charge of teaching, research and other activities. This board discusses all the matters related to habilitation and accreditation process, new study programmes, quality assurance and a strategic plan.
4. Board of internal quality assurance mechanisms – the head of the board is rector. The whole board approves the rules of quality assurance, controls the processes, creates the annual reports about quality assurance and makes other activities related to quality.
5. Board of trustees – which consists of members, who represent different fields within the society. These members can be for example authorities from the municipality, region or state. The main aim of the board is to discuss internal quality assessment, budget issues, strategic plan and annual reports of the institution.
6. Disciplinary committee – consists of members of academic community. Committee deals with the violations of the school rules by the students.
7. Bursar – a person, who is completely liable for all financial concerns and internal policy of the institution (Hlava2, The Higher Education Act).

As mentioned above, the HEIs realize specific activities, which are further complemented with other support processes. These support processes constitute sort of pillar that ensures fulfilling activities and objectives of the HEIs. These support processes are for example: support of education, students and student's mobilities. These processes are also management of habilitation processes, quality assurance, management of human resources, support of infrastructure (such as administration of property, buildings or libraries), as well as management of public relations. These

support processes further ensures, that the HEIs are able to function as a whole. Support processes and activities are outlined in the following table (Ministry of Education..., 2015).

**Table No. 4 HEIs as a whole**



Source: Author, 2017.

### 5.3.4 Other actors

Other groups of stakeholders exist in the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic. These usually are:

- a) Czech Rector's conference - (hereinafter "CRC") consists of representatives – rectors, from all types of HEIs. The CRC takes care about all matters concerning the educational policy and HEIs activities. It furthermore: *“coordinate their unified policy in the cardinal issues concerning the development of education, science, research and creative activities, and also higher education institutions and their students, academic staff and other employees”* (Czech Rectors..., 2016, p.1). The CRC also coordinates with profit and non-profit organizations, as well as with international institutions in order to maintain interest of the Czech HEIs (Czech Rectors..., 2016). It is composed of four bodies and two chambers. The first official body is president, who summons yearly assembly – the second body, where the CRC assess all its activities. The third body is a plenum, which

is composed of members from both chambers and has the right to decide on all matters, such as budget, activities and reports. The fourth official body is presidium, which consist of six members, who take all the responsibilities in all compelling matters between plenum meetings (Czech Rectors..., 2016).

- b) Council of HEIs – is a representative body of HEIs. It deals with economical security, legislation, organization of HEIs, as well as with the major issues regarding to development, activities and interests of HEIs, its teachers, students and employees. It gives opinions and recommendations to the MEYS and other institutions. Council further discusses proposals for funding and state budget for education, laws and regulation and establishment of HEIs and the NAB. Council cooperates with all HEIs, the RCR, the Academy of Sciences and all other institutions which are related to tertiary education (Rada Vysokých..., 2017).
- c) Student’s Chamber – is a part of the Council of HEIs and represents all students and their interests in the Czech Republic. These interests are defended through different negotiation with various stakeholders, such as state and public authorities. This student chamber furthermore: *“supports a freedom of study while preserving the quality of education, promotes solidarity and equal access to education without barriers on the basis of age, gender, disability, handicap or social position, supports students’ involvement in the governance and development of higher education institutions”* (European Students..., 2017, p.1). Students undoubtedly represent one of the actors who are influenced by educational policy. But according to J. Kalous, students are: *“the weakest actor’s group as regards the possibility to significantly influence educational policy”* (Kalous, 2007, p.51).
- d) General Public – citizens can be generally defined as an actor, is biggest in abundance, but has in the same time the smallest possibility to influence real on-going processes of public policy. Citizens as individuals can express their preferences in elections (to give their vote to a particular political party, which is closest to their opinions and values) or can be a part of various organizations of the civil sector (Frič-Nekola-Prudký, 2005).
- e) Media – there are still on-going discussions about what is the role of the media in educational policy. First of all, it is necessary to explain different meanings of media. At one hand, media can be understood as emerging technologies, which are used during the lectures, such as various communicating applications or

simply using the computers during the class. On the other side, there are media, which are understood as journalism. For the purposes of this diploma thesis, the second meaning will be used. Journalism itself can have various forms, such as newspapers, online articles, radio debates or even appearances in the television. What is interesting about media is the fact, that they somehow have very strong effect on public opinion. Information they provide are a source of public debates (Rawolle-Lingard, 2014). Thus, their significant role is then: *“in contributing to the public scrutiny of institutions such as education, and of subjecting public policies related to these fields to public debate and consideration”* (Rawolle-Lingard, 2014, p.610). HEIs and other stakeholders have started to notice the important role of media in education. Media are therefore used as a tool for spreading important information. For example, HEIs can use media to attract talented students, professors or simply share their great results with the whole society (Rawolle-Lingard, 2014).

#### ***5.4 Funding of tertiary education***

The funding of the system of tertiary education is also important for the functioning of the whole educational system. The rules of funding can be found in the HEA and The Strategic Plan, as well as in *“Pravidla pro poskytování příspěvku a dotací veřejným vysokým školám Ministerstvem školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy”* (Ministry of Education., 2017d). The most fitting characteristic of funding of the Czech system of tertiary education is one, that: *“is composed of a state subsidy, but at the same time HEIs are expected to diversify their financial sources, and gain other funding from supplementary activities”* (Ministry of Education., 2009).

The methods of funding are based on priorities, which are set in The Strategic Plan. Until 2020, these priorities are mainly quality assurance, diversification of HEIs, increasing of international cooperation, as well as creative activities, research and development. The budget for the system of tertiary education and the balance of the subsidies provided to public HEIs are divided into funding fields and indicators. The first field of funding is institutional funding, which is the most important part and is further divided into two parts. The first part is a fixed one and contains two indicators. The second part is an operational part and consists of eight indicators. The ratio of the fixed and operational field is 90% to 10%. The second field is focusing on the student's

support and consists of four indicators. The third field is dedicated to development and has just one indicator. The last field of funding is international cooperation, which has three indicators (Ministry of Education., 2017d). The first field represents approximately 80% of the budget, the second field is 11%, the third field is around 6% and the fourth field is 3% of the budget (Ministry of Education., 2016b). Distribution of the funding fields and its indicators can be found in the following table No.5.

What is necessary to mention is the fact, that the funding according to these four fields is based on some rules. The MEYS has to take into account that each HEI is unique and might need different amount of support. The MEYS further takes into account the real results of the mentioned indicators. The results of these indicators, together with the strategic plan of educational, autonomy and creative activities of HEI, are the main things, which are taken into consideration while approving the funding (Ministry of Education., 2017d).

Apart from the state funding, the HEIs should be able to get the financial support from other sources. Additional possibilities exist for HEIs, such as (Ministry of Education., 2009):

1. Student's fees – these typically are fees for exceeding the standard period of study or for studying in a foreign language.
2. Offered services for students – these includes provision of accommodation and meal services.
3. Income from other activities – these include fees for universities of third age or lifelong education, as well as various present or donations.
4. Incomes from property – HEIs are allowed to own properties and in case of need, they are allowed to rent it.
5. Research and development - which include activities, which are done for commercial purposes (Ministry of Education., 2009).

Characteristics of funding of tertiary education in the Czech Republic can be found in the following table.



### No. 5 – Characteristic of funding of tertiary education

Field	Indicators	Name
<b>Institutional funding of HEIs</b>	Fixed part A	Number of students
		Coefficient of economical difficulty
	Operational part K	Results of research, development and innovation
		Results of creative activities
		External revenues from educational and creative activities
		Qualification structure of academic employees
		Employment of graduates
		Share of foreign students
		Students within the mobility programmes
		Graduates
<b>Support of students</b>	C	Scholarships for doctoral students
	J	Subsidies for accommodation and food
	S	Social scholarships
	U	Accommodation scholarships
<b>Support for development of HEIs</b>	I	Development programs of MEYS
<b>International cooperation and others</b>	D	International Cooperation
	F	Educational Policy Fund
	M	Exceptional activities of MEYS

Source: author according to Ministry of Education..., 2017d.

## ***5.5 Tertiary education in numbers***

This chapter will summarize the quantitative data about tertiary education in the Czech Republic during the year 2016. These data are taken from monitoring indicators, which have not been published yet. I although found it relevant to include these sources into this diploma thesis, since they provide a complex overview of how tertiary education in the Czech Republic looks like. Next numbers represent the data from the field of educational activities. Data from the field of Science and Research, such as research publications, were not included.

