

## **CURRENT ASPECTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ACCOUNTING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN BULGARIA**

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### **Abstract**

Economic practice has categorically proved that accounting plays an important role in the management of any enterprise. In this context, a current issue for any reporting unit is the establishment of a lawful, appropriate and effective organization of activities and accountability, the implementation and use of management models and practices. A well-developed accounting system is a prerequisite for the effective functioning of the management information system. In thus outlined aspects, the accounting system of the enterprise is defined as an information system, one of the most important subsystems of the management system, designed to solve tasks concerning: 1) the comprehensive reporting of business operations, processes and results of economic activity; 2) the optimal analytical nature of the objects of accounting; 3) the provision of the management of the enterprise with information about the types of expenses (in quantity and value by types of activities) and revenues (in value by types of activities); 4) the monitoring and analysis of deviations from the set parameters; 5) the accounting analysis of the financial statements; 6) the provision of opportunities for budgeting the activity and others. At the same time, the optimization of accounting today is impossible without its computerization and automation. In recent years, the computerized accounting system has acquired a new meaning and content, namely all processes (production, accounting, supply, sales, pricing, analysis, budgeting, etc.) to function in combination - the so-called integrated accounting information system.

Research on the practice of non-financial corporations shows that the people who work with, respectively administer, the integrated accounting information system in the enterprise, are usually (although not only) the people who draw up the financial statements and the operational accountants. This naturally requires the specialists with higher accounting and economic education to have integrated knowledge, skills and competences, including in the long run.

The paper has elements of static research. The sample is formed by universities in North-Central Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which teach students in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022. Statistical tools and data analysis are used. The results are presented in the form of a description and analysis of the technology and organization of the process of teaching accounting in the different educational forms (full-time, part-time and distance), good practices in teaching theory, the degree of practical orientation of training, undergraduate practice and graduation perspectives in the selected universities.

At the same time, a dynamic study was conducted. The sample included enterprises from the non-financial sector in Bulgaria which have a separate accounting department, selected using the method of random non-recurrent selection. The methodology of a structured interview was used. The results of the study are expressed in establishing the expectations of employers in terms of knowledge, skills and competences of accounting staff and identifying the new requirements for specialists with higher accounting and economic

education, namely to perform many integrated roles, including active participation in the management process. The attitudes towards the specialists with higher accounting and economic education to create value, to report and preserve the created value are analyzed.

The limitations of the study stem from its research focus, which is on the challenges of teaching accounting in the higher education institutions that offer specialized economic training in Bulgaria.

As a result of the research, the need for some changes in accounting training was identified, dictated by the growing role of specialists with higher accounting and economic education in the management process of enterprises. Possible reforms in the methods and organization of training of future accountants are analyzed as well as the need for timely updating of qualification descriptions, syllabi, curricula and others in the course of acquiring up-to-date professional knowledge and competences in the higher education institutions engaged in the preparation of accounting and economic staff as a process based on meaningful learning activities, performed including in an interactive environment.

**Keywords:** Accounting, teaching, learning, higher education institutions, specialists with higher accounting and economic education, competences.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The economic turbulence, the dynamic changes in business in the digital economy, the mass digitalization of communications and the virtualisation of the forms of communication, digital money and bitcoin in recent years have accelerated the process of automation and digitalization of the accounting process, including the introduction of intelligent systems for planning and scheduling of resources in the enterprises of the non-financial sector. The issue of the degree the specialists with higher accounting and economic education possess competences needed to perform a job in a professional way in the rapid changes and innovations in the corporate world, dictated by the attitudes and the capacity universities have to provide for studying subjects that build basic, key and specific competences of graduates, has become highly relevant.

The objectives of the research are to analyse the trends in the development of the educational process in the field of accounting, the options for their full integration into the educational process in accounting subjects in higher schools in the North-Central Region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which provide tuition in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022 and to bring out the opportunities for increasing the competitiveness of the training of specialists with higher accounting and economic education in the educational market.

