

# *The Demand for Public Administration Education in the Czech Republic: A Comparative Analysis on the Case of the University of Pardubice*

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Universities and various institutes from all over the world have numerous public administration (PA) education programmes. The Czech Republic is one of the significant

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Central European countries where PA education is concerned. The field of PA education is evaluated on the case of the University of Pardubice, which offers educational programmes related to PA. The analysis is performed based on a statistical evaluation of students' interest over a span of 16 years. The research uses trend analysis when the interest in studying at the University of Pardubice is supplemented by comparison with the situation at similar universities in the Czech Republic. The conclusion of the study offers suggestions on the possibilities of supporting education in the Czech Republic. On the other hand, more consistent supervision from the state seems appropriate, but also support for a family policy aimed at reconciling professional and family life is necessary.

*Keywords:* public administration education, comparative analysis, Czech Republic, University of Pardubice

## 1. Introduction

Discussions about PA have always been at the forefront throughout history. Good governance principles have been given importance and priority to provide citizens with effective and efficient public services. According to Fenwick (2018, p. 10), PA is primarily a law-based institutional work derived from a traditional descriptive. In this context, governments often make new legal regulations and reforms to ensure and enhance better governance. As governments are concerned with the problems and needs spanning across many policy areas, the field of PA is interdisciplinary. It thus requires the contributions of a wide range of academic disciplines (Ongaro, 2019, p. 135).

Due to the increasing number and scope of government services, more personnel is needed in the public sector. Higher education institutions, especially programmes providing PA education, play a significant role in providing a labour force to the public sector. In consequence, the number of undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate education programmes in PA has increased in many countries of the world. Kettl (2001, p. 216) argues that public affairs schools are inadequate in the transition process of new strategies and tactics followed by governments. Today, it is possible to state that many schools providing PA education organise their programmes in

line with the requirements of the modern age. In this regard, students in PA and policy programmes gain a global perspective of providing sustainable solutions to national and local problems (Manoharan, Mirbel & Carrizales, 2018, p. 35), which is essential for the development of better public services. Denhardt (2001, p. 532) highlights the significance of diversification in PA education, such as on-the-job training and managerial experience, to develop students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Therefore, instead of focusing on traditional teaching methods and curricula, schools and institutes have made promising efforts to modify their curricula and teaching methods and offer various PA education options.

Nevertheless, due to the high volume of workload and working hours, it is often impossible for employees to continue onto postgraduate studies, which negatively affects the quality of human resources in the public sector. Even though in a few developed countries (e.g., the United Kingdom), public servants in local governments and health services are encouraged to take Master of Business Administration courses (Knoepfel et al., 2007, p. 68), on the whole, educational opportunities for public personnel is very limited. It is also possible to state that the same problem exists in the private sector as well.

The Czech Republic is one of the European countries where university education is given importance and priority. To this end, universities in the Czech Republic invest in the infrastructure of particular research facilities, as well as libraries and experienced academicians from abroad, to provide students with a stimulating scientific environment. PA education and its related fields are also given great significance. Within this scope, a diversified PA training has been ensured at various levels in universities and as mentioned previously, the education is supported by relevant courses from other academic disciplines.

This study aims to describe and evaluate the public's interest in studying university educational programmes that are suitable for employees (and future employees) in the field of PA. In terms of data availability, the research is conducted through a case study done on the case of the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Pardubice.

## 2. Public Administration Education in the Czech Republic

As in many other European countries, PA education is a substantial and necessary academic discipline in the Czech Republic. PA education has

maintained its importance in the Czech Republic throughout the 20th century, mainly since it aimed to train public personnel. Marčetić, Lalić Novak & Džinić (2013, p. 130) state that politicians and public officials had an opportunity to have education at the School of Social and Political Sciences between 1945-1950. However, political and social changes after 1948 led to the suppression of education in a spirit of freedom of opinion and diversity. Personnel replacement within the teaching staff corresponded to the new pro-Soviet oriented government. The College of Political and Economic Sciences was based only on communist ideology and aimed to educate employees for the state and party apparatus (cf. e.g., Köpplová & Jiráček, 2020; Olšáková, 2010). Since the 1990s, the number of universities specialising in PA education has been steadily increasing. The development has taken place not only at public universities but also at private ones. In the decades following the 1990s, there was a fluctuation on the part of educational institutions. In addition to emerging educational institutions, many had lost accreditation from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (cf. e.g., Connaughton & Verheijen, 2000; Marčetić, Lalić Novak & Džinić, 2013). Nevertheless, the crucial importance of education for PA lies in public universities. In this regard, PA education has been given priority in the Czech Republic in order to have qualified street-level or high-level bureaucrats and provide citizens with better services.

