

# Secondary School Students' Basic Values and Perceptions of Public Administration as a Possible Reason for the Decreasing Willingness to Study Public Administration Study Programmes in Czechia and Slovakia

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**Abstract:** There is a regional specificity of demand for Public Administration (PA) programmes in two CEE countries. Academic programmes focusing on PA in Czechia and Slovakia have recently faced low demand. This situation threatens the very existence of these programmes as well as the available research capacity dedicated to the study of PA and, consequently, the availability of skilled public administration servants. Understanding the causes of this problem is a prerequisite for mitigating its impact. This article does not aim to comprehensively map all relevant factors influencing the student's choice of study programmes or future careers. We test a hypothesis formulated in a recent study on low demand for PA programmes in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Here, the authors mention the possibility that current secondary school students (potential applicants) do not perceive employment in public administration as a promising alternative because they associate it with phenomena, characteristics, and values that they evaluate negatively or do not share. Naturally, they do not choose to pursue higher education in fields that offer a specialisation primarily aimed at employment in this field. The research uses primary data from questionnaire surveys conducted among secondary school students from two comparable cities (one in Czechia and one in Slovakia). The questionnaire combines a 21-item measure of fundamental human values designed by Schwartz and a battery of statements testing the respondent's perception of public administration as itself and as a potential area of a future professional career. The results suggest no strong link between values and preferences for employment in public administration. It seems likely that the low attractiveness of PA degree programmes among potential applicants is more directly related to their perception of the private sector as a place offering higher earnings and more diverse employment. The findings confirm that perceptions of the public administration appeared to be predominantly negative in the samples studied and that these negative perceptions are not only related to a lack of information and disinterest.