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ASSESSMENT OF METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS OF PA TEACHING AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR PRACTICE –

**FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND
ADMINISTRATION, MASARYK UNIVERSITY, BRNO**
programme: Public Economy and Administration

The analysis of practical relevance of programme competencies
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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the project in this IO1 phase is stated as: "to provide data for analyses how the PA curricula is linked to practice, and analyses of the gap between competencies needed in practical work in public administration and those obtained in the educational programmes." I.e., we should assess the relevance of the competences of our programmes for practice – and our programmes differentiate substantially, if you scrutinize them, which means that we have also different competences listed.

Thus, programme competences are starting points. Not to mention, that needs for practice might differentiate. Furthermore, this output of IO1 serves also as **an input for IO5** (Methodological framework for development of competencies relevant for practice), finally as international evaluations of PA programmes and feasibility studies for suggested improvements.

Moreover, according to the arrangements, we should scrutinize and review only our own programmes, and, furthermore, **PA related programmes** exclusively (not as parts of mainly legally or policy or economics oriented but autonomous programmes; i.e., a rough benchmark should be EAPAA accreditation eligibility criteria – these criteria should be taken under consideration in advance). Scrutinized should be, if possible, **MA level programmes** only, due to the application's theoretical grounds (*Staronova & Gajduschek, Brans & Coenen, etc.*), a more developed PA specifics competences on this level and more convergent state of the art to gain comparable results; and only **programme-specific competencies**, that is PA (in general, as stated in accredited programmes) are in the core study of this project.

This report is focused on the continuous full-time MA level programme Public Economy and Administration of the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. It was elaborated in the period from January to March 2019 and edited for publishing on the conference website in September 2019.

The structure of the report is as follows:

- First point summarizes programme development and mission as well as the structure of the programme and data on enrolment and attrition. Also, competencies are enumerated.
- The second part outlines competence screening history at the department, faculty as well as at the university level and main findings.
- The third part introduces methodology of the survey of which the results are presented in the final part.
- The report is concluded by the fifth point dedicated to concluding remarks and challenges.

1.1 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

1.1.1 Programme development and mission - summary

Originally, the programme was established as a five-year Master's degree study in 1991. In the beginning the mission of the programme was to produce universal public economists who might find their place in the newly formed public sector, i.e. with the knowledge of its laws and functioning, awareness of its specifics, being sensitive to the social aspects and capable of providing a range of practical activities such as accounting, budgeting etc.

Due to changes in legislation, the continuous Master degree was implemented in late 1990s – in accordance with the adoption of the **Bolognese process**, the portfolio of the programme was amended with a three years Bachelor and two years continuous Master programme in **2001**.

The content of the study field has been innovated on a continuous basis. Important changes were made as a consequence of the division of the former continuous five-year study into a 3+2 model and the implementation of a combined form of study. The curriculum has undergone various continuous innovation since that time with respect to the needs of the practice, especially in connection with the integration of the Czech Republic into the EU structures and increasing the importance of programme financing. The dominating theoretical character of the studies has been systematically amended by elements that allow for the obtaining of practical experience (adding a practice class, changes in the content of subjects, accenting the active forms of teaching).

During **2008-2009** the faculty adopted the policy of increasing the average amount of credits for a passed course so that the final version more accurately reflects the principles of the ECTS. It was necessary to reduce the number of individual courses. This lead to modifications of the content and merging of some courses as well as to adoption of the philosophy of optional blocks aimed at creating the following three specialisations within the programme: Public Economy or NNO, Public Finance, and Public Administration.

In **November 2010**, the programme management applied for its accreditation by the EAPAA (accreditation of both forms of study – full-time and combined – was intended). The programme was given a conditional accreditation first and finally was granted unconditional accreditation until 2019 in 2014.

Based on the feedback received during the EAPAA accreditation process, the content of curricula changed – structure of some courses changed and new courses were introduced and modified later on. Also, only two specialisations were introduced and offered for some time. The programme management also implemented several measures to motivate the staff to execute more internationally focused publication activities and research.

The programme was also impacted by demographic changes in population of the country. This caused decrease in number of students enrolled to the programme in its full-time as well as part-time form. Measures were suggested on the level of the Ministry of Education and were considered also in measures approved on the University level. For the academic year 2015-2016 the programme management decided to cancel the specializations and adjust the structure of courses accordingly (making some courses compulsory for all students).

Following the **changes in legislation on HEIs and their accreditation**, that are described in more detail in another report prepared within the PAQUALITY project (Špaček, D., Nemec, J.

the report on PA education in the Czech Republic, February 2019), the programme was accredited by the Masaryk University internal accreditation body in 2018 and obtained the accreditation in August 2018.

The main purpose of the current programme Public Economics and Administration is to prepare graduates for academic level roles in the public sector - students of this programme are trained predominantly for managerial and policy making positions in the public sector. They also receive skills to work in similar positions in the non-governmental non-profit sector.

The graduates find employment especially in areas of employment and social security, health services, social services, educational services, cultural services, housing and sports. They also work as professionally trained managers in the area of technical infrastructure, as well as in the area of public administration, including the military, the police, the justice system, the prison service, tax and toll administration and self-governments.

The core courses provide multidisciplinary basis for future public administration employees – students receive background in public economics, public administration, public policy, social policy, public management, non-profit sector and public finance. Via the faculty level compulsory study courses the students acquire knowledge of economic theories and the classical market economy (e.g. finance and business), making them more flexible in the labour market.

Due to faculty compulsory components of the curriculum the students acquire knowledge of economic theories and the classical market economy (e.g. finance and business). Therefore, their employment in the business sphere is not excluded.