To meet these objectives the following tasks are set: to study the organization of teaching and learning accounting in Bachelor's and Master's degrees in higher educational institutions in the North-Central Region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which provide tuition in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022; to study the learning content, specified in curricula and programmes; to study and analyse the interest and satisfaction of the entities interested in the training of specialists with higher accounting and economic education in Bulgaria; to build a database of fundamental competences, managerial competences and accounting competences of specialists with higher accounting and economic education which raise the efficiency of business activities and the implementation of business strategy; to build a database of the requirements of employers in Bulgaria when announcing job positions for specialists in accounting.

The object of the research is the teaching and learning in accounting, resp. the accounting education in higher educational institutions in the North Central Region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which provide tuition in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022.

The subject of the research are the current needs and the new requirements of employers to specialists with higher accounting and economic education, the impact of the new technologies on studies and the accounting practice, which are to be integrated into the learning process of specialists with higher education in accounting to achieve a higher quality, sustainability and competitiveness of the educational product.

Closely related to the research objectives is the working hypothesis that the improvement of the training in accounting in accordance with the European and the national priorities, standards and regulations, as well as in accordance with the objectively changing realities and the needs of practice, including the introduction of innovations in the process of training in accounting will stimulate the accelerated economic development of the country (Dochev& Chipriyanova, 2020).

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The problems of training students in higher accounting and economic degrees, as well as the present state and the future prospects of accounting education in modern business conditions and intensive challenges, are discussed at a large number of scientific forums and are addressed in the works of authors such as K. Pergelov, T. Totev, S. Basheva, D. Feschiyan, M. Musov, F. Filipova, D. Georgieva, A. Atanasov, G. Chipriyanova, G. Ivanova-Kuzmanova, R. Krasteva-Hristova and other. Of particular importance is the current legislation in Bulgaria – the Higher Education Act, the Vocational Education and Training Act, Regulations, Decrees of the Council of Ministers, Ordinance on State Requirements for Organizing Distance Learning in Higher Education, the concept of digital transformation of education, the National Program for ICT-based Innovative Educational Technologies and Didactic Models in Teaching Practice and other.

The implementation of the research tasks complies with these limitations and based on them builds proposals for systematisation and analysis of the trends in the development of the business environment and opportunities for training specialists in higher accounting and economic degrees in higher educational institutions in the North-Central Region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which provide tuition in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022.

## 3 ISSUE DESCRIPTION

The competition for well-trained, high-quality and capable accounting staff to manage businesses is growing nationally and internationally. Investments in new knowledge, skills and competences of specialists with higher accounting and economic education create preconditions for competitive and crisis-resistant business (Chipriyanova & Chipriyanov, 2021). This naturally imposes the need for the specialist with higher accounting and economic education to have knowledge, skills and competences for performing high-quality reporting, control and other activities in enterprises and organizations, both in the private and in the public sectors (Krasteva-Hristova, 2021). Higher accounting and economic education should not be limited to training staff to meet the current needs of business, but should be developed in a more distant perspective and provide integrated knowledge, skills and competences for the future needs of practice (Atanasov, 2019), (Ivanova-Kuzmanova, 2015). A key point is the study of the objectively changing realities (Ivanova, 2006), the needs and the new requirements of business and the analysis of their degree of compliance with accounting education and training of accountants in the higher schools in the North Central Region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics. In this context, the opportunities for improving the quality of training in accounting subjects in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees will be brought out, including the creation and introduction of innovations in the accounting process (Chipriyanova, 2021), (Ivanova-Kuzmanova, 2013), the development of highly qualified accounting staff to support the growth of the Bulgarian economy will be promoted (Atanasov, 2014), innovation and investment in the country and in all sectors of the economy will be encouraged and accelerated and social and global challenges through knowledge transfer, new technologies and digitalization will be addressed.

