

Comparative Screening of Programme Competences: The Case of MPA Programmes in the Selected CEE Countries

Abstract

The initial research results performed within the PAQUALITY project indicate that we can argue in favour of the role of path-dependence in shaping PA education in the CEE countries, where different starting points affected the outcomes in the content of current PA education. However, also more context-based factors and legal provisions do play the role. No surprise there is a lack of uniformity of PA education across the CEE countries, where the country specific context is the major factor in shaping the structure and content of programs (Pevcin, Špaček and Klimovský, 2019). On this matter, our paper proposal adds to the research by focusing on the programme competence screening of selected MPA programmes from the selected HEI's in three CEE countries that form the focus group of the PAQUALITY project.

To enable theoretically sound and comparable results, the contemporary framework developed by Bergsmann et al. (2018), the so-called Competence Screening Questionnaire for Higher Education, is taken as a methodological base. The framework enables flexible screening into which both alumni as well as employers would be able to insert competencies students of specific programmes should acquire in order to fit practice. Thus, the screening is focused on both cognitive and practical aspects of competences. Namely, the proposed model separates two dimensions of competences: a cognitive aspect (knowledge) and a practical aspect (skill). Furthermore, this methodological approach derives from competences and not from topics/ contents of the courses within the programme, as we are (i) interested to compare and screen competences; and (ii) aware that sampled programmes differentiate substantially on their contents and structure.

The results indicate that large variations exist among the sampled HEI's on the competencies taught at the MPA programmes in the CEE countries, in both dimensions, knowledge and skills obtained. Furthermore, also the relevance of competences for practice and their achievement varies substantially among the selected countries and the HEI's, which argues in favour of country- and institution-specific curricula development, and lack of uniformity in competences. It clearly gives support for the needed increasing role of internationalization in future curricula development, and as the findings of the study suggest, developing the competences relevant to practice of PA serves as one of the main tools for the alignment of curricula.