1.1.2 Structure of the programme

The programme is a part of the education offered by the Masaryk University which uses the ECTS. There is a semester system applied. A semester consists of 13 weeks of instruction and six weeks of examination period. There are two semesters per academic year as well as per calendar year.

The programme has always contained a combination of the following types of courses:

- courses focused on **the public sector and the non-government non-profit sector and their finance**
- courses focused on **public policy**, its creation, implementation and evaluation – a general public policy course was supplemented by courses on fields of the public sector like healthcare, social services, culture, education, sport, housing (students are required to pass one field policy course as compulsory and select at least one as an elective);
- courses focused on the **legal framework of public administration** and on administrative reform in Czechia and abroad, including the area of e-government, civil service, public tendering and PPP;
- courses focused on **theory and practice of public management** (a special course titled as „public management was implemented since Autumn semester 2010.
- courses focused on the improvement of practical skills of the students, including their leadership competences and internship (initially as a option, but later on as a compulsory component of studies).
- courses dealing with **accounting and control in the public sector**,

- **courses on economic theory** (macro- and micro-economics also due to the policy of the Faculty on compulsory courses)

The current structure of the programme consists of the following elements:

1. faculty compulsory courses
2. programme compulsory courses, and
3. two blocks of electives (always as a minimum one elective course from the block must be selected).

The individual components are specified in the below Table 1. There are no specialisations in the programme. To obtain 120 credits, the students add to their study plan freely elective courses from the university list.

Theoretical knowledge of students is deepened in theoretically oriented courses that are focused on the theoretical framework of the public sector and non-state non-profit sector (including its legislative foundations in the Czech Republic), creating, implementing and control of the public policy status (generally and in different parts of the public sector) and also the specifics of public finance and its management. The objective of these courses, above all, is to widen knowledge and understanding and to ensure that the graduates are capable to apply these, not merely to mechanically repeat. The involvement of external expert from public sector organizations helps to fulfil this goal.

The achievement of these goals is also supported by seminars in support of the lectures, which are a standard part of the vast majority of the courses of the full time form of study, as well as the requirements to prepare and present a seminar paper in the course of the seminars, which are used for the combined form of study as well. The seminar papers are written depending on the number of students enrolled for the particular course, either by individuals or by teams of students. Their presentation is supposed to increase the communication and presentation skills of the graduates, their ability to make judgements and – where the paper is written by a group of students – also their teamwork skills. The preparation and presentation of seminar works is also supposed to prepare students to write and defend a quality and problem-oriented final thesis (its successful defence is one of the requirements to gain a degree and to pass the follow-up masters study).

Table 1: Structure of the programme Public Economics and Administration

Course	ECTS
FACULTY COMPULSORY COURSES	
Microeconomics	4
Macroeconomics	4
Foreign language A	2
Foreign language B	3
Diploma Thesis Seminar 1	3
Diploma Thesis Seminar 2	12
Diploma Thesis Seminar 3	12
PROGRAMME COMPULSORY COURSES	
Research Methods in the Public Sector	6
Public Finance 2	8
Public Choice	6
Public Policy Analysis	8
Public Administration II	4
Public Projects and Public Procurement	6

Management Accounting and Taxes in the Non-profit Sector	5
Public Management	8
Communication and Managerial Skills	4
Internship	6
Elective courses	
Block A	
Cultural Policy	5
Housing Policy	5
Sport Policy	5
Education Policy	5
Environment, Sustainability and Public Utilities	5
Labour Markets and Employment Policy	5
Block B	
Marketing, fundraising and Communication in Non-profit Sector	6
Auditing and Controlling in Public Sector	5
Organisational Behaviour	4

In case of some courses, the skills of the students to apply their knowledge are tested (similar to the final exam of the study) using problem questions as well. The final exam is sometimes enriched by using the form of colloquium in which a managerial problem is solved by a group of students during the final exam (usually a random group of students, not one organised by the students beforehand). Communication skills are the focus of a separate course.

An integral part of the evaluated programme is the accent on the creating and developing of the specific practical knowledge and skills of the students. The whole study programme is thus transcended by elements that allow students to engage with practice. Internships is compulsory and the programm also includes other forms for the training of practical skills.

The final thesis is usually prepared over a period of 1.5 years, in most cases under the supervision of one member of the academic staff of the Department. The final thesis is reviewed by a qualified reviewer, who submits his/her written review (preferably practitioner from the investigated area or scholar from other universities). The standard size of thesis is app. 60 pages (single spaced, font 12) and the thesis shall include theoretical, analytical and synthetic parts. Diploma thesis checks especially:

- the skills of formulating the research objectives, original hypotheses or research questions,
- the capacity to choose appropriate methods,
- the capacity to collect necessary information sources,
- the skills to analyse the gained information,
- the skills to formulate conclusions and proposals.

Student enrolment

The basic precondition for application for the programme is the bachelor degree. Student with any type of bachelor degree can apply for the programme, however, the entry requirements are applied differently in order to assure that a student poses necessary knowledge and skills to finish the studies.

Only students, that graduated from the bachelor level programme Public Economy and Administration and their average grade did not exceed 2.65 are accepted automatically. In other cases, a written entrance exam is required to assure that applicants have the necessary

level to study the programme. Students can receive 60 points and it is stipulated that 20 points can be reached from a set of questions from economy and the remaining 40 points are allocated for questions related to the programme.

In comparison to other programmes of the Faculty, the programme under review attracts more students that finished their bachelor studies at different universities.

Figures on students' attrition are evaluated on regular basis.

