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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

**(country report prepared for the intellectual output 01 – Assessment of
methodology and materials of public administration teaching and its
relevance for practice)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The PAQUALITY project aims to support changes in the area of public administration (PA) education in conformity with Bologna objectives, mainly:

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research, which haven't been fully applied in the area of the public administration higher education in Slovakia and the new EU states yet.

Higher education in public administration programmes is not the same in particular countries and lacks a degree of standardizations. From this perspective it is highly relevant to facilitate quality assurance mechanism which would ensure not only comparable quality of education processes but also comparable outcomes of the education (e.g. quality of graduates, their knowledge, skills and experience) in these countries.

In addition, the project aims at tackling skills gaps and mismatches in the area of public administration higher education through designing and developing curricula that meet the learning needs of students that are relevant to the labour market and societal needs, including through better use of open and on-line, work based, multi - disciplinary learning and new quality assessment criteria. Simultaneously, with a view of this priority, promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development, training of academics in new and innovative pedagogical approaches, new curriculum design approaches and sharing of good practices through collaborative platforms will be in the centre of the project.

This report on SLOVAKIA represents an input for the intellectual output 01 of the PAQUALITY project. Within this intellectual output country studies developed based on guidelines and surveys are anticipated. The studies will be used in other project phases but also for mutual information of the project partners at the beginning of the project.

This report summarizes findings on

- the national educational system related to present state of PA education,
- system of evaluation
- findings on PA programmes existing in the country
- relevancy to practice based on research among alumni and civil servants / employers. This research focused on selected study programmes at three Slovak Universities. At Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica the research includes a bachelor study programme Territorial management and a master study programme Territorial Studies, that are a part of study field Public Administration and Regional Development. At Faculty of National Economy, University of Economics in Bratislava, the research covers the master study programme Public Administration and Regional Development. At Faculty of Public Administration, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, a subject of the research is a bachelor study programme Public Administration.
- It is based on data available as of 28. 2. 2019.

2. NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND PA EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS A DISCIPLINE IN SLOVAKIA

The transformation process in Slovakia has since the 1990s been linked with the perception of the role and position of public administration (PA) at the local, regional and national level. It strongly influenced also development of study programmes in PA. Later, the law and structural changes of public administration that were oriented on the decentralization and direct contact with citizens also influenced the development of study programmes. Public administration plays an essential role in social and economic development and acts both as a manager and a responsible actor. This is also why PA education and preparation of qualified workforce for the PA institutions and public policy has also been part of PA reform and government programmes during recent years. However, one of the ongoing challenges there are in the Slovak Republic regarding PA institutions, is the now permanent lack of qualified workforce with a relevant degree (<https://www.portalvs.sk/sk/studijne-odbory/zobrazit/30305>, cit. 28.1.2019).

From the external environment, belong to the main incentives of development the implementation of IT technologies into the public administration and electronisation of public services and all associated processes. During the last decade, the progressive and resolute development of the programmes was partially caused also by more and more challenging requirements of the students, implementation of new modern teaching methods and technological innovations. The key milestones in study programme's curriculum development have been the dates of regular national accreditation (till 2015 each 6 years; nowadays by the decision of accreditation board even more often). Moreover, at some universities the tradition of PA education and research is even longer.

From the historical point of view, the first study programme in public administration in combination with public economics (there was not a specific scientific field – public administration) was developed at the Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica in 1997. It reflected the rich experience in research in public administration and regional development at the Institute of Development of Villages, Cities and Regions established at the beginning of 90s of 20st century. By the societal changes and especially because of the need to qualify the employees in the public administration the study programmes were established also in Košice and Bratislava. In Košice, in 1998 was established also the unique and only Faculty of Public Administration at the University of Pavol Jozef Safarik. In 2002 also based on the research, activity in regional development and spatial economics started to be delivered study programmes in public administration and regional develop at Faculty of National Economy, University of Economics in Bratislava. Subsequently, it spread all over the Slovakia (e. g. Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra, University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Technical University in Košice, etc.). Nowadays, the offer of PA study is provided by 8 public universities, 2 private universities, 1 foreign university. The system of executive study programmes in PA is not developed much in Slovakia. It is represented by two private institutes.

Nowadays, in the structure of study fields created by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Accreditation Commission is separately defined study field – Public Administration and Public Policy; Public Administration and Regional Development; and Public Economics and Services. All these fields include the study programmes (bachelor's, master's, doctoral) fully or partially in PA, which are also the subject of our desk research in Annex 1.

Due to the announced changes in the future, the existing scheme of study fields and study programmes may be changed, with the goal to have less study fields. Public administration would

then be part of one study field, which would include international relations, political science and public administration.

2.2 PA EDUCATION AND ITS SPECIFICS

The PA education is delivered as a part of university education offer in Slovakia. It is characterised by the following features:

1. plurality of providers,
2. compatibility with the systems of university education in the member states of the European Union,
3. autonomy of university institutions

Providers of university education in PA are divided into three groups:

1. Public and state universities,
2. Private universities.
3. Organisations oriented at executive study programmes (MBA, MPA,..).

