

The curriculum transformations of public administration study programs in the context of public sector reforms: case of Lithuania.

Introduction

The development of different theoretical approaches of public administration determined the evolution of the competences of public administration specialists. Legality, standardization, hierarchical command and control systems, state as the main facilitator of solutions and other features of Weberianism required public administrators to focus only on rules and policy systems and created political-administration split within public organizations and left little space for flexible and transparent public administration. The emergence of New Public Governance in XXI century raised new challenges to public administrators, who need to be flexible, responsible and accountable, sensitive to citizens’ needs managers, able to create and manage networks, to achieve outcomes and find solutions to difficult social problems in an efficient manner. Accordingly higher education institutions, in the response to the needs of labour market and reforms of public sector, are impelled to review and update the curriculum of public administration study programs, by integrating accountability and transparency issues, context of civil society and principles of good governance.

The paper discloses the debates over the reflection of public administration paradigm’s transformation in the curriculum of study program and presents the challenges of development of interdisciplinary joint master’s study program in the field of public administration.

The first part of the paper highlights the transformations of Public administration education and its different traditions, by discussing main professional requirements for public administration specialists, Continental versus Anglo-Saxon traditions and identifying their features in second level study programs in the field of public administration in Lithuania.

The second part of the paper focuses on interdisciplinary as the main attribute of professional public administration working field. While the interdisciplinary is common feature of public administration education in USA, it remains the challenge in Lithuania. The development of new joint master’s study program in the field of public administration will be presented through the analysis of curriculum development problems, integration of innovative study methods (e.g. case analysis, inquiry and technology based learning, etc.) and reconciliation to national legal regulations of public administration education.

I. Traditions in study of Public Administration and its transformation in the context of Public Administration Paradigms.

Traditionally the study of Public Administration is organised according to one of two traditions: ‘*Anglo–Saxon*’ / ‘*Anglo-American*’ and ‘*continental European*’. The ‘*Anglo-American*’ tradition of public administration studies dominates in post-industrial Western world and is based on managerial administration methods. With regard to the training of Public Administration scholars, US and UK universities have focused on the education of social scientists and managers rather than lawyers. This sometimes raises discussion if the public administration is separate scientific field or just the part of management field.

The Continental Europe tradition of Public Administration is mainly stands on law and finances and less attention is paid to management, sociology, politics and policy. The features of Public Administrations in Germany and France have led to a scientific discipline which derives administrative principles from state principles in general and law principles in particular (Seibel, 1996, p. 75; Stillman, 1997, p. 335; Jann, 2003, p. 98-99; Rutgers, 2003, p. 244–250). As a consequence, the European focus is primarily on analytical studies, on bureaucratic theory as well as on the description of facts. In other words, the legal education is seen as the foundation for recruitment of public servants.

Only during the last decades, with the increased influence of New Public Management in Europe, the historically rooted continental European approach to Public Administration Study has been faced with transformations to more policy and management based education. However there are some scholars, who expressed some doubts to such generalization and hold, that hybridity in administrative traditions appears to be the rule rather than the exception (Painter & Peters, 2010, p. 139).

The trends in studies of Public Administration partly are determined by transformations of public administration paradigms, changing from traditional (bureaucratic) public administration toward New Public Management, which in turn at the beginning of XXI century moved toward New Public Governance. The shift of political, economical and social factors, influencing public administration practice, raises new challenges for Public Administration study, mainly concerning the study outcomes or the skills, knowledge and values of such specialists.

General goal of Public Administration study programs is to prepare the professionals who could make a significant contribution to the development and implementation of effective public administration in all public and administrative capacities (Domarkas, 2002). In the countries, where scholars play important role in the development of public administration theories, where the public administration studies are provided by the universities since the beginning of XX century, the unique traditions of public administration as scientific disciplines have been set.