As it was mentioned before, the HEA sets the environment in which tertiary education takes a place. Until May 2017 - it has been amended exactly 26 times (the Higher Education Act).

In 2016, there were in total 68 HEIs, out of which 26 were public, 40 private and 2 state HEIs in the Czech Republic. The number of HEIs remains stable and there is only slight decrease in the number of private HEIs in comparison with year 2015. From total number of 68 HEIs, only 29 have university status. The rest of the HEIs are non-university types (Ministry of Education., 2017e).

The system of tertiary education remains strongly influenced by the continuous decline of the demographic numbers. That is the reason why the number of first time enrolled students reached only 53 650 of students, which corresponds to 3,6% annual decline and even 35,4% decline in comparison with the highest number of the first time enrolled students in 2009. Almost 50% of first time enrolled students were citizens of the Czech Republic in the age of 19. Decreasing numbers, which are mentioned above, also negatively influenced the total number students. In 2016, approximately 311 367 students studied in HEIs, which is almost 5% less in comparison with year 2015. 279 847 thousands of students were enrolled in the public HEIs, which is 89,9% from total number of students. Even this number confirms the fact, that public HEIs represent a very important part of the system of tertiary education. 31 520 students were enrolled in private HEIs, which represent 10% overall.

If it comes to study programmes, approximately 180 893 of students studied in bachelor's cycle, 111 370 on master's cycle and 23 265 students in doctoral programmes. In 2016, exactly 77 328 students completed the studies, which is a slight decrease of 6% in comparison with 2015. But one particular field of tertiary system is growing every year and it is internationalization. In 2016, approximately 43 622 foreign

students studied in the Czech Republic, which represented 14% of all enrolled students. Annual increase was more than 1% (Ministry of Education..., 2017e).

The system of tertiary education offered 9 different study fields in total. In terms of first time enrolled students, the most favored field is a technical science. Approximately 23, 6% of first time enrolled students chose this field. Technical sciences are followed by Economical sciences, represented by 20, 5% of first time enrolled students. These fields are followed by Social sciences, Health Sciences-Medicine-Pharmacy. Study fields, which remain stable, are mostly Agriculture, Law, Pedagogy, Natural Sciences and Art and Culture (Ministry of Education..., 2017e).

When it comes to economic indicators, the Czech Republic invested around 4% of GDP into education in 2016. The average investments in Europe are 5% (Ministry of Education..., 2017e). In 2016, the whole budget for tertiary education represented 18 801 082 232 Czech crowns. Almost 82% of investments were dedicated to the institutional funding. More than 10% of investments went to the second field – Support of students. 6% of investments were dedicated to the third field, which is development of HEIs. The last 2% of investments were used for international cooperation (Ministry of Education..., 2016d).

## **6. Accountability in tertiary education in the Czech Republic**

Although this diploma thesis has defined research questions, the following secondary question was studied in parallel for better understanding: *What does the HEA say in terms of accountability?*

The analysis of the HEA, other PPDs and interviews with relevant representative of identified actors and experts revealed that accountability in the tertiary education in the Czech Republic can be seen as:

- a) Formal accountability, which represents the main accountability relations between actors who influence the most the tertiary education in the Czech Republic. These formal relations are mainly based on hierarchy, expectations, measuring performances and using external mechanisms.
- b) Informal accountability, which consists of complementary accountability relations between actors who also have their role to play in tertiary education. These informal relations are based on cooperation, shared goals and possibility of informal sanctions.

The main aim of this chapter is therefore to answer to the set research questions. This chapter will describe who is accountable to whom, what the content of identified relations is and what the consequences of the actor's behaviour are.

### ***6.1 Formal accountability relations***

The analysis of the HEA, PPDs and explorative interviews with actors revealed two formal accountability relations. The following three main actors represent these relations in the Czech Republic:

1. HEIs,
2. MEYS,
3. NAB.

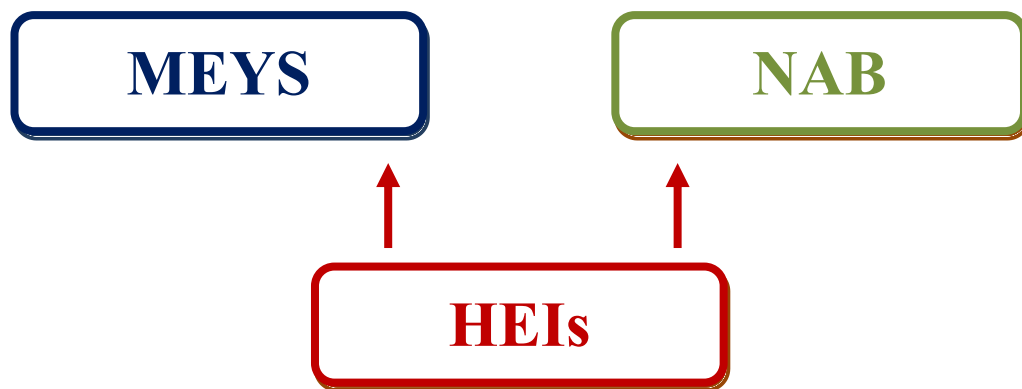
These formal relations are based on formal structures, which involve a hierarchy and authorities that have expectations and requirements. These usually use proper mechanisms, such as legislative, to impose possible sanctions for not meeting the predefined expectations.

The identified formal accountability relations are schematically outlined in the below table. HEIs are in the centre of the table and represent an actor who has to render account. In this case, the forum is represented by both the MEYS and the NAB, which are in the same level.

The direction of arrows in the table corresponds to the type of accountability relations between the identified actors.

These formal accountability relations will be described in detail in the following pages.

**Table No.6 Formal accountability relations**



Source: Author, 2017.

### **6.1.1 Accountability relation between HEIs and MEYS**

In terms of accountability as a social relation, HEIs represent the actor who renders account to a forum – the MEYS.

Public HEIs are institutions that are externally represented by one person who has a clear hierarchical structure – such as a rector. The rector is accountable for the conduct of the HEI. Among other things, the rector is also accountable to all internal structures that exist within the institution. In terms of accountability, HEIs can be understood as a “one for all” actor.

On the other side, the MEYS is a public institution that is represented by minister. The minister is therefore accountable to the parliament, which is itself, theoretically, accountable to the public. The MEYS can thereby be considered as a political forum. As

respondent M1 says: „*I think that accountability in public tertiary education should be done in a way that HEIs are accountable to the ministry; and ministry is accountable to a state administration that is further accountable to public*“ (Conducted interview, 2017).

This specific accountability relation might be classified as a vertical accountability – public HEIs are obliged to render account to the MEYS, because of the certain power that results from the law, decrees or regulations. The term “certain power” can be understood as the particular activities and rights of the MEYS, which can be found in the HEA.

In regards to the content of the identified relation between public HEIs and the MEYS, this relation is a bit specific. In its very essence, public HEIs render account mainly with inputs. These can be understood as, for example, internal regulations of HEIs, which set the overall functioning of a school. Internal regulations are created by the public HEI itself, but these must be approved by the ministry. As respondent R says: „*we have to fulfil the law and we have to act according to valid law*“ (Conducted interview, 2017). If public HEIs want to function, they have to set their internal regulations, which are assessed and registered by the ministry.

In this case, inputs can be considered as financial sources and subsidies from the state budget, which are provided by the MEYS. The funding of public HEIs however represents the most important tool for the MEYS in the tertiary education policy. In terms of funding, the MEYS seeks a financial sustainability of the tertiary education. As respondent M1 mentioned: „*if it is about accountability in the system of tertiary education, more specifically, from the perspective of the MEYS, funding is probably the most important thing in term of influencing the public HEIs*“ (Conducted interview, 2017). Respondent M2 further adds: „*it might seem to be only about finances, but it is the most important element that ministry has for schools*“ (Conducted interview, 2017).

The relation between public HEIs and the MEYS is based mainly on financial aspects and this was confirmed by the respondent R: „*we write different tables to the ministry, about how we used the sources or if it was used in a proper way... Because it is a sources from the state budget*“ (Conducted interview, 2017).