The universities provide all types of accredited programmes in PA (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral) that are fully within the competence of universities and higher education institutions. Public universities are the most common type of universities in Slovakia. Public universities are founded on the legislative approval given by the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The new education Act no. 131/2002 on Higher Education, which came into effect on 1 April 2002, introduced a reform of higher education as part of the Bologna process. This act lays down, among other things, conditions determining the legal status of higher education institutions, fields of study, academic titles, evaluations and accreditation. This act has been amended several times and supplemented with other laws. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (the Ministry of Education for short) is responsible for the strategy and policy with regard to the education system. The ministry defines the content of the educational programme and is responsible for financial policies.

Public universities have an educational system compatible with the systems of the member states of the European Union. This system is based on three levels of higher education. Level one, Bachelor study lasts for 3 (full-time) or 4 (distance) years and graduates obtain a Bachelor's degree title (abbr. Bc.). Level two usually lasts 2 years (full-time) or 3 years (distance) and graduates obtain the following degree titles in PA study programmes: Master (abbr. Mgr.), Engineer (abbr. Ing.).

The university degree titles are obtained after writing a bachelor/diploma thesis and passing a state exam. The third level is doctoral study, which lasts 3 – 5 years, depending on the type of doctoral study – internal or external form. The graduates of doctoral studies are granted a degree title „PhD.”

Public universities also provide life-long education for the citizens of Slovakia and also for citizens from other countries, according to the labour market needs.

Moreover, public universities offer the ECTS study programme, which enables flexible co-operation with universities of EU member states in the area of student, teacher and researcher exchange. Slovak public universities are autonomous institutions. The university is represented by the Rector (President of the University), who is elected by the academic senate of a university and appointed to the position by the President of the Slovak Republic. Universities use their own tangible and intangible assets in teaching and research activities. The assets of universities also include accommodation and catering facilities, which provide supportive services for students.

Universities are financed from the state budget by annual subsidies, which cover approximately 60-70% of their costs depending on the character and size of the university. The remaining costs are covered from sources raised from teaching and research activity, orders from the private sector and other commercial activities.

Universities can provide education only in those programmes that are accredited by the Slovak Accreditation Commission.

2.3 REQUIREMENTS ON ENTRANCE TO CIVIL SERVICE AND ON IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Formal exams for entrance to the civil service are not part of the Slovak legislation system. Students of our study programme are prepared in terms of general requirements of the public administration and civil service system. Formal work in civil service is regulated by the following laws:

- Act No. 55/2017 Coll. on Civil Service
- Act No. 552/2003 Coll. on Execution of Work of Public Interest and on the amendments to certain laws
- Act No. 553/2003 Coll. on Remuneration of Employees in Execution of Work of Public Interest and on the amendments to certain laws
- Act No. 311/2001 Coll. Labour Code of Slovak Republic and on the amendments to certain laws.

Special competences are not required for activities related to economic education. They are required in positions related to construction (urbanism, architecture), energy (water, electric, gas...), transport, entrance to armed forces, police and so on. However, education of experts is important. This is evidenced by a number of successful graduates.

2.4 SUMMARY

<p>2.1. Is PA education in your country specific for some reasons? If yes, why?</p>	<p>PA education is a part of standardised educational system of the Slovak Republic, compatible with the systems of the member states of the European Union. PA as a discipline had developed progressively during last three decades. It demonstrates the interdisciplinary approach in context of national, regional and local development and public policy. The educational system is open, relatively flexible; responsive to requirements of practice situated in competitive environment. PA is a very popular degree and is offered by many universities in Slovakia (see Annex).</p>
<p>2.2. Is PA a well-established own (inter-) discipline?</p>	<p>Development of PA as a discipline was strongly influenced by the transformation process of the 1990s. The aim of PA education is to prepare the qualified workforce for the public administration institutions and public policy, whose need is growing thanks to structural changes of PA and decentralisation processes.</p>
<p>2.3. Is any formal exam required for entrance to civil service? If yes, what are the requirements?</p>	<p>Education of experts in PA is important but formal exams for entrance to the civil service are not a part of the Slovak legislation system. Special competences are required in positions related to construction, energy, transport, entrance to armed forces, police, etc. and are not required for activities related to economic education.</p>

3. EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

3.1 EXISTING EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

Nowadays, in Slovakia, the general governance structure with regard to external quality assurance of higher education institutions is common for all accredited study programmes. There are no special requirements for the accreditation of PA study programmes. The main body is a special Accreditation Commission, which will be operating until 31 December 2019. According to the Act on Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education (*Act no. 269/2018 Coll. on ensuring the quality of higher education and on change and amendment of the Act no. 343/2016 Coll. On public procurement and on amendments to certain acts as amended*), starting from 1 January 2020 the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education will begin its work in the field of evaluation and accreditation of study programmes in the Slovak Republic. After establishing, all the rights and obligations of the Accreditation Commission will pass onto the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. Last possibility to submit a study program to be evaluated for accreditation under the Accreditation Commission is until 15. 06. 2019.

The Accreditation Commission is an advisory body of the government of the Slovak Republic. The Accreditation Commission was established by the government of the Slovak Republic in the year 1990. The essential tasks of the Commission are to monitor and independently evaluate the quality of education, research, development, artistic and other creative activity of universities.