## 4 MONITORING

### 4.1 Data Acquisition

Tuition of students in the field of accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes is conducted by universities or specialised higher schools pursuant to the provisions of the Higher Education Act. (Higher Education Act, 1995). At present, the tertiary education system in Bulgaria comprises 52 higher schools (38 public and 14 private), including universities, specialised higher schools and self-contained colleges (Register of Higher Education Institutions, 2022). Of these, 28 have been accredited to conduct tuition in **professional field 3.8 Economics**. They represent approximately 54% of the higher education institutions in the country. The accreditation is carried out in accordance with the provisions of Art. 5 of the Higher Education Act by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA, 2022) (Register of Higher Education Institutions, 2022). This agency functions as an independent specialised statutory body, which provides for the accountability and transparency of the teaching and research activities of the autonomous higher educational institutions. At the proposal of the Minister of Education and Science and pursuant to Art. 9 (3) of the Higher Education Act, the Council of Ministers adopted a National Map of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021), which determines the profile and territorial structure of higher education in Bulgaria by professional fields and majors of regulated professions in compliance with the socio-economic development and the needs of the labour market. The map identifies six planning regions. The focus of this research is on **the Universities located in the North-Central Region**, which covers the administrative districts of Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Razgrad and Silistra. Their total number is 7.

The collected empirical material is mainly from the publicly available information on the official websites and normative documents of the higher schools and the state institutions.

## 4.2 Data Tidying and Cleaning

The process of data tidying and cleaning includes the selection of universities according to the pre-set criteria. The focus of the paper is on the organization, technology, the learning content and the good practices of the accredited by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency in the professional field 3.8. Economics higher schools located in the North-Central Region in the Republic of Bulgaria, which provide tuition in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022 and obtain funds from the state budget.

Of the total number of 7 universities in the North-Central Region of the country, four are excluded for the following reasons:

- Do not provide tuition in professional field 3.8. Economics (Vasil Levski National Military University – Veliko Tarnovo and Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna with a branch in Veliko Tarnovo),
- Have not been accredited to train students in the field as of 2022, although they have previously conducted such tuition (Technical University - Gabrovo), and
- Are not funded by the state budget and are privately funded (University of Agribusiness and Rural Development – Plovdiv with a branch in Veliko Tarnovo).

The cleaning of the data gives a selection comprised of three higher schools. They represent a little over 10% of the total number of higher educational institutions in the country that train students in the field. They conduct tuition in the field of accounting in 2 majors in the Bachelor's degree and in 9 programmes in the Master's degree. The detailed information shows that students can choose their education in full-time, part-time and distance form of study.

Guarantee for **high quality of the provided educational product in accounting** in the three higher educational institutions in the country are the accreditation evaluations of professional field 3.8 Economics by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA). They are within the range of 8.76 and 9.35 with a maximum grade of 10.00. The average grade for the sample is 9.11 (see Table 1)

**Table 1. Higher education institutions from the North-Central region in Bulgaria according to evaluation, term of validity of the accreditation and capacity for training of students in professional field 3.8. Economics**

Higher school	Grade on the criteria	Validity	Educational capacity (number of students)		
			Bachelor	Master	Total
D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov	9.35	22.05.2025	7 500	3 000	10 500
Ruse University "Angel Kanchev" - Ruse	9.23	22.04.2026	400	100	500
St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo - Veliko Tarnovo	8.76	27.06.2023	2 000	600	2 600
Total	x	x	9 900	3 700	13 600

D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov is at the top of this ranking (NEAA, 2022). This is because the tuition in accounting in the major accounting and Control at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov is a symbiosis between theory and practice (Atanasov, 2013).

### 4.3 Data Exploitation

Data from the Register of current students kept by the Ministry of Education and Science evidence that the total number of students in accounting in the three universities in the region during the summer semester of academic 2021/2022 year is 646 (Ministry of Education and Science. Reference module, 2022). The distribution of the total number of students between the individual **higher schools** is presented in Fig. 1. Data show that two thirds of all students in accounting in the region, which is 432, study at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics. The number of students trained at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo is nearly one third (200) and the number of students at Ruse University “Angel Kanchev” (14) is insignificant.