The content of the relation between public HEIs and the MEYS is also the performance of the school – in other words, achieved results. These are mainly results achieved in the educational activities provided by the HEIs. The budget for each public HEI is redefined mainly by these results. An interesting fact is that only a small part of

the identified relation is focused on effects of educational activities. The effects can be for example understood as a share of employment of graduates. This share of employment can be found in the indicators of institutional funding, but this factor is not very deeply examined by the ministry. As respondent E2 said: *„in regards to the employment of graduates, you can check the statistics of MPSV. The unemployment of graduates is relatively low, maybe with some small exceptions. But in general, it does not play a big role“* (Conducted interview, 2017). Another interesting fact is that the MEYS is not that interested in the processes that public HEIs realize within their educational activities. Respondent M1 further mentioned: *„the ministry does not have the capacity to deal with it. The MEYS as a whole cannot fully deal with the specific teaching or the specific form of the study programme“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

The accountability has several functions in this identified formal accountability relation. The first function is mainly a social one. The ministry is responsible for the direction of tertiary education and it creates therefore long-term strategies. The public HEIs are adopting these strategies in order to develop themselves in the future and thus cultivate the whole society. Another important function is control. Despite the fact that the public HEIs are autonomous, they are recipients of the public sources and the MEYS is, as a provider of these resources, interested in what is happening in HEIs. The public HEIs must therefore regularly report on their activities. From all above-mentioned, it follows that the financial control is trying to prevent the waste of the allocated funds. As respondent R stated: *„they will allocate some financial sources and the MEYS further check, if these sources have been used according to law and for what it have been used for. And then there are controls“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

Another function of accountability in this relation is to increase/improve the performance of HEIs. In other words, the MEYS supports financially public HEIs, in order to ensure that their educational activities will be of high quality. The control function investigates how public HEIs managed the allocated funds and the function of improvement (improving performance) focuses on the quality. It is therefore a direct link between allocated financial resources and the achieved results. As it was mentioned above, the public HEIs must provide annual reports about their activities, which include information about how schools used the funds, but also information about the realized educational activities.

In order to fulfil the features of accountability relation, a forum needs to have a possibility to impose sanctions and the actor has to face the consequences. The

sanction in this relation is the ministry's decision and is about the amount of allocation, respectively, reduction of financial sources. The sanction is directly connected to the control of the use of financial sources. When the MEYS finds out that the public HEIs waste the resources and do not use these properly, as they have committed to do so, the MEYS will directly reduce these resources. Respondent M1 mentioned: *„in terms of funding, there are implicit sanctions – it means that if school does not fulfil the priority, it will not receive the money“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

The relation between the MEYS and public HEIs is very specific - apart from sanctions related to finances, the ministry has very limited possibilities. Respondent M1 therefore said: *„I think that it is quite specific, mainly because of the autonomy of public HEIs. So the state cannot really require very specific things. And if there are not defined and expected results – which can be understood as a conduct, there is just a low possibility to impose the sanctions. And if there is any possibility to do it, it is the financial aspect, where is defined „some“ quality and it can be evaluated. It could be named as an „automatic accountability“. There is just not any possibility to impose sanctions – that HEI does or does not do something and there are some decision-making processes. It does not work like that“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

Apart from annual reports, which include their financial aspects, the public HEIs have to provide information about all realized educational activities. In certain cases, these activities may not be realized in the manner, which is prescribed by the law. In this case, the ministry has some tools, which are defined in paragraph 38 of the HEA. This paragraph defines several situations, where ministry can intervene and act. At the same time arises the question if this intervention can be considered as a sanction. When the public HEIs will violate their internal regulations or the HEA itself, there might be a situation. In such a case, the ministry will restrict the performance of the self-governing bodies and delegate the authority of these bodies to itself. The delegation of responsibilities to the ministry comes as the last possible solution, when called subject – in this case it is the public HEI, repeatedly fails to respond to the call of correction or improvement. This „sanction“ is rather temporary – until the public HEI will not take all the necessary steps to remedy the violation. What is also interesting is the fact that there is no precisely determined time - how much this state may take. Respondent M1 further adds: *„so far, it has happened only minimally in the Czech Republic. The whole paragraph has been used only once or twice“* (Conducted interview, 2017). If the ministry has the possibility to replace self-governing bodies of public HEIs and this



possibility used only minimally until today, it can be stated that this particular situation cannot be understood as a „sanction“, but rather as a „transitional state“.

It can therefore be concluded that this particular accountability relation is specific, because apart from financially sanctions, such as reducing of allocated sources, there is de facto not any other sanction. Respondent M1 said: *„the setting of our system is not like - we control public HEIs and we carefully watch if there is something bad... And if something bad happens that we will immediately intervene. It just does not work like that. It is more about the fact that we act if we are forced to do so“* (Conducted interview, 2017). Respondent M2 further adds: *„the ministry does not have any other tool for sanctions – it is a very unhappy position“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

If it comes to problems with accountability relation between the public HEIs and the MEYS, it can be considered, that there is certainly lack of possibilities to impose the sanctions. Apart from the financial tools, the ministry does not really have any other chances for imposing sanctions. This state however results from the autonomous regime of the public HEIs. Respondent R commented this highly autonomous position of the public HEIs with following words: *„what we care about the most is the internal environment of the school. Academic senate and research board – these are the bodies to which is university management accountable to. So we mostly have to render account inwards“* (Conducted interview, 2017). It can also be mentioned that this lack of sanctions depends on the view angle. Based on the thought of respondent R, which is mentioned above, it can be for example stated that the public HEIs do not necessarily see the lack of sanctions as a problem. Among other things, this lack of accountability, respectively sanctions, can be also related to the MEYS - it does not have enough requirements to render account, for example, to other state institutions or to the citizens (as it was stated in the chapter 3 – circle of democracy).

It can therefore be stated that the autonomous position of the public HEIs is very strong. Autonomy has given to the HEIs more freedom in their activities and the ministry has only the right to control the operations of these activities – especially if it comes with complying with the legislation and managing allocated financial resources. In addition, the MEYS no longer intervenes into the individual activities that the HEIs perform. Respondent N commented this situation as follows: *„the role of the MEYS is still relatively strong – mainly because of the fact that the MEYS have established the legislative context of the system of tertiary education. But it is also, for example, the*

*financial aspect – the HEIs simply cannot exist without it“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

### **6.1.2 Accountability relation between HEIs and NAB**

The relation between the public HEIs and the NAB is representing the other formal accountability relation. As in the previous case, the public HEIs play a role of actors who have to render account to a forum, which is logically represented by the NAB.

The NAB primarily represents an administrative forum on a national level, because it is an independent institution that has set certain standards, which it uses for its work. As respondent N says: *„the NAB creates methodological materials, which explain what is in the law, standards and regulations approved by the government. The role of the NAB is to create a system of how will accreditation will be granted and how it will be controlled“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

The identified formal accountability relation between the public HEIs and the NAB is vertical, which means that the public HEIs have to render account to the NAB that has power over them. This power results from the HEA and the statute of the NAB. The mentioned power can be mainly understood as methodological standards, which are processed by the NAB and represent the cornerstone for the public HEIs and their carried educational activities.

The content of the identified accountability relation are mainly inputs. The NAB focuses on inputs – by means, inputs related to institutional accreditation or accreditation of study programmes. In both cases, the inputs include personnel, financial and material securities, as well as ensuring that a system will function and also control all activities carried by the HEIs. With this, the NAB will ensure that the study programmes have a sufficient quality.

The content of this relation also includes implementation processes, which comprise, in particular, the performance of educational activities, as well as the system of management and quality assurance. The fact that the NAB also deals with processes is further supported by the statute of the NAB, where it is mentioned that the NAB provides methodological help in all quality assurance issues (NAB, 2017). Respondent N commented on the processes as follows: *„for example, if the NAB finds out that a public HEI has started with 5 professors and 20 assistants and after few years, there is just one professor left and the rest are just assistants, the HEI does not fulfil the*

*characteristics of law and cannot keep its accreditation. Simultaneously, if there are any essential changes in the HEIs, they are obliged to inform the NAB“ (Conducted interview, 2017).*

I would assume that when the NAB focuses on inputs and processes, it would also be interested in the results and effects (whether if it is employment/unemployment of graduates or their chances on the market). Effects do anyway not appear in any binding documents. Respondent N commented this situation: *„the NAB is working on a principle that there are 15 members, then office and a list of evaluators. The most important fact is that in the list of evaluators are 5 most important stakeholders in the system of tertiary education – relatively strong representation of academic staff, students, representatives of research organizations, state administration (the MEYS or regulatory bodies) and employers. It reflects those who have a word to say and those, with whom it should be communicated“ (Conducted interview, 2017).* This means that even though the effects of educational activities are not explicitly mentioned in these documents, that the NAB would not be interested in it. Basically, it is mostly about different groups of actors who can get into the list of evaluators and have the possibility to influence the study programmes, which will get the accreditation. This further means that through the evaluation and negative response to accreditation, the NAB will ensure that the existing study programmes have high quality and, of course, they prepare graduates, who will eventually find a work right after finishing their studies. In this way, the NAB (respectively the evaluators) will ensure that the tertiary education will, at least in some way, respond to the market needs. Even though the NAB will not directly deal with the results and effects.