The Commission comprehensively reviews the conditions under which the higher education activities take place at individual universities. It carries out a comprehensive accreditation of universities' activities every six years. Within the comprehensive accreditation the Commission also evaluates the level of research, development and other creative activities of the university and provides its opinion of the standards of the particular university compared with other universities. The Accreditation Commission assesses applications for accreditation of programmes, and is involved in appointment procedures. It provides opinion on the competence of the university to conduct each study programme for which it is authorised to grant an academic title to its graduates. It also provides opinion on the competence of the university to perform habilitation proceedings and proceedings for appointing professors.

Higher Education Act (Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on universities and on amendments to certain laws, as amended), in § 82 Clause 8, states that the Accreditation Commission uses criteria which on its proposal and after an opinion given by the bodies representing higher education institutions are approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. This material contains a set of criteria that the Accreditation Commission applies in accordance with § 82 Clause 2 Letter a) in the accreditation of:

- Bachelor study programmes, evaluating the capacity of a higher education institution to accomplish a study programme, which entitles the institution to award its graduates the academic degree of a Bachelor (Bc.),
- Master or Engineer study programmes, evaluating the capacity of a higher education institution to accomplish a study programme which, entitles the institution to award its graduates the academic degree of Master in the form of Magister (Mgr.), Engineer (Ing.) or Doctor (Dr.).
- Doctoral study programmes, evaluating the capacity of a higher education institution to accomplish a study programme, which entitles the institution to award its graduates the academic degree of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

All state, public and private universities are evaluated in the accreditation process.

3.2 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

Only the Accreditation Commission is entitled to give accreditation to any study programme in the Slovak Republic. It consists of members of the Accreditation Commission until 31 December 2019. The members of Accreditation Commissions (20) are the recognised Slovak personalities from various scientific fields and simultaneously they are the heads of working groups. The working groups, consisting of experts in particular field, are created for evaluation of study programmes in particular research field.

The national accreditation of the study programme in the Slovak Republic is a process in which the Accreditation Commission, an advisory body of the Government of the SR, assesses the capacity of the higher education institution to implement the relevant study programme in the field of study. The Accreditation Commission shall notify the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic about the recommendation to accredit or not, which subsequently decides to grant the right to graduate from this study programme corresponding to the academic degree. Such a programme is called an accredited study programme in the Higher Education Act.

The following attributes are evaluated during the assessment of the study programme:

- the content (the linkage of study programme with the study field, characteristics of the study programme, relevance of the study length, final study thesis's and its adequacy)
- requirements for applicants and the method of their selection (the suitability of the requirements for applicants, the way of applicant's selection),
- requirements for passing (requirements from the education quality point of view and graduation point of view)
- filling the graduate profile (matching the graduate profile with the profession and the quality of the graduates). In case of higher education institution accreditation it is realised also a site visit as one part of the whole evaluation process.

Comprehensive accreditation of the activities of a university is a process in which the Accreditation Commission thoroughly assesses and evaluates the educational, research, development, artistic and other creative activity of a college following its long-term intention as well as personnel, technical, information and other conditions in which this activity is carried out and comments on the applications of the college for the accreditation of all study programs and the accreditation of all habilitation procedures and the appointment of professors in which the college wants to have the corresponding rights.

Comprehensive accreditation of the activities of the university is carried out at six-year intervals according to the previously published plan of comprehensive accreditation drawn up by the Accreditation Commission. It starts from the date of submission of the documents for individual universities. Deadlines for submitting documents are part of a comprehensive accreditation plan and must be known for at least 1 year in advance. In the period between two complex accreditation of the activities of a higher education institution, accreditation of the individual activities of the higher education institution (accreditation of study programmes and accreditation of habilitation procedures and appointment of professors) can be carried out as necessary.

The Accreditation Commission draws up an evaluation report, which is determined by the law and the statements on the individual applications of the universities for accreditation, within ten months of the beginning of the comprehensive accreditation of the activities of the higher education institution. The Ministry decides on the granting, suspension, withdrawal or non-acceptance of rights within 60 days of delivery of the Accreditation Commission's statement. The Ministry then provides the university with an assessment report of the Accreditation Commission and the results of its

decision on the granting of rights, which will end the complex accreditation of the higher education institution.

If a university did not submit a request for accreditation of one of the activities in which it has been granted the right so far, the Ministry of Education withdraws this right with effect from the date of completion of the comprehensive accreditation of the activities of the higher education institution for the purposes of complex accreditation.

Within the new system of accreditation to be realised under the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education starting from 1 January 2020 also new criteria should be developed. According to the Act on ensuring the quality of higher education (§23 and §38, section 5), the newly established Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education should publish the criteria / standards to be binding within the new accreditation procedures, until 31 October 2019 the latest. Beginning of 2019 the criteria / standards are not available yet. Standards suggested by the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher education will have to be publicly available for the public to comment on them. After taking the comments into consideration the standards will step into force after the Executive Board of the Agency has approved them.

The methods used for evaluation of study programs, within the scope of legislative changes according to the Act on Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education, will be based on interaction of internal quality system of every university and of the activities of the newly established Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. The internal quality system of each university according to the Act on Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education (§3) should fulfil the mission of a university through a strategy for ensuring the quality of higher education and quality of research, development, art activities or other creative activities; processes of ensuring quality of higher education and quality of creative activities; interconnection of creative activities and higher education in a particular study field. The university is according to the Act on Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education (§24) obliged to ask the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education to evaluate its internal quality system, at least once every ten years. The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education also performs an ongoing evaluation at least once every two years.