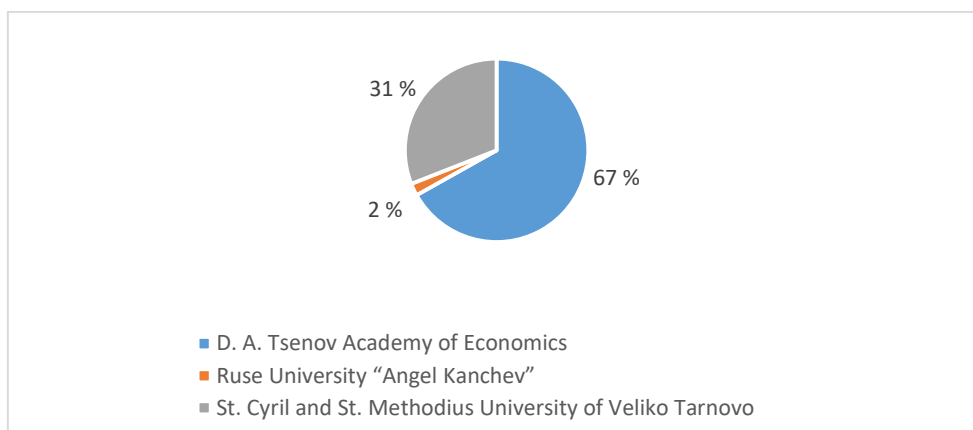


Fig. 1. Distribution of 646 students in accounting by higher school in North-Central Region

The distribution of students by **form of study** in the different higher schools is presented in Fig. 2.

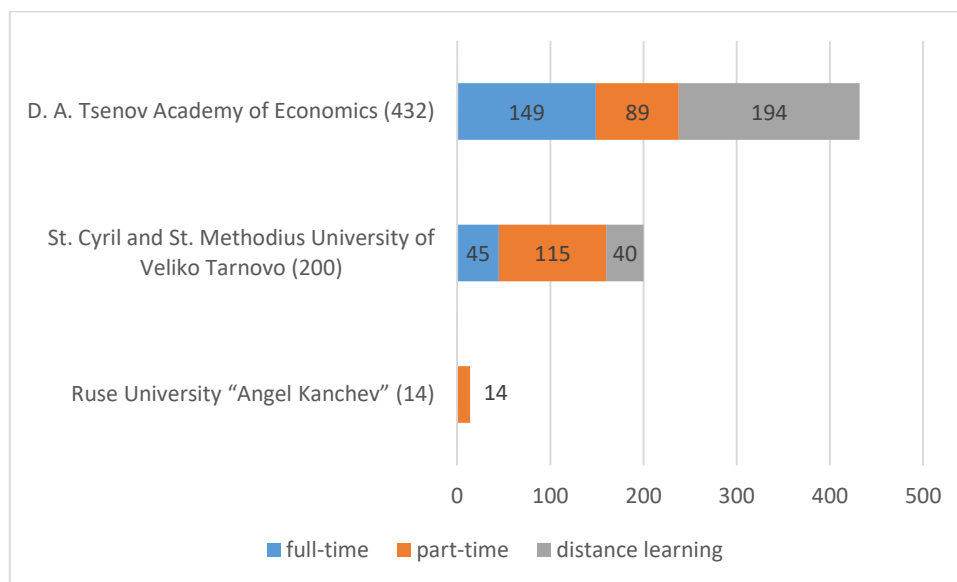


Fig. 2. Distribution of 646 students by higher school and form of study in North-Central Region

In order to achieve a higher level of detail, an additional distribution of students was made according to the **educational and qualification degree** (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