1.2 LIST OF GENERAL COMPETENCIES

The following general competencies of the graduates are expected among the learning outcomes in the overall description of the programme Public Economy and Administration as accredited in the present (and as accessible on the Internet):

- Capability of independent identification and solution of problems
- Ability to communicate and present clearly
- Capability of working in teams
- Capability of critical thinking and discussion
- Ability to find and analyse relevant sources of academic literature
- Capability of independent research work
- Capability to analyse statistical and other data using appropriate methods
- Skills to prepare high-quality academic texts
- Capability of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation

Based on the information on individual courses, the following general competencies may be added:

- Capability to prepare and carry out efficient presentation
- Capability to conduct an evaluation interview
- Capability of negotiation
- Capability to communicate in assertive way

1.3 LIST OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

The following programme-specific competencies of the graduates are enumerated among the learning outcomes in the overall description of the programme Public Economy and Administration as accredited in the present:

- Ability to make use of the theoretical knowledge of public economy, public administration, or public finance and related law to explain, analyse and solve problems in the public domain
- Ability to understand and critically evaluate developments, reforms, tools and impacts in selected areas of public policy (including European policies) and to formulate and discuss recommendations
- Capability to independently suggest and apply a method for data collection in the public sector

- Capability to understand project management and to prepare and evaluate a public project
- Ability to understand, explain and apply basic economic theories for solution of problems and formulation of recommendations

For the competence screening research within the PAQUALITY project the list was enlarged based on learning outcomes enumerated in description of individual courses (individual competences were defined also with regards to literature and other data on competences – especially Stare and Klun, 2018; Haupt, Kapuca and Hu, 2017; and Reichard and van der Krogt, 2014; IQM-HE, 2016; and list of competences of the Master Master's Degree Programme Administration - Public Sector Governance, 2nd Cycle, of the University of Ljubljana). The following list of competences was prepared:

Table 2: Programme-specific competences (enlarged list)

COMPATENCES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, ITS DECISION-MAKING AND MANAGEMENT
1. Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management
2. Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia
3. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and of administrative procedure
4. Understanding of political framework of PA in Czechia and of public choice processes
5. Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia
6. Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control
7. Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization
8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering
COMPETENCES FOR POLITICAL PROCESSES AND PUBLIC POLICY
9. Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy
10. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia
11. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia in the EU
12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA
13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods
COMPETENCES FOR ANALYSING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING
14. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms
15. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector
16. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.
17. Capability to organize and carry out (especially applied) research focused on the public sector with use of qualitative and quantitative methods
18. Capability to present and defend own conclusions in front of audience of experts from PA / the public sector
19. Capability to evaluate administrative reforms
20. Capability to select and use appropriate method for evaluation of public projects
21. Capability to evaluate sustainability of public finances
22. Capability to use economic theory for understanding and evaluation of economic policy
23. Capability to use economic theory for understanding of behaviour on perfect and imperfect markets
24. Capability to predict effects of economic policy in various macroeconomic conditions
COMPETENCES SUPPORTING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PROCESSES
25. Understanding of principles and processes of project management
26. Capability to evaluate and suggest appropriate methods for management of public expenditures
27. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA
28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA
29. Understanding of principles of quality management in PA and public services
30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA

31. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA
32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA
33. Capability to independently plan and carry out simple public project
34. Capability to conduct evaluation interview

Source: Author.

2. COMPETENCE SCREENING HISTORY

2.1 HISTORY OF PREVIOUS COMPETENCE SCREENING ENDEAVOURS

Screening of competences has usually been a part of broader surveys that have been carried out within the quality assurance system on the Faculty or the University level. For a long time, the quality assurance system of the Faculty of Economics and Administration has consisted of the following components:

- **External accreditation:** Prior legal changes from Autumn 2016, study programmes were subjected to **national accreditation** by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

As outlined above the programme was also undergoing the **EAPAA accreditation process** in the period of 2011 – 2014. The programme has undergone a reaccreditation in 2019 (final results have not been announced yet by the EAPAA).

Based on changes of the national accreditation mechanisms, the Masaryk University obtained the called institutional accreditation and study programmes of the Faculty are subjected to **accreditation and continuous evaluation by the Council for Internal Evaluation** (RVH) of the university. This internal accreditation process was carried out since autumn 2017 till Spring 2018 for the first time and the programme was awarded the accreditation in August 2018. These internal evaluation processes also include **evaluation of external expert** which has a peer-review form (more information can be found in the second report – Špaček and Nemec, 2019).

- **Student surveys:** Student surveys are carried out on biannual basis – students can provide a feedback on courses at the end of a semester through survey that is integrated in the University information system (is.muni.cz). The survey combines close and open-ended questions on value of education for students, perceived clarity of lecturing and quality of preparation of face-to-face education. Although the average response rate across all the programmes of the Faculty may be around 35 %, the response rate across individual courses may vary a lot and can be below 8 %, i. e. in case of small number of students in the Master level programme this may mean that only 1, 2 or 3 students out of the total 15-18 participate in the survey (and of them may be of the opinion that a course is beneficial and interesting and an opinion of the other may be completely different).
- **Alumni surveys:**¹ Alumni surveys has been carried out since 1996 (for graduates since 1993). Again, the scope of the survey is broader and there are individual surveys focusing on
 - employment of graduates (the last report from 2018 deals with graduates of the academic year 2015 – 2016);

¹ Individual reports are available here in Czech: <https://strategie.rect.muni.cz/cs/studentske-pruzkumy>.