3.3 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Internal quality assurance is to some extent based on the national legislation (primarily Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education and Act no. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance in Higher Education). However, this legislation and also the fact that universities in Slovakia are self-governing institutions and possess a significant extent of autonomy, allow for own internal quality assurance framework. Hence, legislation sets some basic criteria and principles but universities can set up own bodies, organisations, processes, measures, etc. in order to fulfil the legislative criteria and the criteria of the Accreditation Commission (from 1 January 2020 the Accreditation Agency).

Most universities have the following bodies and/or measures put in place in order to secure internal quality standards:

1. Programme councils [programové rady]
2. Course guarantor [garant predmetu]
3. Study programme guarantor [garant študijného programu]
4. Quality Council [Rada kvality]
5. Inspection [hospitácia]
6. Central register of dissertations [Centrálny register záverečných a kvalifikačných prác]
7. Lecturers' training
8. Field Commission – PhD study [Odborová komisia – PhD štúdium]

Programme councils [programové rady]

Programme councils are composed of university lecturers, scientists and also relevant practitioners from the field and representatives of employers who are employing university programme alumni. Thanks to this mechanism, theory meets practice and demand meets supply. Programme councils are voluntary bodies. For instance, Faculty of National Economy of the University of Economics in Bratislava has programme councils for each academic programme, including public administration and regional development. This is largely motivated by the university planning to attain international accreditation. And international accreditation specifically asks for such a body. However, functioning and effectiveness of programme councils largely vary and depend on the individual institution's and study programme staff motivation to quality assurance and improvement.

Course guarantor [garant predmetu]

Each course has to have its guarantor. This person guarantees the quality of the curriculum and of the tuition process of an individual course (e.g. Introduction to Public Procurement). A course guarantor has to be at least an associate professor in order to guarantee a Bachelor's, Master's course of study. He or she has to have the same or related academic background. Each time there is an update to the course curriculum, accreditation file, an inspection, etc. he or she is consulted and approves of the changes.

Study programme guarantor [garant študijného programu]

A study programme guarantor similarly to the course guarantor guarantees the quality of the entire study programme curriculum and of the tuition process in the given study programme (bachelor's, master's, PhD, etc.). Each study programme and each level of study has to be accredited separately and they each need one study programme guarantor. One study programme guarantor can guarantee more than one level of the same study programme and this is usually the case in Slovak universities and study programmes. So usually there is a professor who guarantees all three levels of the same public administration study programme. Associate professors can only guarantee the first two levels of study. Importantly, current legislation allows for a level of freedom in terms of actual day-to-day quality assurance from the study programme guarantor. In the past and still in the present there are cases of study programme guarantors who are only formally guaranteeing the study programmes in order to fulfil all the necessary formal and legal accreditation criteria. Hence, they function merely as figureheads. Furthermore, the phenomenon of "flying professors" (i.e. study programme guarantors and usually professors guaranteeing multiple study programmes at multiple universities and hence only formally rather than actually guaranteeing the quality) occurred in the past. As a result, national legislation changed and study programme guarantor now has to have a 100% full time employment contract with the university in which he or she is a guarantor and/or can only guarantee one study programme in Slovakia. Also, all academic staff in Slovakia can only have up to 1.99 of full time contract. This measure is strictly monitored by institutions and the Ministry of Education and data regarding the amount of job contracts is available for public scrutiny online and is regularly updated (see <https://www.portalvs.sk/regzam/>). This then resulted in the problem of a lack of study programme guarantors and some study programmes, including public administration study programmes have been struggling to find enough study programme guarantors to keep their levels of study. As a result, some Slovak institutions recruit foreign study programme guarantors even in the field of public administration with questionable quality assurance.

Inspection [hospitácia]

This is largely an autonomous area and each university and faculty can set its own rules in terms of frequency, depth, quality assurance, etc. Faculties are in charge of inspection planning and

academic course quality evaluation. They can set up quality councils for this purpose. This evaluation is carried out in conjunction with student surveys (see below). Faculties select courses that are inspected – it can be either on a regular basis or on a need basis. So each institution can set its own inspection plan (e.g. each course has to be inspected at least once every 4 years) or if there is a particular course or a lecturer who scores badly in student surveys, then it is more likely that this course or this lecturer's courses will be inspected. Inspection takes the form of a standard evaluation process. It evaluates the overall quality of the course, its curriculum, compatibility with university or faculty goals such as practical and soft skills orientation of the tuition process, individual qualities of the lecturer(s), use of technical tools (e.g. use of PowerPoint), etc. Based on the inspection, lecturers receive an inspection report that is carried by an inspector and they have the right to comment on this report which will be taken into consideration and will be considered in the final report. An inspector is usually someone from the lecturer's own department and has to be from the same or related field that he or she inspects. This measure similarly to the measures before can be a very useful quality assurance tool but at the same time there are universities, faculties and public administration study programmes that carry it out only very formally and/or do not take it into consideration.