The studies of Public Administration in USA are mainly multidisciplinary, integrating politics and policy, management, law, economics, sociology and other study fields. The multidisciplinary is especially well emphasised in

the study specialisations, presenting certain practical functions and work field of professionals: e.g. local governance, management of state authorities, informational systems of governance, financial administration, personal administrations, human resource management, city planning, law and order administration, the administration of NGO, international policy and administration, etc.

The stronger genesis of politics and law prevails in Public Administration studies, provided by universities in Western Europe. On the contrary to USA, Public administration, as study discipline in Western Europe, was acknowledged in the middle of the XX century. Firstly, public administration was related to political processes, legal state and functioning of state structures. This approach was based on distinctions between politics and administration, bounding the competences of public administrators to executions of laws, passive implementation of political grand plans, expertise, legality and limited discretion. With the emergence of globalization, fields like public administration have needed to be largely reconceptualised.

Since 1970, the Public Administration studies become more orientated to the education of New Public Management principles and less to state regulations. The managerial characteristics in study process became publicly emphasized at the end of XX century, after the “welfare state” concept has been changed by NPM approach, underlying the process and results. The key aims of public administration studies turn to managerial quality, to education of pursuers of results and efficiency. It was essential for public administrations to realize, that they operate under vertical and horizontal models of governance, they must create and manage networks that include a wide array of experts with various approaches to solving problems (Goldsmith, 2010; Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004). Resulting from these shifts, accountability measures have moved from a legalistic, rule-driven, and bureaucratic form to one that focuses on performance management and market-based standards (Considine, 2002; Romzek, 2000; Weber, 1999, cited from (Newswander & Newswander, 2011, p. 4)). These expectations stress the need for administrators to achieve outcomes and find solutions to difficult social problems in an efficient manner. This state of affairs requires practical fields like public administration to move consciously toward a state of thoughtful and considered interdisciplinarity. Thus, at the end of XX century the study of Public Administration in Europe integrates the pluralistic and managerial tendencies. Especially this approach is being practiced in Belgium, Italy, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, etc. Politics and law grounded Public Administration programs remains in Germany and France.

It should be noticed, that in the case of USA the inderdisciplinarity of studies was developed as natural result of practical needs, while in Europe this trend emerged in respond to politics and law monopoly. The continental European tradition of Public Administration study did not satisfy the practical needs of public administration sector, running under the principles of New Public Management. The contents and learning outcomes of study programs are transformed to the education of flexible public managers, having distributed leadership skills, responsible for his/her activities, orientated to the results and able to use market mechanism in public sector. The legislated processes and procedures, previously being central issue of public administrators’ activities, are seen as the context of his/her actions. However the critics of NPM argue, that such reform of public administration and its studies, have undermined other fundamental values in governing public affairs, such as fairness, justice, representation, and participation, in the name of improving efficiency (deLeon & Denhardt, 2000; Frederickson, 1997).

The decline in popularity of New Public Management worldwide reinvigorated the search for a new paradigm in the field of public administration. As the alternative to New Public Management, the paradigm of New Governance has gained prominence in recent years. So this transformation of public administrations studies can be named as evolution of NPM to public governance (Patapas & Smalskys, 2010). New Governance paradigm seeks to reconfigure the role of the public sector through citizen participation and network governance (Bingham, Nabatchi, and O’Leary 2005; Boyte 2005, *cited in Wu & He, 2009*). New public governance (NPG) tries to overcome the distinctions between politics and administration, essential in traditional public administration paradigm, thus the curricula of public administration teaching programs is focused on public policy development and public administration as two complementary, not distinctively issues. Democratic governance, citizen’s participation, network governance, political management, e-government, e-democracy and capacity building becomes main categories of public administration studies, orientated toward new public governance.

In response to the increased complexity that comes from a shift away from NPM to NPG, public administration programs need to adjust their traditional curriculum and to develop public administrators as advocates, prepared “to adapt and reposition their organizations in their political and task environments in addition to simply ensuring their continuity (Moore, 1995, p. 55), “able to manage through networks, to be open to learning in different ways, and to draw the resources from a range of sources” (Stoker, 2006, p. 41). Although these challenges are difficult to solve, it is essential to develop individuals “who can serve as both ‘hubs’ and ‘bridges’” between different experts (Rhoten, 2006, p. 9). Thus it becomes essential to create “generalist” public administrators who have the capacity to serve as these hubs because they are rooted in a pluralistic mode of thinking and acting.