- perceptions of fresh graduates of Master programmes of the Masaryk University (last available report is from 2019); only in case of this survey there is a set of questions dedicated to competences that are not included in the survey of graduates);
 - motivation and expectations of fresh Bachelor programme students (first years of their studies; last report published in August 2016 and contains data obtained in 2015)
 - motivation and expectations of Master programme students who studied the Bachelor level at the different HEI (last report is from August 2018)
 - employment of graduates of doctoral programmes (last report from March 2017)
 - candidates and entrance examinations (the last report is from August 2018).
 - Since October 2007, longitudinal survey called “On the studying way” has been carried out every two years.
- **Meetings and panel discussions with employers:** This is not a formalised component of quality assurance system neither on the Faculty level, nor on the University level and as such it is not done on continuous and systematic basis. Employees of the Department for strategies of the University were consulted and they were not aware of any panel survey among employers. They referred to activities of the University Career Centre (<https://www.kariera.muni.cz>). According to its employees, the Centre organize events for individual faculties of the university that serve as a platform for panel discussion for employers. So far, such events were organized for meetings with employers from the private sector companies and the first event that will be organized for employers from public administration will be held in the beginning of April 2019. We anticipate that we will participate in the event.
- Except for activities of the Career Centre, similar panel discussions have been a component of some individual projects, that, for instance, focused on internships, improvements of links between the university and employers etc. Public authorities can also provide the Faculty with topics of final Master thesis and such cooperation has started mainly with the City Office of Brno City.
- **Internal evaluations of courses** that are focused on reducing the level of duplicity and should result in the logical succession of courses. This is not so formalized part of the quality assurance system, but such evaluations have been done usually before the expiration of accreditation of the programme or as a consequence of important changes in strategy of the Faculty (e.g. the reduction of courses and face-to-face education due to decreasing enrolment of students).
- **Other internal evaluation activities.** For instance, on the university level a survey focusing on **early finishing of studies** has been carried since 2015 which has addressed to the guarantors of Bachelor and Master degree programmes from the university. The aim was to map perceptions on early finishing of studying and, also, to find good practices at faculties related to solution of student attrition. The last available report is from August 2018.

In the case of internships, within every semester there is one seminar planned where all students present their internship experiences, contribution to the final thesis, etc. (the so-called final traineeship report).

Important quality improvement inputs are provided by double-degree cooperation with foreign universities – the Faculty is involved in a double-degree project in public economics and public finance. A formal agreement was entered with the University of Rennes1 (France), University

of Tampere (Finland) and L'Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro" (Italy).

2.2 MAIN FINDINGS AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

So far, particularly the feedback obtained from the EAPAA was a very important source of findings used for revisions of the programme. Based on the feedback received during the **EAPAA accreditation process**, the content of curricula changed and the programme management also implemented several measures to motivate the staff to execute more internationally focused publication activities and research. As a consequence of decreasing number of students enrolled, the specializations were cancelled and the structure of courses in curriculum was adjusted accordingly.

The **accreditation of the programme by the university** bodies is a rather recent topic. As already mentioned, the programme was awarded the university accreditation in August 2018 based on evaluation process that started mainly in Autumn 2017. Review of the programme by an expert outside the university is a compulsory part of this accreditation process. Some recommendations were emphasized concerning some specific programme competences. Based on the evaluation obtained during the accreditation process and, also, based on data produced by most of the evaluations outlined in this report, a proposal of programme development was approved for the programme.

In case of a higher response rate, results of the student surveys are discussed within a standard evaluation interview between the head of the department and individual department members. This serves as a basis mainly for: the consideration of study programme innovations and feedback for the students (by lecturers responds). The survey result served also for changes made in requirements on preparation of final thesis.

The survey on fresh graduates is the only one that also comprises competences screening. Only limited number of graduates of the programme Public Economy and Administration participated. For instance, in the case of the last survey among graduates published in 2019, 10 graduates filled-in the questionnaire which makes formulation of conclusions impossible.

Based on the findings on student attrition surveys, specific positions were established on the University, Faculty level and also within individual departments.

2.3 BRIEF SUMMARY

In case of the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the Masaryk University, competence screening is usually a part of broader surveys. It has not been done on the programme level and is not systematically incorporated in evaluations made on the faculty level. However, this does not mean that it does not exist. Relevant data may be found in external evaluations (particularly in findings produced in during the EAPAA accreditation, feedback received during internal university accreditation – from peers as well as from the university Council for Internal Evaluation) and in data obtained through surveys focused on graduates. Competence screening has been more incorporated only to surveys focusing on fresh graduates and related set of questions could be more incorporated in other alumni surveys.

Feedback received from the EAPAA was used intensively to revise programme components. Other changes were initiated by changes of the strategy on the Faculty or the University level.

This was driven by decreasing number of students in some programmes as well as by discussions on imbalance in high failure in studying and leaving of studies across faculties.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the competence screening, the framework recommended for data collection prepared within the PAQUALITY project was used in the following way:

- First, the list of programme-specific competences was prepared as outlined in the above sub-section 1.3.
- Second, the list of programme-specific competences was used during adaptation of the suggested screening framework to Czech language. During this adaptation an instruction for employers and programme graduates was prepared consisting of the following components:
 - short introduction of the research and its aims;
 - instructions for commenting / filling-in the table with programme-specific competences, including the explanation of scales used - for this Annex 2: Competence Levels if the IQM-HE (IQM-HE, 2016, pp. 110-111) framework was translated and adapted;
 - in case of the template for employers, additional column was inserted into the table suggested in the template – “What level of competence of graduates of the programme would you expect? (please use the 0-6 scale)”
 - a table with the competences that followed the template prepared within the PAQUALITY project;
 - special page for recommendations for quality improvements of the programme; ○ special page with few sorting questions
 - in case of the template for graduates the following questions were used: When did you graduate? At what type of public authority do you work? On what position are you currently employed? If you have worked also at other public authorities, where? How long have you been working in PA? What new competences you have acquired thanks to your professional experiences in PA and on what level (following the project template, again theoretical competences and practical skills were differentiated)?
 - the following questions were used:
- Following the guidelines prepared within the PAQUALITY project, the method worked with the following **scale for expressing competence levels**: 0 – None, 1 – Threshold, 2 – Foundation, 3 – Interconnection, 4 – Contextualisation, 5 – Expansion, 6 – Generation).
- Because there is no official list of graduates of the programme working in PA / the public sector (this is not collected on systematic basis on the programme level), an email was sent to students that were enrolled in selected courses of the programme in the last 10 years already in November 2018. Their replies as well as contacts used in a different project (e.g. the Muni 4.0 project) was used for preparation of a preliminary lists of graduates working in PA/PS and then for selection of potential informants. A phone-call was made with these potential informants mainly on 7th and 8th November informing them about the research, its