Student surveys

Student surveys can be one of the most useful internal quality assurance tools. Again, similarly to the measures above, it all depends on how serious the institution is and on the extent to which it seeks reveal the real picture and genuine feedback from its student on university, faculty, study programme and/or individual academic course quality. Student surveys are anonymous and are usually carried each semester towards the end of the course. There are a number of ways to perform them. Recently, some universities have started to use electronic academic information systems and/or electronic survey tools (e.g. Google Forms) to encourage students to fill them and to make the process more efficient and comfortable. However, making surveys voluntary, easily accessible and electronically filled does not necessarily lead to the best outputs. Some universities receive less than 10% of student questionnaires and as a result these answers are neither precise nor can be considered statistically valid. Some universities are either sticking to or returning to paper surveys instead. It is much more time-consuming but a higher return rate and usually better quality comments are guaranteed. Some institutions use student surveys to identify low quality courses and/or lecturers (see Inspection). On the other hand, results can be used to award exceptional lecturers for their effort and teaching qualities. This further motivates other colleagues to pay attention to the quality process and to treat students with respect and view them as clients seeking the best quality tuition and academic experience.

Quality Council [Rada kvality]

Quality council can be set up by a university / faculty and is formally in charge of inspections, evaluates them, takes decisions and issues recommendations based on the results.

Central register of dissertations [Centrálny register záverečných a kvalifikačných prác]

The Central register of dissertations (see <https://cms.crzp.sk/>) is a very useful tool in dissertation quality assurance. Every university student in Slovakia has to upload his or her dissertation to the academic information system which then automatically and based on an algorithm assesses the dissertation in terms of its originality and also potential plagiarism. Furthermore, all dissertations have to be published electronically and are accessible from this database. This measure is key in upholding dissertation quality. However, this system does not stop students from paying third parties to write entire and original dissertations for them. Recently, a major scandal was revealed in this area. In 1999, the Speaker of the Slovak Parliament wrote a dissertation in the field of public administration to attain his JUDr. degree. However, it was revealed that this dissertation lacked even

minimum levels of originality and that it was largely copied from other sources – some of them not properly referenced. Furthermore, this scandal has revealed an entire business scheme currently operating in Slovakia that offers university students bespoke dissertations in various fields and of various quality: everything from seminar papers to associate professor dissertations. These can cost between a couple of hundred to a couple of thousand euros depending on the extent, quality and speed of delivery. This problem affects mostly the humanities and/or social sciences field and hence public administration students are also among the most frequent customers. This has further devalued PA degree reputation in Slovakia which had already been relatively low. There have been measures taken to try to stop this phenomenon, however to only a limited degree of success. As a result of the current discussion, the Ministry of Education in late 2018 prepared a new legislative measure which will make it possible to strip any individual of his or her academic degree in case of plagiarism and other serious academic misconduct.

Lecturers' training

Some institutions have internal capacities or use external partners to provide their lecturers training in terms of teaching skills, soft skills, psychology training, etc. This training is designed to improve the overall quality of the tuition process. Lecturers can be either offered this training on a voluntary basis or it can be set as a condition to further academic career. Alternatively, it can be a form of a „punishment“ if a lecturer does not meet the teaching criteria and/or receives negative feedback and hence he or she is forced to attend this training and pass the final examination. This tool is purely within the institutional capacity and based on the self-governing principle.

Field Commission – PhD study [Odborová komisia – PhD štúdium]

Field Commissions are usually set up by individual departments which manage particular study programmes and study fields. Members can be both internal university academics and external academics from the relevant field. Members are usually invited to comment on PhD candidates, their dissertations, and members are also invited to take part in PhD defence and the review process.

3.4 ANTICIPATED CHANGES

An extensive reform should be implemented in the evaluation of Slovak educational system from 2020. New legislation was passed in 2018 which specifies these changes (Act no. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance in Higher Education) The Accreditation Commission will be dissolved on 1 January 2020 and will be substituted by the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. It will be an independent public institution which will carry out external quality assurance in higher education. It will be based in Bratislava and will take over the duties of the Accreditation Commission. The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education will consist of members of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. There are also plans to involve foreign academic peers. The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education will settle criteria of study programmes' accreditation.

Suggested standards by the newly established Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education will have to be publicly available for the public to comment on them. After taking the comments into considerations the standards will come into force after the Executive Board of the Agency approves them.

After the establishment of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, a new way of accreditation should be implemented. The institution accredits the study field and after the successful accreditation, it can create own study programmes within the study field. The specific criteria/standards are not yet known.