II. Trends of public administration education in Lithuania.

The above mentioned shift of public administration paradigms are observed in the transformations of public administration studies and program’s requirements in Lithuania. The Regulation of Public Administration Studies, adopted by Minister of Education and Science in February 27, 2007 (Nr. ISAK-276) sets the main requirements to the

organization, curricula and provision of public administration study programs. Today this document should be used more as recommendations than legal regulation, because it does not respond to the increased and transformed requirements to the competences of public administration specialists in Lithuania. It could be noticed that the Public administration studies, developed and organized according to this Regulation, represent hybrid approach to public administration, combining economics, law, politics and management. However the features of Anglo-American traditions remain significant.

On the other hand, today's reforms of civil service and latest national programmes (e.g. Public Governance Development program 2012-2020, adopted by the Government on February 7, 2012, Nr. 171; The Conception of Civil Service Recruitment Process Improvement, 2012; The Conception of Civil Service Development, adopted by the Government on June 2nd, 2010, Nr. 715; etc.) present the attempts to expand the public administration meanings and institutionalise the term of public governance. The Lithuanian Government identified the needs to: a) extend the members, participating in public governance, by empowering society (NGO, private sector) to become active participants of public governance; b) to provide public services in accordance to the needs of customers and to enhance the accessibility of such services (e.g. to develop technologies for e-services); c) to increase the efficiency of the governance by the development of result-orientated civil service and strengthening strategic management (Šiupinskas, 2012). These reforms of public sector emphasise the need to review and update the studies of public administration and to develop other - more flexible approach to the requirements for such studies.

Partly such approach is integrated into current Description of Public Administration project, where public administration is seen as complex object and interdisciplinary study field, encompassing public governance and all related political and managerial issues as well as social and economic environment (Description of Public Administration Studies. Project, 2012). The core parts of Public Administration study programs are **public policy and policy analysis** (policy development, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, public policy strategies, programs and projects, sectorial policy, etc.) and **public management** (the management of public sector and organisations through using management methods and legal instruments). According the Description, universities have freedom to decide on the curriculum on the ground of these core parts, while the previous Regulation precisely prescribed study subjects of Public Administration programs (e.g. economic, law, etc.). There are some transformations concerning learning outcomes: it is emphasized that they are described in accordance to European Association for Public Administration Accreditation, EAPAA recommendations. The professionals should have the following competences and skills:

„30.1. to be able to analyse and think critically, to solve problems and to make evidence based decisions in the context of public sector;

30.2. to be able to manage the process of public policy, administrate policy implementation;

30.3. to be able to communicate with citizens, by empowering them to participate in public governance;

30.4. to perceive and recognize the public interest, ethical principles and to base the decisions on them;

30.5. to know, understand and use the public management tools in practice.” (Description of Public Administration Studies. Project, 2012).

It is interesting, that the new Description legitimates the wider professional functions for public administrators: manager, public policy analysts, expert and evaluator, consultant and adviser, specialist, auditor and controller, programs and project manager, initiator of innovations and reforms of public sector, a leader, etc. Such regulations set up more complicated goals of public administration studies – to educate the professionals, able to cope “with complexity, appreciation of diverse viewpoints, awareness of bias, and suspicion of authority” (Szostak, 2003, p. 48). It becomes critical for public administration studies to “provide different ‘lenses’ for seeing subject from different perspectives” (Wamsley, 1996, p. 366). The only way to achieve such goals is to move in the direction of interdisciplinarity.