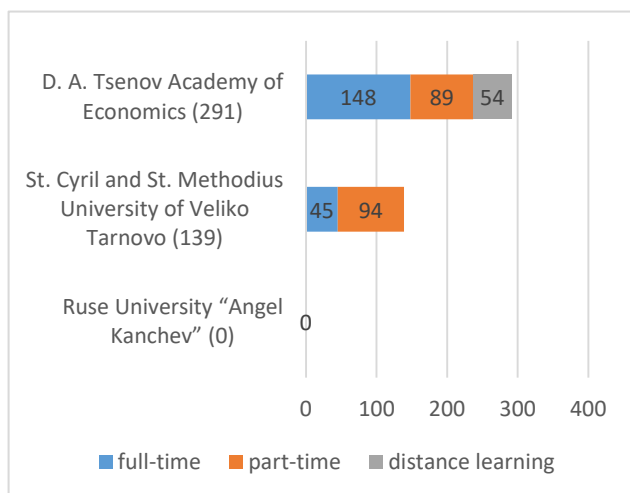


Fig. 3. Distribution of 430 students in Bachelor's degree by higher school and form of study in North-Central Region

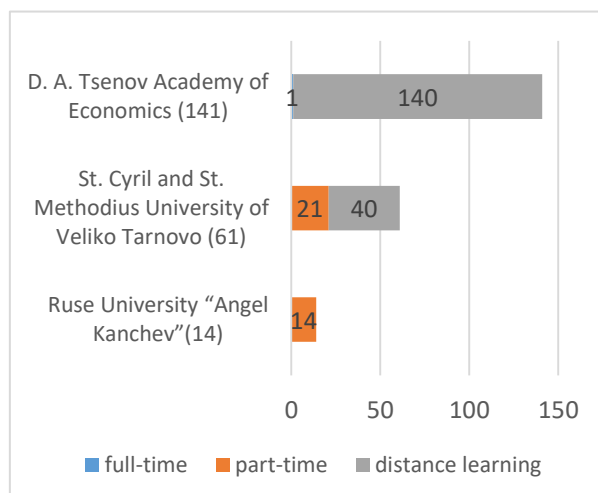


Fig. 4. Distribution of 216 students in Master's degree by higher school and form of study in North-Central Region)

The part-time form of study has been displaced by the distance-learning form. This fact evidences that the higher schools adhere to the new educational strategies for training specialists in the field of accounting which "are aimed at anticipated innovative education, building a system of customised training, training for the requirements of the sustainable development and, in general, at smart and intelligent training of specialists with higher economic education" (Ivanova, 2014).

Differences in the organization and technology of training are found in the type, number and the learning content of the subjects in the curriculum and in the provided knowledge, skills and competences in the qualification descriptions of the individual majors / programmes.

The results of the study of **the structure** of the curricula of the studied majors / programmes in the selected higher schools<sup>1</sup> show that the relative share of the subjects specialised in the field of accounting in the total number of studied subjects in the curriculum of students in Bachelor's degree is respectively 39.13 % in St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo (18 subjects out of 46) and 40% D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (24 academic subjects out of 60), and in the Master's degree - respectively 60% in St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo (12 subjects out of a total of 20) and 81.82% in D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (18 out of 22 subjects). The significant difference between the two higher schools shows that the training is much more specialised in the field of accounting in D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics. This finding, as well as the well-organized tuition in the distance learning form of study (Atanasov, 2020), (Krasteva-Hristova, 2019), characterise D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics as an irrefutable leader at the regional level.

The subjects in the field of accounting are grouped into three categories depending on the frequency of their inclusion in the curricula (Atanasov, Chipriyanova, Krasteva-Hristova, & Luchkov, 2022), which allows an analysis of their learning content. It was found that the Bachelor's degree includes 42 subjects in the field of accounting, while the Master's degree – 30. The groups are as follows: fundamental accounting subjects, taught in the both higher schools - 15 in the Bachelor's degree and 10 in the Master's degree; accounting subjects studied only in St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo - 4 subjects in the Bachelor's degree and 3 in the Master's degree; accounting subjects studied only in D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - 10 in the Bachelor's degree and 8 in the Master's degree.

There is a significant difference in the way students graduate. While in D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics this is done with defense of a graduate thesis, in St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo

<sup>1</sup> The curricula of Ruse University "Angel Kanchev" are not subject to research due to lack of sufficient publicly available information. To be more specific and achieve comparability, the curricula of the programmes accounting and Control (St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo) and accounting and Auditing in Non-Financial Enterprises (D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics), for students with a bachelor's degree or a master's degree in other professional fields were studied.

students can choose between defending a graduate thesis and taking a state exam. In this aspect, the training at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo provides for flexibility of the process in line with the individual attitudes of the students, which contributes to the development of specific soft skills for written and oral presentation and supporting a point.