Thus, the content of the identified relation is mainly inputs and processes and the NAB mostly uses external formal mechanisms during the phase of “judging”. These mechanisms have mainly legislative character – these are laws, decrees or regulations. The work of the NAB is based mainly on the HEA, which regulates the setting of tertiary education system, as well as duties and rights of the public HEIs. Government regulations are also used – in this particular case, these are mainly *„Nariadenia vlády o štandardech pro akreditace“*. The NAB further uses *“Zákon o správných deliktoch”* and most recently, also Administrative Procedure Code. Respondent N further adds: *„the NAB is currently an independent body, which works as a self-governing body“ (Conducted interview, 2017).*

The formal accountability relation between the public HEIs and the NAB has several functions. The first function is a methodological one, because the NAB interprets the law through the methodological material and describes how the public HEIs should perform their educational activities, respectively, what the HEIs have to accomplish in order to get authorization to carry out these activities. This function is directly linked to a control function, which is basically involved into two areas. The first area of the control is more or less the control of inputs – whether the school, which sent the requests for accreditation, meets all the criteria for obtaining it. As mentioned above, these inputs are mainly personnel, financial or material security of the study programmes. It is mostly about how HEIs can fulfil the set standards and how is the potential to maintain and develop the study programmes in the future. The second area of the control constitutes of processes carried out within the framework of educational activities. Respondent N says: *„the NAB can control, if HEIs during the given accreditation fulfil the things they are committed to. And if the NAB finds out that these things are not realized in a way they should, the control will start“* (Conducted interview, 2017). The third control is a cultivation function. Cultivation can be understood as follows – thanks to defined standards and principles, the NAB enables to the HEIs to develop themselves and become even better. Respondent N says: *„our aim is to set the internal mechanisms of schools in a way so the whole tertiary system will constantly develop“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

Since the relation between the public HEIs and the NAB has clearly defined content and functions, it is further possible to identify the sanctions. In terms of sanctions, these constitute one of the most important parts that put this relation into the framework of accountability. The sanctions for the public HEIs have mainly a formal character. It is therefore a very strong element, because the public HEIs have to face the consequences for what they did. These sanctions are directly based on the control performed by NAB. As said by respondent N: *„the relation between the NAB and the public HEIs is based on a principle of responsibility – if we will write you something and it is recommended (standards for accreditation or methodologies) and if you – the public HEIs will fulfil it, you should expect to get an accreditation. However, if the NAB during the process finds out that schools presented something that is not the truth, they will simply not get the accreditation. Simultaneously, if there are any changes in the study programmes, the public HEIs have to inform the NAB about it. If it does not happen and the NAB will*

*find out, the control will basically start and it can result in the withdrawal of the accreditation“ (Conducted interview, 2017).*

From the information mentioned above, it follows that the sanctions in this relation are the refusal to give accreditation or withdrawal of accreditation. For better illustration, ACCR annual reports from the period 2007-2015 can be used. Within these years, ACCR received a total number of 15,452 accreditation applications and 1071 had a negative character. In percentage terms, ACCR refused to give accreditation to 6,9% from the total number of applications. Accreditations have not been given mainly because of the misleading information, inaccurate behaviour of teachers or insufficient reassurance of the study programme (Accreditation Commission., 2017).

At the same time, ACCR could limit accreditations. This information is relatively difficult to monitor in ACCR annual reports. However, Annual report from 2015 can be used for illustration, when ACCR discussed 304 control reports and consequently suggested the limitation of accreditation in 19 cases. These 19 cases represent 6,3% from the total of discussed control reports. The limited accreditation was based on serious shortcomings in the quality of teaching (Accreditation Commission., 2016).

Despite the fact that the ACCR ceased to exist in 2016, the NAB is a relatively new institution that is still being formed right now. Until today, the NAB has issued only a minimal number of binding comments so far. The use of ACCR's annual reports in this diploma thesis is therefore partly usable.

It can be stated that the identified relation between public HEIs and NAB meets all the requirements of accountability. Respondent N however states: *„the key is the fact that the public HEIs are not just passive recipients. Thanks to the nomination of their representatives into NAB, they are called for shared responsibility of our tertiary education. It is more about the principle of sharing the responsibility, which is based on reciprocity. Basically, there is no relationship of supremacy and subordinate. We want to set the system in a way, so it will not slow down the development of the HEIs. We want them to develop further. We want to give them a significant feedback. And that is the most important part of the accountability relation – the public HEIs have to be aware that there is not just an order - we pay you money so you give us a graduate. We want to create a relationship, where they can freely express their opinions. We want and need to build a quality tertiary education and if we will not do it, no one else will“ (Conducted interview, 2017).*

As every relation, even the accountability relation between the public HEIs and the NAB has many problematic areas. One of the problems might be, in particular, giving the institutional accreditation. With the increased number of institutional accreditations, the public HEIs can easily stop to apply for accreditation of their study programmes. Thanks to the institutional accreditation, the public HEIs will be able to approve study programmes individually and internally by themselves and this can only strengthen their autonomy. That is the reason, why the NAB has to give accreditation only to schools that really achieve required standards and principles – and this means that control cannot become just a formal matter.

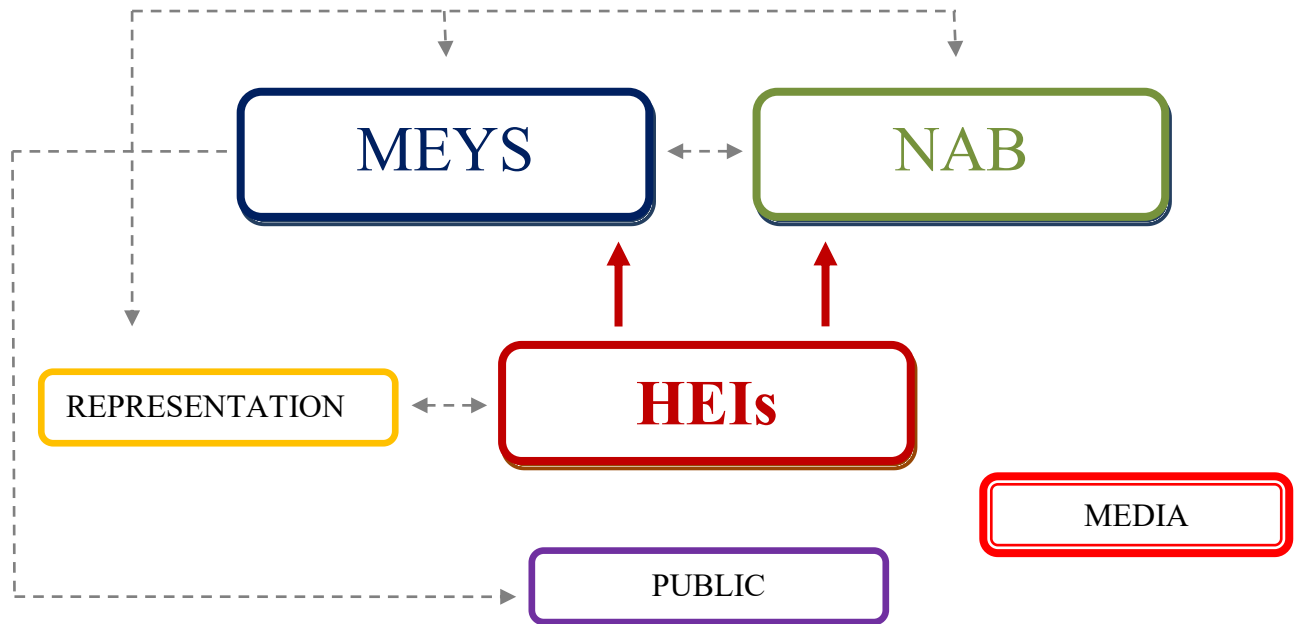
The public HEIs' responsibility to the NAB should on the other side also increase with the increased autonomy of the public HEIs and the NAB can start its control whenever it wants. Since the NAB is newly created institutions, the question for the future is, how the whole system will really work. Respondent N further adds: *„the NAB must clearly plays its role, which is defined by law – how the controls and sanctions will be set up and how this system will develop over time. We are trying to create a constructive school system that will culture our higher education. And only time will show if this system has met the defined expectations“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

## ***6.2 Informal accountability relations***

The main objective of this subchapter is to further supplement identified formal accountability relation with informal accountability relations. Informal relations are based on mutual goals (in this case its quality education and its development), interactions, communication, trust and possible informal consequences.