Today 6 universities in Lithuania provide Public administration programs on Master's level: Mykolas Romeris University, Kaunas University of Technology, Vytautas Magnus University, Siauliai University, University of Aleksandras Stulginskis and Vilnius University. In several years the significant decrease of public administration study programs at Master's level can be observed. According to AIKOS database, since 2010 two programs, provided by Mykolas Romeris University (Taxes Administration, Customs Administration) were closed, while three programs (Environmental Policy and Administration, Sustainable Policy and Management, European Union Policy and Administration) were reregistered as programs, providing Master's diploma in political sciences and one program (Leadership and Change Management) – as human resource management study program.

The symbiosis of different courses remains problematic issue in Lithuania. One of the possible ways to solve this problem is to differentiate the core and additional or peripheral courses. The hypothetical structure of the curriculum is shown in the table 1, which represent the “core and periphery” idea. The combination of core and peripheral courses explains the studies direction. The need for training program, raised from the practice, firstly should be operationalised through *core* courses. The all courses, presented in the table 1, are common to all Public Administration study programs. However the *core* courses highlight the managerial orientation of such program.

Table 1

The Example of core and peripheral courses of Public Administration program

Core courses	Peripheral courses
<i>Management of organisations, Public policy analysis, Personal Management, Finances and Budget, Programs evaluation, Ethics of Administration; Interaction of state authorities</i>	<i>Politics, Law, Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Psychology of organisations, Research methodology.</i>

Theoretically, according to core courses of the curriculum, the three types of Public Administration studies, representing different approaches, could be identified:

1. Public Administration orientated toward management problems;
2. Public Administration focused on legal approach;
3. Public Administration emphasizing problems of public policy and politics.

The curricula analysis of master’s programs in Public administration, provided by universities in Lithuania, shows meaningful differences. The study programs, offered by Kaunas University of Technologies, are focused on managerial approach of Public administration. Vilnius University programs range all traditional topics (such as theory of public administration, economics and finances, management, law and special attention is paid to policy and politics. In case of Mykolas Romeris University it should be mentioned, that previously core concentrate of curriculum was on law, today public administration studies are mainly interdisciplinary and focused on concrete topic: e.g. Sustainable policy and Administration, Administration of Municipalities, European Union Policy and Administration. Master’s programs, provided at Vytautas Magnus University, are more concentrated on politics and law, while the core course of Public Administration programs at Siauliai University are more focused on public management and governance. Concluding, we argue, that the differences in core courses enable to specify the profile of program and represent its practical orientation. The variety of Master’s program in Public Administration in Lithuania is positive and incentive phenomena. As Domarkas (2002) states, the different profiles of programs have positive impact on further development of Public Administration studies in Lithuania, because the broader issues are covered the better preconditions for specialisations, which allow to educate professionals for different public administration spheres, are created.

However it is important to mention, that the profiles of public administration studies are directly related to postgraduates’ competences and university profile. In practice, there is a balance of correspondence between program goals, labour market needs and potential for implementation (i.e. academic, scientific, material resources). The joint study program, provided by different universities, enables to recruit various specialists and complement academic and material resources that in turn create better conditions for competence development and correspondence to labour market needs.

III. The challenges of development joint study program “Regional socioeconomic policy and governance”

The idea to develop joint study program “Regional’ socioeconomic policy and governance“ was raised as the result of feasibility study, where the possibilities to develop joint program with Pardubice university (Czech Republic) and labour market needs in the field of administration were analysed. The feasibility research showed that the profiles of public administration studies in Lithuanian universities are not specifically oriented to the appropriate regional socioeconomic public policy and management issues. The analysis of labour market’s demand and supplies also revealed a need of such specialists. There are only three study programs in the field of Public Administration in Lithuania (provided by Vytautas Magnus, Mykolas Romeris and Vilnius universities), which train specialists for work in European Union institutions, who are able to perceive, understand, analyze and evaluate the multi governmental interrelations of EU institutions, EU policy making and implementation processes. However the demand of well qualified specialists, competent to work efficiently in institutions, developing and implementing EU policy, as well as to analyse public administration and political problems, consult interest groups and citizens in Lithuania and EU is still high.