#### 4.4 Stakeholder Analysis

The analysis of the satisfaction of business with the complex of knowledge, skills and competences of specialists with higher accounting and economic education, acquired during their study in accounting in the surveyed higher schools, will reveal some problematic areas and options for optimising training in accounting in full-time, part-time and distance learning form of study in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the higher educational institutions in the North-Central region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which train students in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022. The study among specialists with higher accounting and economic education who graduated from the selected higher schools will provide a database of the degree of difficulty to start a career in the field of accounting, and to find out whether the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during their studies of accounting subjects are sufficient for the performance of their professional duties at the beginning of the career on the one hand, and in the future on the other.

##### 4.4.1 Survey of Employers' Attitudes

It is done through an analysis of the labour market to determine the compliance of the tuition provided by the higher educational institutions in the North Central region in Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which train students in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees for 2022 in accounting, its requirements and the expectations of its users. A structured interview was conducted among enterprises from the non-financial sector in Bulgaria that have a separate accounting department using the method of simple random sampling. The results are expressed in:

First, identification of the factors (measures) and indicators for evaluation of the professional profile of the accountant for two consecutive five-year periods, respectively research in the dynamic aspect (see Table 2 and Fig. 5):

**Table 2. Factors (measures) and indicators for evaluation of the accountant's job experience for the period April 2013 - April 2017 (Chipriyanova, 2021)**

Factors (measures) and indicators	Types of enterprises (Accountancy Act, amm. SG/ 26 dated 22 March)			
	Micro-enterprises	Small enterprises	Medium enterprises	Large enterprises
<b>I group</b> acquired educational and qualification degree:				
▪ Bachelor's degree in the major;	√	√	√	√
▪ Bachelor's degree in another major;	√	√	X	X
▪ Master's degree in the major;				
▪ Master's degree in another major;	~	◇	√	X
▪ Doctor's degree in the major;	X	~	~	√
▪ Doctor's degree in another major	X	X	◇	√
	X	X	◇	◇
<b>II group</b> additional vocational training/qualification:				
▪ specialisations;	~	√	X	X
▪ qualifications;	~	◇	X	X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ certificates from training courses and workshops;</li> <li>▪ ACCA, CIMA, CFA, FRM, CPA certificates and other</li> </ul>	X	~	√	√
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ computer;</li> <li>▪ software;</li> <li>▪ MS Excel, Pivot tables</li> </ul>	√	√	√	√
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ fluency in 1 foreign language / levels of fluency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2);</li> <li>▪ Cambridge English Certificate, other international certificates;</li> <li>▪ more than 1 foreign language.</li> </ul>	X	◇	√	√
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ fluency in 1 foreign language / levels of fluency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2);</li> <li>▪ Cambridge English Certificate, other international certificates;</li> <li>▪ more than 1 foreign language.</li> </ul>	X	X	~	√
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ fluency in 1 foreign language / levels of fluency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2);</li> <li>▪ Cambridge English Certificate, other international certificates;</li> <li>▪ more than 1 foreign language.</li> </ul>	X	X	X	√

\* N.B.: The symbols used in the table to be interpreted as follows: √ - „yes“; ◇ - „more likely“; X – „definitely no“; ~ - „rather not“.

The data from the survey for April 2018-April 2022 show the following groups of factors (measures) and indicators for assessing the professional profile of the accountant - intellectual skills (IS), fundamental competences (FC), accounting and tax competences (ATC), BI competences (BIC) analytical capacity (AC), professional values and ethics (PVE), business management skills (BMS), leadership skills (LS), communication skills (CS), team work skills (TWS), technical and functional skills (TFS) and other (O). They can be visually presented as follows (see Fig. 5).