The table from the previous subchapter is supplemented with the other actors and the arrows indicate the direction of the relation. All arrows are dashed and marked in grey. These arrows mostly indicate reciprocal relations. The table can be found on the next page.

**Table No.7 Informal accountability relations**



Source: Author, 2017.

### 6.2.1 Relation between MEYS and NAB

As shown in the table No. 7, the MEYS and the NAB are the actors who play the role of a forum in the identified formal accountability relations. However, the relation between these two actors is understood as an informal relation that is based on cooperation – and reciprocity plays a big role there. Since both actors are in the same level, the cooperation is quite important for the entire tertiary education system. Their relation is indicated in a dashed grey arrow, which is reciprocal.

The horizontal type of accountability relation can be found between these actors. There is no hierarchical structure between them and none of the actors have formal mechanisms against the other. The possibility to impose the sanctions is completely omitted in this relationship. As respondent M1 mentioned: „the NAB is an independent institution at the same level as we are... There is no relationship based on supremacy and subordination. There is not any responsibility“ (Conducted interview, 2017).

At one hand, the NAB is financially and materially supported by the MEYS. This relation results from the setting of the MEYS budget – within this budget, there is

a separate chapter on a financial support for the NAB. And among other things, the NAB is an independent institution, which is accountable to the government.

These two actors can be taken as complementary ones. While the relation between the public HEIs and the MEYS can be understood as financial accountability, the relation between the public HEIs and the NAB is focused more on processes and education. As respondent M1 says: *“this is more or less in the power of the NAB. The NAB evaluates teaching more – and how it looks in a particular school. It goes far beyond our indicators“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

Even though the NAB decides independently – without the approval of the MEYS (as it was a rule with former ACCR), the NAB nowadays cooperates with the MEYS and provides them with all the important information. As respondent N said: *„we are partners. This setting between us is more or less correct and it allows the functioning of the system of tertiary education“* (Conducted interview, 2017). Respondent M1 adds: *„we actually cooperate and consult things“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

It can be said that trust plays a big role within this identified relation. From the MEYS' point of view, this trust lies mainly in the correct control of the NAB on the public HEIs, as well as the delivery of reliable information. This information delivery can be also understood as a good communication between two actors, who play a leading role in decision-making processes in the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic.

### **6.2.2 Relation between Representation of HEIs and MEYS & NAB**

The representation of HEIs can be considered as two bodies, which are directly mentioned in the HEA. These two bodies are the CRC and the Council of HEIs (hereinafter “Council”). In this case, the CRC reflects the perspective of a higher management, while the Council is composed of representatives of individual faculties of HEIs. As respondent C stated: *„it has more than 200 members. There are representatives from students, academic staff, normal teachers and vice-rectors. With this, it reflects the perspectives of academic staff, teachers and students“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

The two bodies can be considered as complementary ones, because while the CRC considers the HEIs as a whole and provide the view from the „top“, the Council constitutes the plurality of opinions, because there are composed of represented people



from each faculty. This complementarity demonstrates the fact, that the CRC reflects the information outwards and the Council inwards. The combination of these two bodies can thus represent one very strong actor, who represents the Czech tertiary education in practice. Despite the fact that there are two different bodies, they are perceived as one actor in this diploma thesis.

Individual informal relations between the representation of HEIs and HEIs, the MEYS and the NAB, can be found in the table No. 7.

If it comes to the particular relation between the representation of HEIs and HEIs – the CRC and the Council are the bodies, which represent all HEIs outwards and deal with other actors in the system.

### *MEYS*

In identified formal accountability relations, public HEIs – respectively rector as their representative, render account for their carried activities. But the representation of HEIs represents all public HEIs in all matters, which directly influences the setting of the system of tertiary education.

The relation between the representation of HEIs and the MEYS can be considered as a horizontal type of relation. This relation can be found in the HEA, but it is not further developed and described. However, this relation is based mainly on cooperation in various proposals, in negotiations related to the budget for HEIs, or legislative changes, which directly or indirectly affect HEIs. All the things listed above also represent the content of the accountability relation between the representation of HEIs and the MEYS.

In addition, the law does not directly mention how the representation of HEIs can act. These possibilities can be found in the statutes, which are not binding for the MEYS. Not even these statutes explicitly mention how the CRC and the Council can act and what is the impact of their actions. The statute of CRC says: *„to coordinate their unified policy in the cardinal issues concerning the development of education, science, research and creative activities, and also higher education institutions.. Looks after the promotion of Czech Republic higher education institutions' interests in public life and in contacts with government or nongovernment bodies in the Czech Republic“* (Czech Rector., 2014, p.1). The statute however does not mention how the options, which are mentioned above, are performed. In addition, the statute of the Council refers only to the possibility of commenting the issues (Rada Vysokých..., 2011).

It therefore means that the cooperation between these actors is driven mainly on the basis of repeated interactions. These interactions include the possibility of commenting the resolutions on matters, which directly affect public HEIs.

As respondent M1 said: „*we negotiate almost everything. It is however based on cooperation. It is not done in a way that they have to approve everything*“ (Conducted interview, 2017). Respondent C further mentioned: „*our comments are non-binding. It has mostly a recommendation character*“ (Conducted interview, 2017).

At the same time, it can be stated that the representation of HEIs still has a great power, because in a certain way they are involved in policymaking. Also, they represent an actor, who offers a valuable feedback, since all changes are straightly related to them. One of the problematic areas might be the commenting the matters in a way, that representation will affect the final result for their own benefit. It is however expected that both actors will act seriously and with the best intention to improve the Czech tertiary education. Thus, there are shared values and mutual trust between these actors.

The function of accountability in this informal relation is mainly the effort to establish an effective and meaningful system, which will respond to the requirements of the individual actors and in the same time, it will contribute to the development of the whole system. This means that the cooperation between identified actors will contribute to the improvement of the system and every single actor should therefore behave in such a way that there are no unnecessary problems. This can although not always be avoided. As respondent C said: „*in reality, these relationships are not always good*“ (Conducted interview, 2017).

In case of a problem, informal sanctions can be imposed. As it was mentioned above, these sanctions can for example be the loss of credibility. As respondent C mentioned: „*the loss of credibility is one of the biggest punishments. For example, if we have said that with immediate effect we want to abolish the whole school system, we can do it, because it is our legitimate opinion. But everyone would say that we are just a bunch of fools. We would therefore become a partner, who has no value and everybody would only follow the things, which are given formally*“ (Conducted interview, 2017). Thus, on the basis mentioned above, the other actor, the MEYS, does not have to take comments from the representation of HEIs into consideration and only formal reception of their opinions and suggestions will be made – without having any weight in the final decision.

## NAB

In regards to the relation between the representation of HEIs and the NAB, this relation is not fully established. One of the main reasons is also the fact that the NAB is a newly created institution and the relations are just starting to form.

In this case, the position of the representation of HEIs was particularly important during the creation of the NAB. The representation of HEIs nominated people into the NAB's structure and in the same time, they could give comments on legislation and accreditation standards. As respondent C said: *„we created our candidate's list, but we did not have the last word. It was rather declarative, or in other words – recommendation word, because the final decision is taken by the government. Actually, we have only participated in the creation of this institution“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

Additionally, apart from the fact that the representation of HEIs helped to create the NAB, they could name their representatives. Respondent N commented this fact as follows: *„there are certain ratios, which are approved by the government. So not anybody could have been named. A huge trust have been given to public HEIs from the state“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

For the future, the relation between the representation of HEIs and the NAB should work on the same basis as the relation between the representation of HEIs and the MEYS. The representation of HEIs will give comments on the NAB's decision and will consult all the important matters. Thus, this setting will create a relation that will be based on cooperation. As respondent C said: *„NAB needs to know a wider perspective of opinions. And that is why we have the possibility to give comments“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

### 6.2.3 Media

One of the actors is media, but do not have an indicated relation within the table of accountability relations. One of the main reasons is that media plays a role of forum for all identified actors in the table (apart from public) and it is therefore standing separately.