Although there public administration systems in Lithuania and Czech Republic are different, the common socio-cultural and economic European space, similar development contexts of post soviet transition from centralized state sector to democracy, enables to identify the common trends in needs of specialists competences, required for public governance and provision of public services.

On the other hand, it should be emphasized, that there are few differences in approaches to study of Public Administration in Siauliai (Lithuania) and Pardubice universities (Czech Republic). As it was already mentioned, the core part of Public Administration programs in Siauliai University is based on public governance, while in Czech Republic public administration is acknowledge mainly as management of public sector institutions or part of politics. The most usually titles of study programs in the field of Public Administration in CZ are “Public sector economy and administration”, “Public administration and regional development”, “Public administration and regional / social policy”. Usually such programs are provided at the faculties of Economics or Economics and Administration, and rarely – at the Faculties of Law. So, the public administration in CZ is seen as horizontal issues, which is integrated and analysed in

the field of economy, regional development, information management, etc. Such trend is especially overt at Bachelor level programs. In the case of Pardubice University, there are any specified programs of Public Administration at first cycle, but some public sector issues are integrated in such programs as “Economic and Management”, “Systems engineering and informatics”, “Economical policy and administrations”.

The curricula analysis enables to conclude, that the bachelor students lack knowledge in public administration, because the curriculum represents the titles of the program. The situation is almost the same at master’s level. The core courses of public administration are provided more as specialisation. As distinct from Lithuania, the studies of Public Administration in Czech Republic lack the policy and politics aspects and are more orientated toward management problems. Thus the development of joint study program in the field of Public Administration enables to implement the idea of interdisciplinarity and to correspond to the requirements of new Description of Public Administration Studies in Lithuania. The curriculum of program will cover conceptual, casual and instrumental issues of regional socioeconomic policy and governance, focusing on regional development, economics and social cohesion of the regions, regional social welfare governance, multilevel governance, e-governance, citizens’ participation, etc.

The other peculiarity of developing joint study program is concerned with the use of interactive study methods and enquiry and technology based educational strategies. It is planned to develop enquiry and technology based studies through the use of modern ICT technologies (video conferences, distance learning, interactive boards and simulation games) and case studies, project management methods, orientated toward the real professional problems analysis and decision making. Such educational approach will enable students to inquiry and self-study, will develop creativity and specific (professional and research) as well as transferable (communications, team work) skills. The international regional dimension of tasks will benefit for development of comparative analytical skills. The result of such efforts would be a new generation of flexible public administrators uniquely prepared for the complexity of the real-life problems that will face them after graduation.

Conclusions

1. As an educational field, public administration has a distinct advantage in preparing future leaders to overcome the barriers that arise from the increasing complexity of governance. However it requires the integration of Anglo-American and continental Europe traditions in study of Public Administration, the move consciously toward a thoughtful and considered interdisciplinarity. The evolution from New Public Management to New Public Governance opens up the possibility to overcome the distinctions between politics and management and to revive the fundamental values in governing public affairs, such as fairness, justice, representation, and participation. The training of flexible public administrators uniquely prepared for the complexity of the real-life problem becomes essential goal of Public Administration programs.

2. The curriculum transformations of Public administration study programs are one of the relevant issues in Lithuania. The reforms of public sector and civil service, orientated toward the implementation of New Public Governance principles, stipulate to develop a flexible and less regulated approach to studies of Public Administration. After the adoption of the new Description of Public Administration Studies, universities will gain more freedom for curriculum development on the ground of public policy and analysis and public management issues. On the other hand, the Public Administration studies should to keep balance between labour market needs and available resources. Thus the joint study programs could be used as tool to create better conditions for public administration competences development in correspondence to labour market needs.

3. Distinctive practises of Public Administration studies in various countries can serve as advantage in development of joint study program’s curriculum and enable to implement the idea of interdisciplinarity. However the achievement of current Public Administration study’s goals might claim to apply innovative educational strategies, empowering students to solve complex real-life problems during their studies.

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