*Second*, establishing the expectations of the business for specialists with higher accounting and economic education in Bulgaria in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The survey shows that the expectations of 73% of enterprises in the non-financial sector of the sample are for highly qualified accounting staff who exercise their professional duties to support the growth of the Bulgarian economy, encourage and accelerate innovation and investment in Bulgaria and all sectors and tackle social and global challenges through knowledge transfer, new technologies and digitalization.

*Third*, revealing the new requirements of employers to specialists with higher accounting and economic education. 89% of the surveyed enterprises in the non-financial sector indicate that

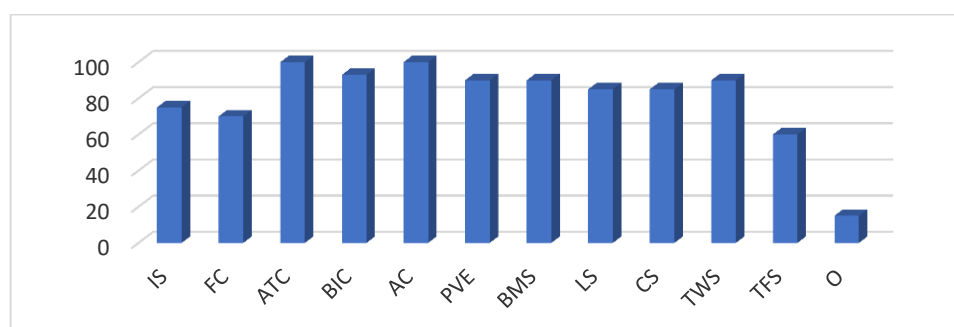


Fig.5. Factors (measures) and indicators for evaluation of the accountant's job experience for the period April 2018 - April 2022

the specialists with higher accounting and economic education should have fundamental, managerial, accounting and tax knowledge, skills and competences for high-quality implementation of reporting, financial, control and other activities in enterprises and organizations in the private and public sectors. For 97% of the surveyed medium and large enterprises in our country the specialists with higher accounting and economic education should possess not only knowledge, skills and competences that meet the current needs of business, but rather those aimed at the long term, the so-called integrated knowledge, skills and competences for the future needs of the practice.



Fourth, identifying the opportunities of specialists with higher accounting and economic education to perform integrated roles and to actively participate in the management process. The survey data can be visually presented as follows (see Fig. 6):

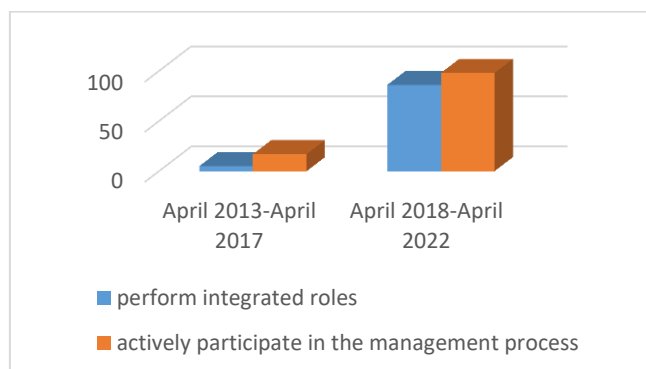


Fig. 6. Level of realization of integrated roles of the specialists with higher accounting and economic education and their participation in the management process of the enterprises from the non-financial sector in a dynamic aspect

The survey clearly confirms the growing role of specialists with higher accounting and economic education in the management of the enterprise and in their capacity as business partners.