Media can hold two positions in this case: it can either represent an informal political forum that works as a „fire alarm“ and points out any problem or behaviour that is contrary to established rules. As V. Veselý states: *„when the mechanisms of*

*political accountability within a democratic society are imperfect, the importance of the mass media grows. It is a fact that many cases of abuse of power or public resources are only uncovered thanks to journalists“* (Veselý, 2012, p. Xx). Or on the other side, media can be included in a social forum, which stands as a mediator between public and individual identified actors. Media can publish various messages that can be controlled or compared by citizens or by public institutions.

The particular relations between media and identified actors can be considered as vertical relations. In this case, all actors feel a „moral obligation“ to inform the media. The word „inform“ was intentionally used in this context, as accountability and rendering account is very relative in this case.

In general, the media can serve as a tool through which individual actors indirectly render account to other actors or the public. As respondent R said: *„thanks to media, it might be taken as a responsibility to public for fulfilling our mission to which university has been created – we educate, we create science and cultivate society“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

At the same time, it can be stated that media nowadays have the position of a social forum, because most of the identified actors use media for their own presentation, respectively, for presentation of their achieved results and goals. As respondent M1 stated: *„a large part of the ministers’ work is to maximize the amount of positive news and to minimize the amount of the negative ones“* (Conducted interview, 2017). Respondent R further adds: *„of course we have a good relationship with media. We communicate with them, for example, when we want to present our university. Media represent a very important tool for us, because they publish many articles about what is happening at the university“* (Conducted interview, 2017).

Further to the above-mentioned, the role of media in the Czech Republic as an informal political forum is not very widespread. Individual actors use media for rendering account, but not in terms of accountability – by means, not for their behaviour and realized activities. In its own way, it is more about popularization of the individual actors, because these actors usually contact media in order to provide information to the public or the other actors. As respondent R said: *„it is usually done in a way that we contact them. It is quite hard for someone to know what is going on in our university“* (Conducted interview, 2017). Respondent C further stated: *„in principle, after each meeting there is a press conference, where we invite journalists. The invitation,*

*respectively that echo about press conference, is delivered to everybody” (Conducted interview, 2017).*

Thus, it is about cooperation between individual actors and the media, but this cooperation does not come from media’s activities. The media in the Czech Republic cooperate only on the basis of contacting; there is only a little activity from their side. This reality was also confirmed by the interviewed respondents:

Respondent E2: *„an education is quite complex and difficult. Not everybody understands it or – has an interest in it”..*

Respondent M1: *„in general, there are just few published articles about education. And if anything has been written, the quality is rather low, especially because of such a specialized topic”..*

Respondent C: *„There is not a great interest of media about educational policy in the Czech Republic. And if so.. What does a man, who opens the newspaper on his way to work, will say to it?”.. (Conducted interview, 2017).*

The increased activities of the media in the Czech Republic may be seen in situations concerning various causes. We can therefore not talk about systematic “screening” by the media (the principle of “fire alarm”). As respondent M1 said: *„when it comes to media, they are more concerned with problems rather than good news. Of course, not all media are like that” (Conducted interview, 2017).* Respondent C further adds: *„media nowadays are limited only to controversy and to some things that are easy to say. It has to be something that is catchy... it is marketing“ (Conducted interview, 2017).* Respondent E2 expressed his thoughts as follow: *„the role of the media in the Czech Republic has begun to be doubted. I would not say that accountability and media is a big topic. Of course, I do not underestimate the role of media, but I do not think that they play a big role in tertiary education, unless it is a huge scandal. But I would not say there is even some investigation” (Conducted interview, 2017).*

As a conclusion it can be stated that the media have the biggest impact mainly on the public, for who the media is a huge source of information. This is further connected to the direct function of the media, which is to provide all necessary information that are the basis for decision-making. It often depends on content, because of its huge impact – for example for elections. Of course, it is not always true that the media is interested only in controversial topics, because there are journalists who are actively interested in educational policy. Respondent M1 adds: *„there are also good journalists who are really good at this, but there is just few of them” (Conducted interview, 2017).*

In the same time, it is necessary to take into account the public itself. It is not a secret that people in their everyday life are not interested in, for example the budget for the tertiary education, or the number of graduates or study programmes in the education. The whole system is complicated and if people are not interested in it, they are not able to distinguish between the provided information. We can therefore see an overall apathy and disinterest from the public. This situation was summarized by respondent C: *„it can be stated, that public or citizens are not interested in educational policy. It is more about apathy within the Czech society and especially students, what can we say about it. The participation on educational policy is possible, but it is not used at all”* (Conducted interview, 2017).

In general, it can be stated, that rendering account within media is not widespread and it is mostly just a marginal topic.

#### **6.2.4 Public**

As it was mentioned previously, citizens represent one of the biggest forums, but their real impact is quite limited. They can only influence policies through elections. On the other side, education is not a major topic that people take into consideration while voting. And as it was mentioned above, tertiary education is a quite complex and specific topic, for which people are quite apathetic.

Thus, overall apathy and a small participation of public on education together lead to a small social/participatory accountability.

## 7. Discussion of research findings

Although the previous chapter described existing accountability relations, it is crucial for this diploma thesis to furthermore develop these relations in order to provide a complex overview.

This final chapter will summarize all the research findings and discuss what is typical for accountability relations within tertiary education in the Czech Republic. The chapter will further describe to which theoretical framework (discussed in chapter 3) the findings correspond. This chapter will also summarize the conclusions of the research.

As A. Veselý states, the empirical research of accountability is just in the beginning in Central and Eastern Europe and the Czech Republic is not an exception (Veselý, 2013). The main aim of the presented diploma thesis was to carry out such a research. The concept of accountability has been applied to the Czech tertiary education, which is quite a broad topic and it was therefore necessary to limit the research only to educational activities. Despite the limited research opportunities I consider the findings as beneficial.

As A. Veselý further states in his publication, accountability: *„has not been internalized and institutionalized (e.g. in legal norms) and would not be understood by most people”* (Veselý, 2013, p. 314). There is no literal translation for the word accountability in the Czech Republic. And since no terminology has been developed to capture accountability, it was necessary to either link particular parts in legislative or supplement them with other information from PPDs. Especially qualitative interviews with the representatives of identified actors helped to clarify accountability relations. It can be stated that each respondent knew, or at least partially knew, the concept of accountability. Almost all respondents however started to use the term “responsibility” after a while.

..Respondent M1: *„I think that the concept of responsibility is applied in the Czech republic”.*

..Respondent N: *„this is the principle of sharing the responsibilities”*

..Respondent C: *„internal processes of responsibility”* (Conducted interviews, 2017).

It can be stated that the knowledge about the principles of accountability is relatively widespread in the Czech Republic, but individual actors do not really think about it within their work, because the reality is more complicated. The actors carry out

their work on established and clear rules, which are set in legislative and other binding documents. As it was mentioned above, accountability is not explicitly mentioned in these documents, but it is possible to find some of its reflections (such as content and functions of accountability relations).

The basis of the accountability relations in the Czech Republic is autonomy. Autonomy has been granted to the public HEIs and it has been growing over time. Nowadays, the public HEIs have their autonomy not only in their internal structures and organization, but also in important decision-making about students, employees or financial sources. Autonomy is a key component in each accountability relation because it further characterizes the particular relation.

As far as the accountability relations are identified, they can be further divided into two groups: formal and informal. These formal relations are mainly based on hierarchy, expectations, measuring performances and using external mechanisms. On the other hand, informal relations are based on mutual goals (in this case development of a quality education), interactions, trust and possible informal consequences. Both types of accountability relations are however important for the functioning of the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic, because they overlap.

If it comes to formal accountability relations, they are primarily set up by formal mechanisms – legislation. Activities are coming mainly from the forums – the MEYS and NAB. The public HEI is always an actor in these formal accountability relations.

These two forums are on the same level, but they are not interdependent. As A. Veselý mentions in his article, the existence of multiple forums and various demands can cause confusion for actors (Veselý, 2012). The analysis revealed that while the MEYS sets the legislative context of higher education and financially supports public HEIs, NAB on the other side develops the methodological guidelines and standards for implementation of educational activities. There are two forums and each forum has its own area of interest. And while the MEYS focuses on the control of inputs, NAB is primarily interested in the control of processes. Thus, it may cause confusion for the public HEIs in terms of which requirements should be met first. The analyses of PPDs and conducted interviews showed that the existence of multiple forums does not have to be a problem. As mentioned in the chapter 6, the MEYS and NAB can indeed be considered as complementary institutions, which cooperate with each other.