3.5 SUMMARY

<p>3.1 What is the general governance structure with regard to external quality assurance of higher education institutions? Is it the same or is it different for PA programmes?</p>	<p>Quality assurances regarding the offered study programmes are the same in public administration study programmes as they are for other types / fields of study, and they are linked to the accreditation system.</p>
<p>3.2 Which are the main providers of programme accreditation? Is there a national body (regulator etc), e.g. as an agency under control of the Ministry of Education, responsible for the regulation of accreditation? What is the status of relevant institutions (government authorities, semi-autonomous or independent organizations)?</p>	<p>Currently there is the Accreditation Commission which has a semi-autonomous status. The new Accreditation Agency (from 1 January 2020) should have more independence guarantees but its degree of autonomy/independence is questionable as of now.</p>
<p>3.3 What are the rules and requirements for accreditation (e.g. are all programmes subject of accreditation or only new programmes? Are only state or public universities to be evaluated? etc)?</p>	<p>All study programmes and all universities (state, public, private) are subject to complex accreditation on a regular basis every 6 years. A new programme has to pass accreditation if university chooses to accredit it and launch before its complex accreditation.</p>
<p>3.4 Who is allowed to do programme accreditation? Only an official government agency, (like e.g. in Austria) or other (ENQA- or EQAR-) recognized institutions?</p>	<p>Only the Accreditation Commission (from 1 January 2020 Accreditation Agency) is allowed to do programme accreditation at the national level which is recognised by the Ministry of Education. The Commission is officially an advisory body to the Ministry of Education which makes the official decisions and grants universities the right to offer academic degrees and issue diplomas in respective study programmes and study fields.</p>
<p>3.5 Who are the evaluators (bureaucrats and/or academic peers, are foreign academic peers involved)?</p>	<p>Evaluators are members of the Accreditation Commission. The Commission is made of working groups assorted according to research areas. PA field and PA degrees belong to at least 2 of these research areas. Members are academic peers and they should act independently and impartially.</p>
<p>3.6 Which methods of accreditation are primarily applied in the respective country?</p>	<p>Comprehensive accreditation of the activities of a university is a process in which the Accreditation Commission thoroughly assesses and evaluates the educational, research, development, artistic and other creative activity of a college following its long-term intention as</p>

	well as personnel, technical, information and other conditions in which this activity is carried out and comments on the applications of the college for the accreditation of all study programs and the accreditation of all habilitation procedures and the appointment of professors in which the college wants to have the corresponding rights.
3.7 Who takes the decision to accredit a programme? (is it the institution doing the evaluation or a superior government body?)	The decision is taken by the Accreditation Commission and then is confirmed and implemented by the Ministry of Education. The Commission acts officially as an independent advisory body to the Ministry of Education.

4. EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

4.1 DATA, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The study programmes offer in the Slovak Republic is provided by the state (public and state universities), private and foreign universities and colleges. The executive study programmes in PA are delivered by the private institutes independent from the Slovak university education framework.

The structure of study fields in the Slovak Republic is defined by the Decision of The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic n. 2090/2002 of 16th December 2002 as amended other Decisions of the Ministry of Education. It includes 371 study fields. The Slovak private and public university must accredit the study programmes within this structure. By their deep analysis we identified as relevant study fields three of them:

- two study fields in the research area Economics and Management: Public Administration and Regional Development; Public Economics and Services,
- one study field in the research area Social and Behavioural Sciences: Public Policy and Public Administration.

The study field Public Administration and Regional Development includes 33 programmes, Public economics and services consists of 9 programmes. The study field Public Policy and Public Administration contains 26 study programmes. To sum up the public and private Slovak universities offer 68 public and private Slovak universities (bachelor's, master's, doctoral).

Moreover, the foreign college in Slovakia provides two study programmes and 2 private institutes deliver 2 study programmes of MBA and one study programme of MPA.

The total amount of study programmes delivered by public, private universities, foreign colleges or private institutes in public administration in Slovakia is 73.

However, each study programme at Slovak private and public universities must be accredited separately, so it means also the study programme in various language variants (identical in content) has to be accredited separately. In the research, we eliminate this repetition. We counted only one study programme although it is in a few language variants (Table 2). By this measure, we reduce the number of relevant study programmes to 59 from public and private Slovak universities. The structure of this study programmes including the programmes of foreign college and private institutes present table 1.

As a next step of study programmes selection, we applied the criterion – form of study. It is usual that the study programme delivered in the full-time form is accredited separately also in distance form. The programmes are identical usually by the content, but from 2015 the length of study differs. The duration of bachelor study programme in full-time form is 3 years and in distance form 4 years. The duration of master study programme in full-time form is 2 years and in distance form 3 years. The duration of PhD study programme in full-time form is 3 years and in distance form 4 years. The duration of executive study programmes is 1 year or 1.5 year. In the analysis we include the study programmes that are accredited in full-time form as well as in distance form only once. By the elimination of distinguishing full-time and distance form of programmes, the core of study programmes consists of 43 study programmes (Table 3).

4.2 EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

The structure of study programmes in PA in the Slovak Republic including the programmes of foreign college and private institutes with differentiation of full-time and distance form of study and with elimination duplicities of language variations present table 1.

Table 1 - Structure of study programmes in Public Administration in Slovakia

Institution	Bachelor SP		Master SP		PhD SP		MBA/MPA	Total
	full-time	distance	full-time	distance	full-time	distance		
Public HEIs								
Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra	2	2	2	2	1	1		10
Matej Bel University	3	1	2		1	1		8
University of Economics	1		1		1	1		4
Technical University in Košice	1	1	1	1	1	1		6
Alexander Dubček University	1	1						2
Comenius University			1		1	1		3
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University	2	1	3	1	1			8
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava	3	3	2	1	1	1		11
Subtotal:	13	9	12	5	7	6		52
Private HEIs								
School of Economics of Public Administration Management in Bratislava	2		1					3
Danubius College	1	1	1	1				4
Subtotal:	3	1	2	1				7
Foreign universities/colleges								
College of International and Public		1		1				2

relations Prague								
Private institutes								
Business institut EDU a.s., Bratislava								1
University Institute of Economic and Law Sciences								2
Subtotal:								3
Subtotal	16	11	14	7	7	6		
Total	27		21		13		3	64

Source: Authors.