#### 4.4.2 Survey of the Current State and Prospects of Specialists with Higher Accounting and Economic Education

A structured interview is the research method. The sample was formed by specialists with higher accounting and economic education, graduates of higher schools in the North Central region of Bulgaria, accredited in the professional field 3.8. Economics, which train students in accounting in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees using the method of single random sampling. The results of the survey can be summarised as follows (see Table 3):

**Table 3. Indicators of the significance of the acquired knowledge, skills and competences in accounting**

Indicators	Types of enterprises (Accountancy Act, amm. SG/ 26 dated 22 March)			
	Micro-enterprises	Small enterprises	Medium enterprises	Large enterprises
▪ degree of difficulty to start a career in the field of accounting	X	X	◇	√
▪ prestige of practicing of the accounting profession	◇	√	√	√
▪ knowledge, skills and competences, acquired during the tuition in accounting subjects for quality performance of professional duties at the start of the career	√	√	◇	◇
▪ knowledge, skills and competences, acquired during the tuition on working with Big Data, non-financial information, integrated reporting	~	~	~	~

▪ knowledge, skills and competences, acquired during the tuition in accounting subjects for quality performance of professional duties in the future	√	√	◇	~
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\*\* N.B.: The symbols used in the table to be interpreted as follows: √ - „yes“; ◇ - „more likely“; X – „definitely no“; ~ - „rather not“.

At the same time, the attitudes of specialists with higher accounting and economic education for value creation, reporting and preserving the value created in enterprises in the non-financial sector (medium and large enterprises) in April 2013-April 2017 compared to April 2018 - April 2022 were studied. (see Fig. 7).

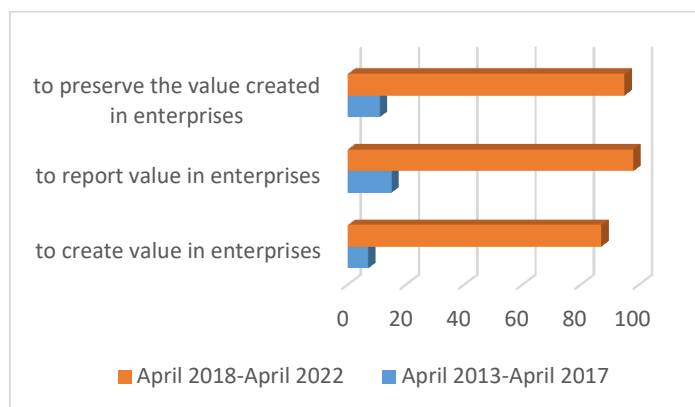


Fig. 7. Participation of specialists with higher accounting and economic education in the creation, reporting and preserving value in medium and large non-financial enterprises in Bulgaria in a dynamic aspect (in percentage)

The tendency is for the corporate business to increasingly require specialists with higher accounting and economic education who participate in the development of value creating corporate strategies, engage in management decisions and risk management, exercise internal control, provide for relevant and useful internal and external reporting (Filipova, Georgieva, Nikolova, Petrova, & Hristov, 2017).

## 5 RESULTS

From what has been stated so far, it can be reasonably argued that the organization, technology and the learning content of the training in accounting, provided by the higher schools is of high quality and meets the current needs of business. The curricula is balanced and in accordance with the respective form of study. There is a tendency to prioritise distance learning due to the dynamic changes in the economic and social environment. The knowledge, skills and competences acquired in the course of training correspond to the expectations of micro-enterprises and small enterprises to a very high extent, of medium-sized enterprises - to a large extent, and of large enterprises - to a satisfactory level. The complexity of business, the changes in the corporate world such as: digital assets, virtual currencies, globalisation, investment in human capital, require an adequate transition from traditional training in accounting to a new model of training for professionals with higher accounting and economic education.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The conducted theoretical and applied research proves that in the future the specialists with higher accounting and economic education will have increasingly significant strategic role in the management of non-financial enterprises. For this reason the educational process is to further integrate: 1) specific academic subjects that build the so-called "soft skills" - communication skills, social engagement, leadership, presentation, career skills and other; 2) digitalization and new technologies in accounting practice today and in the future, as part of the learning process of specialists with higher education in the field of accounting; 3) initiatives for attracting lecturers from practice, organizing joint research events, gamification, interactive connection of economic and accounting theory and practice.

In conclusion, in order to achieve a high level of compatibility between higher education institutions and business, a consistent integrated approach to education and training of specialists with higher accounting and economic education is to be applied. This will ensure the sustainability of the business and the competitiveness of the educational product in the field of accounting.

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