aims and a survey planned. Based on their willingness to participate, the template was then distributed. Data collection was done in the period from February 13th to March 17th. **Structure of respondents** is outlined in Table 6.

Table 3: Structure of respondents and method used

Graduates	Total		Their positions	Year of graduation	Length of experiences in PA (years)	E-mail interviewing	Face-to-face interviewing
• working at city/municipal offices	3	G4	economist (responsible for budgeting)	2015	4	x	x
		G5	auditor	2011	7	x	
		G6	controller	2015	3	x	
• working at regional offices	5	G1	quality manager	1998	20	x	
		G3	quality manager	2006	8		x
		G9	main accountant	2018	1	x	
		G10	accountant	2009	10	x	
		G11	accountant	2009	10	x	
• working at central authorities	2	G2	head of department, ministry	2012	6	x	
		G8	project manager, ministry	2013	3		
• working at another public sector organization	1	G7	internal auditor (now at university, formerly at city office)	2011	7	x	
Employers			Their positions			E-mail interviewing	Face-to-face interviewing
• working at city/municipal offices	2	E1	head of project department		13	x	x
		E2	head of ITI department		7	x	
• working at regional offices	5	E3	quality manager		15		x
		E4	head of the budget and financing department		20	x	
		E5	head of a department		28	x	
		E6	head of a department		16	x	
		E7	head of accounting department		12	x	

Source: Author.

In total, 11 graduates participated in the survey (3 from municipal offices, 5 working at regional office, 2 working at central authorities and 1 currently working at the university, with former experiences on a similar position at the city office).

In case of employers, 7 employers participated, 2 from city offices and 5 from regional office. Unfortunately, no employer from a central authority joined the survey. Most of them have more than 12 years of experiences in public administration.

Most of the respondents were interviewed by e-mail – a file with instructions and tables with competences and questions was distributed to them. This was supplemented by follow-up questions oriented mainly on specification of recommendations for improvement.

Anonymity of respondents was promised in order to increase their willingness to participate in the research.

4. QUESTIONNAIRES – RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 RESULTS – COMPETENCES SCREENING BY ALUMNI

As outlined above, 11 graduates of the programme participated in the research, the vast majority of them graduated before 3 or more years, i. e. in 2015 or later. This means that **majority of the graduates were not impacted by the programme as revised based on feedback during the EAPAA accreditation process and changes caused by cancelling the specializations since the academic year 2015-2016** (for instance, courses like Public Administration 2 and internships became compulsory). Also, course **Public Management** started to be lectured since Autumn 2010 (dealing with specifics of PA and their implications for public management, strategic management and its tools, quality management and its tools, HRM and its instruments and management of change).

In average, graduates expressed that higher levels of competences had been promoted by the programme particularly in the category of competences for analysing and problems solving and in case of the competences for understanding the context of public administration, its decision-making and management.

The results indicate that the programme provided graduates more with theoretical knowledge, than with practical skills and this is fully in compliance with findings of alumni surveys presented above.

In case of theoretical knowledge, the level provided was tending especially to the level "interconnection". Higher levels are indicated in case of the following competences: understanding a theory and specifics of PA, understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia, capability of critical thinking about PA, its functioning and reforms, capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector, ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector/PM, capability to organize and carry out (especially applied) research, capability to present and defend own conclusions, capability to evaluate sustainability of public finances, and capability to use economic theory.

When looking at averages of graduates's own competences, competences of graduates from the category of competences for understanding the PA context and competences supporting

public management processes improved in particular. Not competences for analysing and problem solving.

The top-10 competences promoted by the programme according to the graduates are enumerated in Table 4. **Competences that were promoted the least by the programme** according to the graduates are presented in Table 5. In majority of cases, average opinion of the graduates was that they were obtained on the level between "Foundation" and "Interconnection". According to the graduates the least promoted competences were the following (their average level did not exceed 2):

- capability to conduct evaluation interview
- capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA
- capability to independently plan and carry out simple public project
- understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering.

Table 4: Top-10 competences promoted by the programme (graduates' view)

Competences	Knowledge	Competences	Skills
23. Capability to use economic theory for understanding of behaviour on perfect and imperfect markets	3,91	15. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	3,55
5. Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia	3,82	16. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	3,27
1. Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management	3,73	17. Capability to organize and carry out (especially applied) research focused on the public sector with use of qualitative and quantitative methods	3,09
14. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms	3,73	18. Capability to present and defend own conclusions in front of audience of experts from PA / the public sector	3,00
15. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	3,64	5. Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia	2,91
22. Capability to use economic theory for understanding and evaluation of economic policy	3,64	1. Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management	2,73
21. Capability to evaluate sustainability of public finances	3,55	14. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms	2,64
24. Capability to predict effects of economic policy in various macroeconomic conditions	3,55	23. Capability to use economic theory for understanding of behaviour on perfect and imperfect markets	2,64
16. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	3,45	24. Capability to predict effects of economic policy in various macroeconomic conditions	2,45
17. Capability to organize and carry out (especially applied) research focused on the public sector with use of qualitative and quantitative methods	3,45	20. Capability to select and use appropriate method for evaluation of public projects	2,27

Source: Author.