The NAB defines the standards for accreditation that have to be met. When a HEI gets an accreditation, it can start to realize a study programme for which it needs



funding from the ministry. Despite the existence of two forums, the public HEIs know what are the demands of individual forums, because these demands are usually cooperated. Additionally, none of these forums is explicitly interested in the results and effects of the educational activities. That might result into conscious overlooking of the third role of HEIs – the development of educated and sophisticated society.

The most important and at the same time, the most interesting part of the identified accountability relations is the sanctions. While there are sanctions clearly defined (withdrawal of accreditation) in the relation between the NAB and the HEIs, there are sanctions represented mainly by financial aspects (for example reduction) in the second identified formal relation between the MEYS and HEIs. In the beginning of this diploma thesis, I would assume that the MEYS will have possibilities to impose sanctions to a greater extent. The analysis of PPDs however revealed that the possibility to impose sanctions is quite limited. One of the main reasons is the overall set-up of the system of tertiary education and the great autonomy of the public HEIs.

Within the identified formal accountability relations, it can be further stated that individual forums do not extend their activities and rights beyond the requirements of their assigned scope. Since the NAB is a relatively new institution, its activities are still in a shaping phase. On the other side, the MEYS realizes that apart from the financial aspects, it cannot really influence the public HEIs with any other tools. In the same time, the MEYS does not develop any activity that would lead to some change. As stated by respondent R: *„I would say that the limitation of autonomy here, in the Czech Republic, is not very endangered. Although, the occasional effort of some entities can be seen, it is however not a strong stream – there is not any systematic pressure”* (Conducted interview, 2017). Of course, the question is if there is any other option of how the public HEIs could render account to the MEYS.

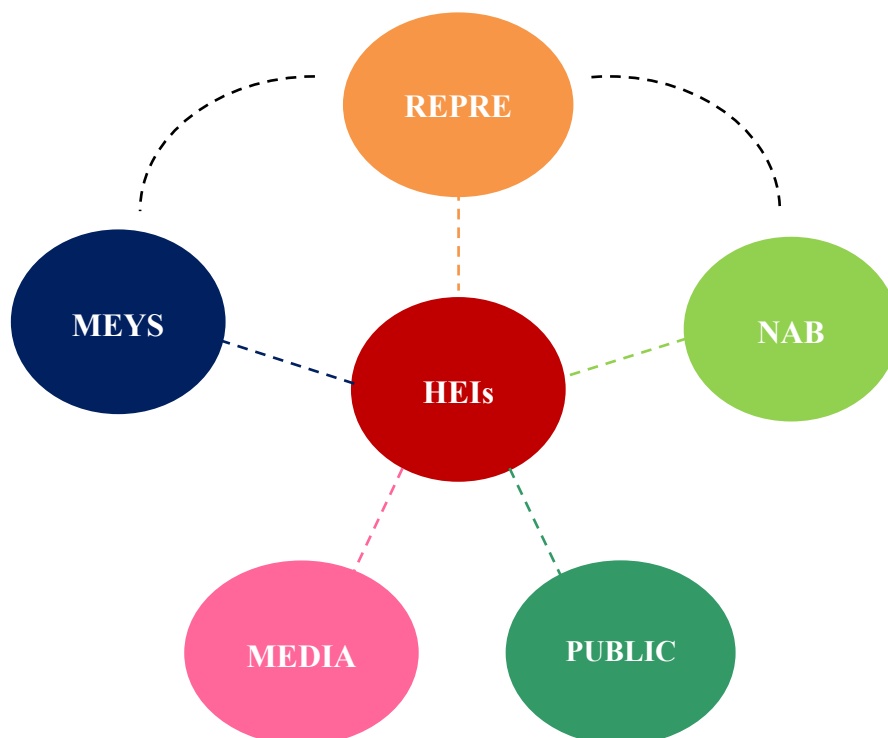
The other type of accountability relations is the informal ones. Informal relations further complement other identified actors, who also have their role to play in the tertiary education. In particular, these actors are representation of the HEIs, the media and the public. It is however necessary to add that there is a much wider range of actors in the Czech tertiary education, but it is beyond the limits of this diploma thesis.

In the context of informal accountability relations, it can be stated that these are mostly horizontal type of relation. The individual informal relations are completely coordinated with each other. Each actor clearly perceives his role in the system. Especially the media and the public have to hold their position in this system and other

actors should automatically render account to them. As J. C. Burke states that what accountability needs is: „*better coordination*“ (Burke, 2004, p.323 ). Regarding the realized interviews with actors, each of them mentioned that they consider other identified actors as their partners, with whom they cooperate. However, such cooperation and coordination is not explicitly defined by the law. It can be stated that individual actors realize that the best way to develop the tertiary education is cooperation. The system further develops, because each actor – despite their different specifications, share similar or equal values and goals. It can be said that each actor cares about these relations, because trust plays the biggest role and its violation can bring unpleasant consequences. These consequences of an informal character are usually the loss of credibility. Among other things, the possibility to impose sanctions is within informal accountability relations omitted.

The cooperation between identified actors is indicated in the following table. The public HEIs stand in the centre and a circle of actors, who cooperate with each other, are formed around them.

**Table No.8 Cooperation between actors**



Source: Author, 2017.

Within the framework of this diploma thesis, I was also interested in the role of the media in the Czech Republic. The concept of accountability highlights the growing role of media as one of the forums that might exist as a “fire alarm” (Bovens, 2006). In regards to the Czech Republic, the role and the position of media is just a marginal topic. Discussions with respondents have shown that they have a certain relation with the media, but it always depends on the topic. Identified actors cooperate with the media, especially when they present themselves or simply when they share their successful results or comments on some issues. The media itself does not develop any activity unless it is a “hot topic” or some case. This reality can be illustrated in the case of University of West Bohemia, when one of its faculties had some serious issues with giving degrees. In this particular case, the media published articles periodically. After the “cooling” of the case, the number of published articles went down quite fast. Of course, not all media work on this principle. There are also media that regularly contribute to the topic of tertiary education. On the other side, a public apathy can be seen on such topic. This fact was confirmed almost by all respondents. For example, respondent R says: *„public is apathetic towards education“*. Respondent M1 adds: *“people do not care about it and they do not want to read about it. Moreover, the system itself is quite complex and not everyone understands it”*(Conducted interview, 2017).

The system of tertiary education is rather complex and individual relations (whether they are formal or informal) can bring many benefits, but also various challenges and problems.

The benefits can for example be: thanks to constructive feedback that public HEIs get, it can increase their motivation to improve their educational activities. In the same time, accountability can allow to comply with the obligations and standards, fairness, as well as better management of the allocated financial sources. Accountability can further increase a public confidence in the educational system.

Regarding the challenges and problems, the author A. Veselý speaks of asymmetry in accountability, where one actor has to render account less than others (Veselý, 2012). Based on the information above, the public HEIs always represents an actor who has to render account. Within the accountability relations, the public HEIs are never in a role

of a forum<sup>8</sup>. There are however actors, such as the media or the public, who do not (neither formally nor informally) render account, but in the same time, as forum do not have a big “power”. The public is considered to be the weakest forum, which can express itself only through elections, which take place only once every four years. At the same time, the public has its place between identified actors and it is mainly based on the principle that the public HEIs are funded from public sources. As respondent M1 said: *„a citizen should not deal with an accountability of a public HEI. It is impossible“* (Conducted interview, 2017). This fact has consequent impact on the MEYS, which minimally renders account. I would suppose that the MEYS, which determines the direction of tertiary education, would render account to the other actors, who will judge their behaviour, even more.

In a short summary, the accountability in the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic can be characterized as follows: accountability in the Czech tertiary education represents an integrated network which is based on vertical and horizontal relations that are established on formal processes and informal dynamics and coordination. More specifically, accountability can be described as follows:

- a) Existence of formal and informal accountability relations,
- b) Predominant vertical and horizontal type of relations,
- c) Prevalence of inputs/processes over results and effects,
- d) Almost minimal personal responsibility,
- e) Omitted sanctions within informal accountability relations,
- f) Existence of actors with minimal responsibility,
- g) Strong partnerships between identified actors, which are based on cooperation,
- h) Only small degree of social/participatory accountability,
- i) Accountability itself (and its potential change and setting) is not a big topic in the Czech Republic.