In Slovakia, we identified 27 bachelor study programmes (16 full-time and 11 distance); 21 master study programmes (14 full-time and 7 distance); 11 doctoral study programmes (7 full-time and 6 distance), 3 executive study programmes. The programmes are delivered by 13 institutions – 8 public universities, 2 private universities, 1 foreign college and 2 private institutes. The highest number of PA study programmes are provided by University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava.

The study programmes in PA by language variants present table 2.

Table 2 - Structure of study programmes in Public Administration by language

Language of study programmes	Number of programmes
Slovak	35
Slovak and English	17
Slovak /English	9
Slovak, Czech and English	1
Slovak, Czech, Polish and English	2
Total	64

Source: Authors. The highest number of programmes (35) are taught only in Slovak. 17 programmes are taught in combination of Slovak and English. 9 study programmes are provided in English and their equivalent programmes in Slovak, so in total it is 18 programmes (the curricula of the study programmes are the same, only the language in which the study programmes are delivered is in two variants – English or Slovak). The largest offer of study programmes in foreign languages are delivered at Technical University of Košice (bachelor, master and doctoral study programmes in full-time and distance form in English).

Table 3 presents the structure of PA study programmes after elimination of duplicities in form of study and language variations of study programmes.

Table 3 – Existing PA study programmes after elimination of duplicities

Public HEIs						
Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra	2	2	1			5
Matej Bel University	3	2	1			6
University of Economics	1	1	1			3
Technical University in Košice	1	1	1			3
Alexander Dubček University	1					1
Comenius University		1	1			2
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University	2	3	1			6

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava	3	2	1			6
Subtotal	13	12	7			32
Private HEIs						
School of Economics of Public Administration Management in Bratislava	2	1				3
Danubius College	1	1				2
Subtotal	3	2				5
Foreign universities / colleges						
College of International and Public relations Prague	1	1				2
Private institutes						
Business institute EDU a.s., Bratislava				1		1
University Institute of Economic and Law Sciences				1	1	2
Subtotal				2	1	3
TOTAL	17	15	7	2	1	42

Source: Authors.

After elimination of duplicities in form of study and language variations of study programmes there are identified 42 relevant study programmes in PA. It includes 17 bachelor, 15 master, 7 doctoral programmes, 2 MBA programmes and 1 MPA programme. The highest number of PA study programme's variants is delivered by University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (6), Pavol Jozef Šafárik University (6) and Matej Bel University (6).

The executive study programmes are a part of additional education, classified separately from the university or college education. In the Slovakia, the boom of these study programmes has been dated from the beginning of 21st century. The study programmes are provided usually by the foreign private companies (institutes) and are fully paid. In the research, we identified only 2 private institutes (Business institute EDU a. s., Bratislava and University Institute of Economic and Law Sciences in Žilina) that provide the study programmes in Master of Business Administration in Public Administration (MBA) or Master of Public Administration (MPA). They provide the full-time form and online-form of study. The average length of study is from 12 to 16 months and the price for the programme from 3.000,- €.

The structure of selected study programmes in PA by the level of education and study field illustrates table 4.

Table 4 Structure of selected study programmes in PA by the level of education and study field

Study field	Bachelor SPs	Master SPs	PhD SPs	Executive programmes		Total
				MBA	MPA	
Public administration and regional development	7	6	3	0	0	16
Public policy and public administration	6	7	3	0	0	16
Public economics and services	3	1	1	0	0	5
Foreign university	1	1	0	0	0	2
Private institutes	0	0	0	2	1	3

Total	17	15	7	2	1	42
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Source: Authors.

The highest number of study programmes are delivered in study field Public administration and regional development (7) in first level and in Public policy and public administration (7) in second level. In third level, there is the same number of programmes in study field Public policy and public administration (3) and Public administration and regional development (3). The lowest number of PA study programme's variants is in the study field Public economics and services (5).

4.3 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

The availability of information on PA study programmes presents table 5.

Table 5 Availability of information about PS study programme

Kind of information	YES	%	NO	%	Total
Information about graduate profile and learning outcomes of the programme	41 (29 only in Slovak; 12 in Slovak and English)	97,62%	1	2,38%	42
Information about curriculum structure (list of courses)	31 (29 in Slovak; 2 in Czech)	73,81%	11	26,19%	42
ECTS of individual courses	28	66,67%	14	33,33%	42
Structure of individual courses	13	30,95%	29	69,05%	42
Literature used in individual courses	13	30,95%	29	69,05%	42
Requirements on passing individual courses	15	35,71%	27	64,29%	42
Staff involved in teaching of individual courses	27	64,29%	15	35,71%	42

Source: Authors.

On the webpages of study programmes are available mainly information about the graduate profile and learning outcomes of the programmes, staff involved in teaching of individual course and ECTS of individual course. For cca 70 % of study programmes there are no available information about structure of individual courses, literature used in individual courses, requirements on passing individual courses.