Table 5: The least promoted competences (graduates' view)

Competences	Knowledge	Competences	Skills
34. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	1,73	11. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia in the EU	1,27
32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,00	28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	1,27
33. Capability to independently plan and carry out simple public project	2,00	32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	1,27
8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	2,09	34. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	1,27
11. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia in the EU	2,27	8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	1,36
28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,36	12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA	1,45
25. Understanding of principles and processes of project management	2,45	25. Understanding of principles and processes of project management	1,45
31. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,45	27. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA	1,45
29. Understanding of principles of quality management in PA and public services	2,55	29. Understanding of principles of quality management in PA and public services	1,45
30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,55	30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	1,45
7. Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization	2,64	33. Capability to independently plan and carry out simple public project	1,45
12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA	2,64	31. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	1,55
27. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA	2,64	19. Capability to evaluate administrative reforms	1,64
13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	2,73	13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	1,73
9. Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy	2,82	26. Capability to evaluate and suggest appropriate methods for management of public expenditures	1,73

Source: Author.

Graduates also suggested some recommendations and this is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Recommendations / Comments

Graduate (graduated in)	Recommendations / Comments
G1 (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 20 years passed and the table with competences indicate that the programme has developed a lot. Topics like quality in public administration or e-government were not included in my studies, project management and project evaluation were there only marginally. In general, I would recommend to enable students to obtain practical competences and ensure that lecturers have experiences from practice, I would promote internships in authorities and public sector organizations. In case of my studies, 90 % of the programme was based on theory and rather macroeconomic perspective and I did not use this in my profession.
G2 (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend enhancing the system of internships – only in real practice a student can understand all specifics of PA.
G3 (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In overall terms, competences obtained by the programme form a solid base for working in public authorities. For my profession particularly competences related to the following areas were the most beneficial: PA/public sector/public finance theory, project management, quality and control. I recommend paying attention to e-government, digitalization, quality, project management, process management. I recommend paying attention to soft skills (time management, structuring of information) I recommend working more with practical projects and experts from practice in lectures.
G4 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory internships in public administration Greater emphasize on specification in some fields of public administration (like transport, agriculture, education, culture) – this can help students to be prepared for testing of special competences Participation of students in excursions
G5 (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pay more attention to legislation on PA functioning (act on municipalities, budgetary rules, administrative procedure) and their impacts on processes in PA pay more attention to public procurement, administration of projects co-funded by the EU, data protection, registry office, management of risks to concretize more specifics and duties of individual public authorities (municipalities and their organizations) approach the accounting more practically, train the ability to read accounting documents and financial statements increase possibilities to pass internship in public authorities
G6 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> competences from the table are valid, they form a general basis on which graduates can built in PA, regardless its field, but I would recommend the following connecting the theory to practice more, for instance, the theory emphasizes 3Es, but in practice especially economy is emphasized and efficiency is overshadowed implementing interactivity in obtaining theoretical knowledge, e.g. through e-learning, creation of simple projects organizing lectures of interesting people changing ways of examination – focus on concrete problems
G7 (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement more practice pay more attention to accounting, taxes (inc. seminars) incorporate fields relevant for all civil servants (e.g. financial control)
G8 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend to cover as much field of PA as possible in the programme (social affair, healthcare, culture, industry, transport), because a civil servant may change positions and does not know where he/she finishes, also during interviews especially knowledge from the area is more important than general competences. Maintain the multidisciplinary feature of the programme. Pay more attention to project management, HR and business methods, less on history, trends, reforms, because this is not used in practice. Although general administrative theory may not seem useful, it is beneficial for entry exam into civil service (during this exam large administrative theory is examined, not practical skills)
G9 (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -
G10 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater emphasize on practical aspects of PA economy (budgetary structure, specifics of accounting, financial control)
G11 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -

Source: Author.

New competences graduates have obtained during their career are outlined in Table 9 together with perceived levels of theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Table 7: What new competences graduates obtained thanks to their professional experiences and at what level?

Graduate (graduated in)	New competences obtained in job (level: knowledge / skills)
G1 (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special software for accounting and budgets (5/2) • MS Office 365 (3/3) • preparation of presentations for the public (4/4) • organization of conferences, seminars, workshops, training (4/4) • get oneself oriented in law and a capability to understand it (4/4)
G2 (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • except of higher levels of competences from the table, also higher diplomacy competences that are used for defending ministerial proposals
G3 (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special software for process management (5/4) • MS Office 365 (3/3) • Corporate Social Responsibility (4/3) • Soft skills (time management, stress management, motivation) (2/3) • organization of conferences, seminars, workshops, training (4/4) • preparation of presentations for the public (5/5)
G4 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competences for understanding funding of educational institutions (5/5) • administration of budgets (5/5) • communication with impacted organizations (5/5)
G5 (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capability to analyse and solve given problem, draw conclusions and present them to responsible body (in written as well as oral form) (6/6) • enhancing of expert knowledge (especially those related to individual processes in a authority) (6/6)
G6 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to lead a team (4/4) • capability to innovate existing processes (5/5) • capability to negotiate with top-managers in PA (4/5) • capability to prepare guiding documents (5/5) • capability to lead colleagues methodically (5/5)
G7 (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial control • audit procedures • project management
G8 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial control (4/5) • management of financial flows with state budget (because of its specifics) (4/5) • neutral communication style (4/6)
G9 (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -
G10 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting and budgets of contributory organisations (6/6) • Preparation of supplementary documents for decision-making of elected bodies (5/5)
G11 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -

Source: Author.