Based on what was said above, I would conclude that I reached all pre-defined partial goals. This diploma thesis provided a detailed description of the concept of accountability and the Czech tertiary education, which further help me to quickly

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<sup>8</sup> Public HEI can play the role of a forum if we talk about inward accountability. The presented diploma thesis however deals with general accountability in tertiary education. Therefore, this thought is not further developed in this diploma thesis.

orientate in the Czech educational policy and its setting. I consider these two “theoretical” chapters to be the “stepping stone” for the whole research. The results of the diploma thesis are represented in the chapter 6, which step-by-step answered to the research questions. Therefore I think that the aim of capturing and describing individual accountability relations, as well as their characteristics, has been fulfilled.

The tertiary education can however be divided into three dimensions – education, science and research and their third role. The research conducted within this diploma thesis has dealt only with aspects of education. The aspect of science and research has not been included and the results of this theoretical study can therefore not be generalized to the public HEI as a whole. The concept of accountability, as described by M. Bovens, sets a new perspective on the perception of tertiary education system and from my point of view, it is usable for further research in the Czech Republic. One area that could be tackled in the future is the second dimension of tertiary education – science and research. This area would broaden the circle of actors with additional actors (such as RVVI). Research in this area would bring interesting findings and together with this presented diploma thesis would provide a comprehensive overview of existing forms of accountability in the Czech tertiary education.

However, I would personally suggest the public HEIs to be considered as a main subject for further research, using the concept of accountability. The public HEIs stand in the centre of tertiary education and there are some external actors, who – at least in some way, influence these. But what is the most important is that the public HEIs are autonomous and they create their own internal structures and bodies. A public HEI is then accountable not only outwards, but also inwards. I would like to state, that accountability relations within public HEIs are itself more powerful than those, which HEIs have with external actors. Personally, the most beneficial information I was able to get, is the answer of respondent R, who clearly defined: *„Academic senate and research board – these are the bodies to which a university management is accountable to. So we mostly have to render account inwards”* (Conducted interview, 2017).

HEIs perceive themselves as a separate entity and this is also supported by their autonomous status. Thus, we get back to the beginning of this chapter, where we said that autonomy plays an important role and not only in the whole system, but also in each accountability relation. It would certainly be interesting, as well as beneficial, to find out which forms and mechanisms of accountability do exist and where educational activities take their place.

## Summary and conclusion

The presented diploma thesis has dealt with the theoretical concept of accountability and its application in the tertiary education in the Czech Republic. Despite the fact that accountability is an extended term in Western European countries and in the United States, it is quite known but not very used in the Czech Republic. The concept of accountability is defined as a social relation between two actors, where one actor is obliged to justify his conduct and behaviour to a forum, which can pass a judgment and impose sanctions.

A research aim and research questions were defined in the first chapter of the diploma thesis. It was followed by the definition of the theoretical concept of accountability, which was further used as the main framework for the entire research. The third chapter dealt with methodology and specification of research methods, which were used in order to reach the set aim.

The defined research aim and questions were achieved through the theoretical study conceived in a particular country – the Czech Republic. The theoretical study used a combination of two methods: analysis of PPDs and qualitative exploratory interviews with representatives of the identified actors. The analysed PPDs usually directly adjust and determine what the content of the tertiary education is, what is assessed and what are the powers and responsibilities of various actors. The analysis of PPDs could however not capture all the informal relations and mechanisms of accountability. The results of the analysis of PPDs were therefore supplemented by qualitative interviews, which allowed verifying the findings from the analysis, as well as to reveal the information that could have not been captured by the analysis.

The main source for the analysis was the HEA, which sets the functioning of the system, as well as rules and responsibilities of individual actors. The HEA was complemented by long-term plans, statutes, annual reports or other laws and strategies.

Based on the combination of used methods, the presented diploma thesis has subsequently identified eight accountability relations within the system of tertiary education in the Czech Republic. These identified accountability relations were further divided into two groups – formal and informal. The formal accountability represents the main accountability relations between actors who influence the most the tertiary education in the Czech Republic. These formal relations are mainly based on hierarchy, expectations, measuring performances and using external mechanisms. The formal

accountability relations are represented by the MEYS, the NAB and the HEIs. The informal accountability consists of complementary accountability relations between actors who also have their role to play in the tertiary education. These informal relations are based on cooperation, shared goals and possibility of informal sanctions. The informal accountability relations are represented by the representation of HEIs, the media and the public. The diploma thesis has further focused on who is responsible to whom, for what and what are the consequences and possible sanctions.

The basis of the accountability relations in the Czech Republic is autonomy, which plays the most important part in each relation. Autonomy is a key component in each accountability relation because it further characterizes it. Within the formal relations, the actor who always has to render account is the public HEI. An interesting thing is the fact that public HEIs are never in the forum position. Furthermore, the vertical and horizontal type of accountability relations prevails in the Czech Republic. Identified accountability relations are focused mainly on inputs and processes. The functions of accountability are mainly control and compliance. For example, while the MEYS focuses on financial aspects, the NAB focuses mainly on carried educational processes and its quality. The effect and outputs of educational activities (such as employment of graduates) are minimally scrutinized. The informal accountability relations are based on a cooperation between identified actors, where the possibility to impose sanctions is omitted. The research findings also include the fact that the social/participatory accountability in the system of tertiary education is relatively low.

The main aim of the presented diploma thesis was to contribute to a professional knowledge about accountability in the Czech tertiary education, since some forms of accountability exist, but these are not further examined and described. The accountability in the Czech Republic is not explicitly expressed in PPDs, but it is possible to find some of its reflections. The presented diploma thesis can therefore be taken as a „starting point“ for further research of accountability within the Czech Republic.

Despite the fact that this diploma thesis has focused only on public HEIs and covered only the aspects of educational activities, it would certainly be interesting to apply this concept into the internal structure of public HEIs. HEIs perceive themselves as a separate entity and this is also supported by their autonomous status. HEIs render account not only to external actors, but also to its internal structure. It would certainly

be interesting, as well as beneficial, to find out which forms and mechanisms of accountability do exist, where educational activities take their place.



***“We want and need to build a quality tertiary education  
and if we won’t do it, no one else will.”***

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## **Attachment No.1 – Information consent for interview with actors**

Source: Author, 2017.

### INFORMOVANÝ SÚHLAS PRE ÚČASTNÍKOV VÝSKUMU

Bol som zoznámený s podmienkami, cieľom a obsahom diplomovej práce Veroniky Hrtánkovej s názvom „*Akontabilita v terciárnom vzdelávaní v Českej republike*“. Súhlasím s účasťou na tomto projekte a dávam výskumníčke svoj súhlas, že materiál, ktorý som poskytol, môže použiť za účelom napísania svojej diplomovej práce, poprípade odborného článku alebo akejkol'vek ďalšej odbornej publikácie vychádzajúcej z tejto témy.

Súhlasím, že počas výskumu a aj po jeho ukončení nebude uvedená moja identita. Súhlasím s nahrávaním rozhovoru s výskumníčkou a s analýzou výsledného zvukového záznamu a jeho prepisu. Súhlasím, že výskumníčka môže v odbornej publikácii citovať informácie, ktoré jej poskytnem, avšak bez uvedenia môjho mena. Rozumiem, že pokiaľ sa v priebehu rozhovoru objavia ťažké témy, môžem odmietnuť odpovedať na akúkoľvek otázku alebo kedykoľvek ukončiť rozhovor. Rozumiem, že môžem odstúpiť z tohto výskumného projektu do siedmich dní od poskytnutia rozhovoru.

MENO:

PODPIS:

DÁTUM:

## **Attachment No.2 – List of questions for interviews**

Source: Author, 2017.

1. Ako chápete akontabilitu? Ako veľmi je akontabilita známa v ČR?
2. Ktoré subjekty sú podľa vás kľúčové vo vysokom školstve?
3. Koho vnímate ako subjekt, ktorému sa musíte zodpovedať?
4. Akým spôsobom spracovávate podnety od iných aktérov?
5. Akú rolu hrá pri vykonávaní vašich činností (MEYS, NAB, REPRE, HEIs, MEDIA)?
6. Uvažujete pri uskutočňovaní svojich činností aj nad tým, ako sa budete ďalej zodpovedať?
7. Akú funkciu plní akontabilita v konkrétnych vzťahoch?
8. Ako vnímate postavenie médií vo vysokoškolskej politike?
9. Vnímate nejaké problémy vo vzťahoch k iným aktérom?