Based on research, we identified the problem to find the asked information. They are difficult to find. It is necessary to look for them at websites of departments, websites for students or in available study program guides for students.

The second problem is also the quality of provided information (usually incomplete) and only in Slovak. Published information in English were dedicated only to the graduate profile or learning outcomes of the programme.

4.4 SUMMARY

<p>4.1 How many relevant PA study programmes have you identified and what is their structure?</p>	<p>The total amount of study programmes delivered by public, private universities, foreign colleges or private institutes in public administration in Slovakia is 73. By deduction of various language variant of PA study programmes, we identified 59 programmes delivered by public and private Slovak universities. Two study programmes are provided by the foreign college in Slovakia and 2 private institutes deliver</p>
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	2 study programmes of MBA and one study programme of MPA. After elimination of duplicities in form of study there are identified 42 relevant study programmes in PA. It includes 17 bachelor, 15 master, 7 doctoral programmes, 2 MBA programmes and 1 MPA programme.
4.2 What information are available on the study programmes on their web pages?	There are available mainly information about the graduate profile and learning outcomes of the programmes, staff involved in teaching of individual course and ECTS of individual course. The most information are difficult available. The problem is also the quality of provided information.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS, POINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS, CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE

5.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

PA education is a part of standardised educational system of the Slovak Republic, compatible with the systems of the member states of the European Union. The educational system is open, relatively flexible; responsive to requirements of practice situated in competitive environment. PA is a very popular degree and is offered by many universities in Slovakia at all three levels of study.

Slovakia offers a relatively high number of PA study programmes in both private and public universities and other academic institutions. This is largely due to the high number of universities operating in the country and the low initial cost and running cost of PA education. Also, PA as a field of study is popular among students and there are no government limits or special requirements regarding the entrance exams, organisation of the programmes and there is no special entrance exam for civil servants or public administration staff.

Quality assurances regarding the offered study programmes are the same in public administration study programmes as they are for other types / fields of study, and they are linked to the accreditation system. Currently there is the Accreditation Commission which has a semi-autonomous status. The new Accreditation Agency (from 1 January 2020) should have more independence guarantees but its degree of autonomy/independence is questionable as of now. Comprehensive accreditation of the activities of a university is a process in which the Accreditation Commission thoroughly assesses and evaluates the educational, research, development, artistic and other creative activity of a college following its long-term intention as well as personnel, technical, information and other conditions in which this activity is carried out and comments on the applications of the college for the accreditation of all study programs and the accreditation of all habilitation procedures and the appointment of professors in which the college wants to have the corresponding rights.

5.2 POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The whole system of external quality assurance is going to be much transformed during next 3 years. The new accreditation system of study programmes is going to be established, so we can assume that it creates also the space for enhancement of the quality of higher education in public administration and related programs. The inspiration how to do it can be identified in the standards of European Association for Public Administration Accreditation or standards of higher education in other countries where is the education in PA at high level (Belgium, Holland, Great Britain etc.).

The education in PA at universities and other institutions is mainly oriented at Slovak students. Only a few study programmes are delivered in English, more of them are delivered in combination of Slovak and English languages. There is a space to enhance the international dimension of the study programmes in PA in the Slovak Republic. One possible form is to create and offer a joint-degree programme. As an example, there is a master joint-degree programme at UPJS, in Košice, or at EF UMB, in Banská Bystrica. The great benefits for students is to graduate with two degrees (Slovak and foreign university). Other possibility is to accredit or certificate the study programmes by EAPAA, but the precondition is to be able deliver the study programme fully in English. It brings to the study programmes an international acknowledgment and to the students the internationally acknowledged degree.

5.3 CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE

One of the greatest challenges is the reputation of the field and of some of the study programmes. Some universities offer PA study programmes with questionable quality and as a result, the entire PA field reputation is affected. Some students and general population regard the field as easy compared to physical sciences and even other fields and programmes within humanities and social sciences. Hence, one of the current challenges and for the coming future is how to attract the best students to study PA. Also, universities which offer better quality research and tuition need to distinguish themselves from the other institutions which focus mainly on mass tuition. The current accreditation system and external quality assurance has not been able to deal with the issue effectively. Only time will show whether the ongoing transformation of the Accreditation Commission into the Accreditation Agency will bring any significant improvements.

From 2020 there will begin the real implementation of the reform in the evaluation of Slovak education system. However, there are still not know the exact criteria of accreditation so it is very difficult to say if they support the ideas of external international accreditation or not. Nowadays, a proposed system of study fields does not differentiate the study fields Public Administration and Public Policy; Public Administration and Regional Development; and Public Economics and Services. They were created only two study fields Economics and management (it will include previous study fields Public Administration and Regional Development; and Public Economics and Services) and Public Policies (previous study field Public Administration and Public Policy), which will be more extensive. The system of new study fields is in a stage of evaluation of inter-ministerial commenting. The standards and processes of the accreditation of study programmes following the reform rules should be known during second half of 2019.

Due to a large degree of university and faculty autonomy in Slovakia, some departments have been able to uphold their quality through various means of internal quality assurance. This could be one of the ways forward. Quality departments and universities could work more closely together and promote PA as an attractive field that offers versatility, multiple job prospects and career paths. Experience from other countries show that one of the ways forward could also be more cooperation with government institutions.

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