4.2 RESULTS – COMPETENCES SCREENING BY EMPLOYERS

Similarly to screening by graduates, data from employers should be presented with some precaution because it was clear that employers usually referred to competences that are relevant for their own position / department. This can be seen in levels they chose with regards to individual competences of graduates (some of them assessed only the competences that are relevant for their job / department and used the option “I do not know”) as well as in their comments and recommendations.

In average, employers expressed that higher levels of competences had been promoted by the programme particularly in the category of competences for analysing and problems solving and in case of the competences for understanding the context of public administration, its decision-making and management. In contrast to graduates, they also expressed that the programme also promoted higher levels of other competences and the data indicate that they perceived less differences between theoretical knowledge and practical skills compared to the graduates.

The following Table 10 presents the list of **top-10 competences** promoted by the programme according to the employers. Table 9 than enumerates the least promoted competences according to opinions of the employers.

Table 8: Top-10 competences promoted by the programme (employers' view)

Theoretical knowledge	Average	Practical skills	Average
16. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	4,00	16. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	3,80
20. Capability to select and use appropriate method for evaluation of public projects	4,00	5. Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia	3,57
5. Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia	3,86	15. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	3,50
22. Capability to use economic theory for understanding and evaluation of economic policy	3,80	26. Capability to evaluate and suggest appropriate methods for management of public expenditures	3,50
17. Capability to organize and carry out (especially applied) research focused on the public sector with use of qualitative and quantitative methods	3,67	22. Capability to use economic theory for understanding and evaluation of economic policy	3,40
23. Capability to use economic theory for understanding of behaviour on perfect and imperfect markets	3,67	7. Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization	3,33
33. Capability to independently plan and carry out simple public project	3,60	20. Capability to select and use appropriate method for evaluation of public projects	3,33
1. Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management	3,57	21. Capability to evaluate sustainability of public finances	3,33
15. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	3,50	23. Capability to use economic theory for understanding of behaviour on perfect and imperfect markets	3,33
18. Capability to present and defend own conclusions in front of audience of experts from PA / the public sector	3,50	31. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	3,33

Source: Author.

Table 9: The least promoted competences (employers' view)

TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED KNOWLEDGE		TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED SKILLS	
6. Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control	2,50	6. Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control	2,17
19. Capability to evaluate administrative reforms	2,60	8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	2,40
31. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,75	12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA	2,40
32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,75	24. Capability to predict effects of economic policy in various macroeconomic conditions	2,67
8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	2,80	11. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in the EU	2,75
14. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms	2,83	13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	2,75
30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,83	32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,75
9. Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy	3,00	9. Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy	2,80
12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA	3,00	3. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and of administrative procedure	2,83
13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	3,00	14. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms	2,83
24. Capability to predict effects of economic policy in various macroeconomic conditions	3,00	27. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA	2,83
26. Capability to evaluate and suggest appropriate methods for management of public expenditures	3,00	28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,83
28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	3,00	30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,83
3. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and of administrative procedure	3,17	2. Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia	3,00
7. Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization	3,17	10. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia	3,00

Source: Author.

Data suggest, that the **employers would anticipate improvements particularly in the following areas** (theoretical as well as practical dimensions of competences):

- Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy
- Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control
- Capability of critical thinking about PA, its functioning and reforms
- Capability to independently plan and carry out simple public project

And to a lesser extent also

- Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia
- Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA

The data also indicates that in case of some competences their **level expected from the programme is lower** than the level of graduates produced. This is the case of

- Capabilities to use economic theory (theoretical and practical dimension)
- Capability to select and use appropriate method for evaluation of public project (the theoretical dimension).

Employees suggested some recommendations as outlined in Table 10.

Table 10: Recommendations / Comments

Employer	Recommendations / Comments
E1	<p>For my position the basic competences required are from the area of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project management and project cycle • economy • accounting, budgeting, budgetary structure • cash-flow and financing • public tendering – not only the law, but ability to identify the object of a tender and also evaluation criteria • public support • control, especially the financial control • soft skills (negotiation, ability to defend and present and in the latter to present the core and graduates should be more aware of what is important and what is not in the presentation) <p>What can be seen is that graduates of the programme are much more flexible than graduates of programmes of other universities / faculties. They also know much more about public administration and are also not so naive in comparison to others.</p> <p>The programme provides good basis for starting the career, for fresh civil servants to be accountable. Their competences will be developed during the practice, it is logical.</p> <p>I recommend the following for quality improvement of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to enhance possibilities for internships – reality at public administration can be sometimes negative for them, because of different culture that may be demotivating (for instance, preparation for documents for council meeting may require rather long time and documents are prepared in advance in order to distribute them among councillors); • to focus more on law, this can reduce the naivety of students (for my job, for instance, it is important that they know how self-government makes decisions, tasks of individual bodies etc.) • to focus more on public tenders • to focus more on control (especially internal processes) • to use the Institute of Public Administration for better linkages to practice
E2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from the perspective of my position I would concentrate more on public policies and strategic planning, rather than on narrow instruments like public procurement and budgeting
E3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have not passed the programme. Therefore, I could not understand some of the competences. Also most of the competences are not relevant for my position. Some of the competences may be relevant for civil servants of state authorities, not for those employed in self-governments. • Also it is not easy to assess competences of those, who have rather long experiences, their competences are usually much higher than competences of fresh graduates.
E4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none mentioned
E5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none mentioned
E6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none mentioned
E7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that the programme can promote the level 4 as maximum. Higher levels can be promoted only during the professional career.

Source: Author.

4.3 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What seems to have proved is that the method used allows for identification of **competences that**

- **are relevant for the position of a graduate** - they usually obtained higher value on the scale used for stating graduate's own (present) level of knowledge and skill. Similarly, also employers used higher levels of the scale for assessing competences that were more relevant for their department.
- **"atrophied" / worsen**, because they were not relevant for a profession and were not improving. Some of the graduates pointed out that they do not use some competences in their current jobs, but are happy to have them because they can always use them if they need them in the future;
- **seems not to be relevant for certain positions** – at least 3 employers chose the option "I do not know" when required to assess some of the competences. These findings should be approached carefully, because they usually reflect needs of department of which the respondent participated in the research.

When comparing assessing of competences between employers and graduates, one must take into account that in most of the cases the employers were not direct superiors of the graduates. Employers assigned higher levels to vast majority of competences. This can be seen in all their categories, and the main differences where in the category of competences supporting public management. Although more data should be needed, this clearly calls for consideration of perceptions of both – employers and graduates – in any competence screening approach.

If we look at the top-15 competences that were promoted the least by the programme according to the graduates as well as the employers, we can identify those that are enumerated in Table 11 (however views of employers and graduates were not always similar in case of the level of competences).

Table 11: The least promoted competences (similarities of views)

TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED KNOWLEDGE	Employers; Graduates	TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED SKILLS	Employers; Graduates
31. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,75; 2,45	8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	2,40; 1,36
32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,75; 2,00	12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA	2,40; 1,45
8. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	2,80; 2,09	11. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in the EU	2,75; 1,27
30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,83; 2,55	13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	2,75; 1,73
9. Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy	3,00; 2,82	32. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,75; 1,27
12. Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA	3,00; 2,64	27. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA	2,83; 1,45

13. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	3,00; 2,73	28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,83; 1,27
28. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	3,00; 2,36	30. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,83; 1,45
7. Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization	3,17; 2,64		

Source: Author.

If we combine the perceptions of employers and graduates, the gaps can be identified particularly with regards to these competences:

- Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy
- Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA (theoretical dimensions)
- Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA and capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA
- Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA
- Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering (theoretical and practical aspects)
- Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA.

The programme should concentrate on courses dealing with these areas, obtain feedback from the last cohorts of students, discuss feasible revisions and implement appropriate measures.

4.4 LIMITATIONS

Graduates Survey

1. The research was purely qualitative. On the other hand, quantitative research would be impossible, because a list of graduates working in public administration / the public sector is not available.
2. The averages are biased to some extent - one of the reasons is that the Graduate 2 chose especially the highest levels of his own knowledge and skills.
3. Programme content (structure of courses, their content and teaching and evaluation methods) have been changed few times. This could not be embraced by interviews with graduates completely.
4. Although much effort has been made to adapt the template to Czech language, the template still was rather difficult for some graduates and employers.
5. Sometimes it was difficult for respondents to assess to what extent a theoretical knowledge can be used in practice.
6. The programme under review works especially with learning outcomes and no anticipated level of competences obtained by graduates is defined. This makes it hard to assess gaps between competences obtained by the programme and requirements of practice.
7. It is arguable to what extent the methodology used allows for identification of gaps between competences obtained by the programme and competences obtained by working experiences. Students can have various interests during their studies that are not always in

line with their future career (e.g. they choose cultural policy as the elective course, but their future profession relates to educational policy). Also, length of experiences varies across the group of graduates and it is not clear from the data obtained how much time did it take them to improve their competences in professional life.

Employers Survey

8. In case of the surveying of employers' perceptions, the research clearly indicates that people working on different positions in PA usually require and evaluate different competences. This may bias findings significantly and would require more in-depth research and larger sample. Only employers from self-governments (municipalities and regions) joined the research, no respondent from a central authority participated in the research.
9. In vast most of the cases, employers were not direct superiors of the graduates who participated in the research. This also has to be taken into account when assessing and commenting the findings on the differences between levels perceived by graduates and levels perceived by employers.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS & CHALLENGES

The survey indicates that both – graduates and respondents – are aware of the fact that higher levels of competences can be developed in practice, this support the principle learning by doing.

Particularly graduates commented that the programme provided them with basis on which they could build during their career in public administration. The realized competence screening indicates that the gaps of the programme can be identified particularly with regards to these competences:

- Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy
- Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA (theoretical dimensions)
- Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA and capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA
- Understanding the role of key interest groups in decision-making processes in PA
- Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering (theoretical and practical aspects)
- Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA

On the other hand, one must work with findings with some reservations. Especially these limitations of the research should be considered:

- The research was purely qualitative and the sample of graduates as well as employers is low.
- The findings are biased because they are based on averages. Also, the research clearly indicates that people working on different positions in PA usually require and evaluate different competences. No respondent from central authorities participated as employer and the findings on employers are summarizing only opinions of civil servants

from self-governments. This may bias findings significantly and would require more in-depth research and larger sample.

- Programme content (structure of courses, their content and teaching and evaluation methods) have been changed few times and this could not be embraced by interviews with graduates completely.
- Although much effort has been made to adapt the template to Czech language, the template still was rather difficult for some graduates and employers.
- Sometimes it was difficult for respondents to assess to what extent a theoretical knowledge can be used in practice.
- In vast most of the cases, employers were not direct superiors of the graduates who participated in the research. This also has to be taken into account when assessing and commenting the findings on the differences between levels perceived by graduates and levels perceived by employers.

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