The Department of Social Sciences at Charles University can be considered as one of the most successful and leading institutions offering various post-diploma courses for public servants (Connaughton & Verheijen, 2000, p. 342). Furthermore, the number of private Master of Public Administration (MPA) programmes have increased dramatically, especially at the beginning of the 2010s (Staroňová & Gajduschek, 2016, p. 360). Most programmes focusing on education in PA are also offered as a standard at faculties of economics. This education area is further considered a multidisciplinary field (cf. Plaček, 2014, p. 115). The structure and curriculum of PA education programmes vary according to the faculty they belong to, such as the business and management school, law school or social sciences school (Plaček, 2014, p.119). The schools of law in the Czech Republic offer PA programmes only at the undergraduate level, except the Police Academy and the CEVRO Institute Praha (Staroňová & Gajduschek, 2016, p. 358). From this point of view, it can be said that PA education in higher education institutions in the Czech Republic shows significant differences.

Currently, the situation on the “market” of education in the field of PA is that it is not offered in the Czech Republic as a course purely focused on

the needs of PA. According to an overview study carried out within the PAQUALITY project (see Špaček & Nemeč, 2019), it is possible to study only one MPA program (within Masaryk University). Bachelor's, master's and doctoral study programmes related to PA are offered by 12 public universities and eight private universities. A total of 60 study programmes are available to students (public universities and their faculties represent 16 of them). The offer of study programmes close to PA is considerably fragmented.

The paradigm shift from New Public Management to Good Governance and the developments in PA and governance have led to significant changes in the methodology and PA education scheme. In parallel, various updates and innovations have been introduced in PA students' skills (Plaček, 2014, p. 118). Reichard and Krogt (2014, p. 7) identify the learning outcomes of PA education and list several competencies. These competencies are related to public governance, participation in and contribution to policy and administrative processes, articulation and application of public service perspectives, productive communication and interaction in the public domain, analysis and solution of PA related problems by applying appropriate scientific methods, and understanding of the public domain (Reichard & Krogt, 2014, p. 7). Following the competencies mentioned above, PA education in the Czech Republic has also gained momentum, especially in recent years, and several diversifications have been made for more efficient education. PA programmes in the Czech Republic generally consist of functional methods, and the students are stimulated to practice in the public sector as a critical requirement of the programmes. Besides, English PA education programmes and distance education facilities are also offered by some universities in the Czech Republic (Marčetić, Lalić Novak & Džinić, 2013, pp. 132-133). The Institute for Public Administration Prague is a core institution providing PA training to public officials. The Institute is a state-funded organisation founded by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. It organises training for senior or lower-level public officials, such as heads of authorities, PA employees, and public servants (The Institute for Public Administration Prague, 2019, pp. 9-10).

The requirement to train civil servants is not just born out of a general need to ensure good governance; it is also incorporated into two basic legal regulations, namely Act 234/2014 Coll., The Civil Service Act, and Act 312/2002 Coll., On officials of self-governing territorial units. The first law generally applies to civil servants of PA. The second law establishes the obligation to educate employees of municipalities, towns, and

regions as self-governing territorial units. Moreover, two decrees of the Ministry of the Interior supervising officials' training also mention this requirement. The self-governing territorial unit is obliged to draw up a training plan, which includes a timetable for the improvement of the official's qualification of at least 18 days for three years. Education may be provided in accredited educational programmes by accredited institutions in the form of a legal or natural person, a contributory organisation established by the Ministry of the Interior - Institute for Public Administration Prague, or a self-governing territorial unit which has been accredited (cf. MICR, 2019a).

The training of officials is carried out on three levels: (a) Entrance training, (b) Continuous training, and (c) Preparation and verification of special professional qualification training. Public servants are required to complete initial education within three months from the start of employment. This obligation does not apply to an official who is already of special professional competence, i.e., having completed the relevant study programme at the bachelor or master level. Continuous training specialises in deepening the knowledge of officials. It also focuses on updating knowledge such as legislation or specialisation in a particular area of administration. Language education is also included. Special professional competence consists of the knowledge and skills necessary for administrative activities' performance, as stipulated by a decree of the Ministry of the Interior. This training is completed by an examination consisting of a general part and a special part. The testing is carried out by the Institute for Public Administration Prague. There is currently a set of practices that apply to the general professional competence of both ordinary and senior officials. If the relevant official has completed the selected bachelor's or master's degree programmes, he/she is not obliged to attend such training.

In 2019, the Ministry of the Interior (MICR, 2019b) reviewed the above training requirements for officials. One proposal was that initial training is compulsory for all incoming officials. The aim was to provide the necessary knowledge of the current state of PA among new officials. It has also been proposed that this education requirement also applies to elected municipal authorities. For example, in small municipalities, the mayor also acts as a secretary/clerk in the Czech Republic, performing state administration at the municipal level.

Another point discussed was the institutions that provide training for officials. As mentioned above, this training can be provided by any private or public institutions. The condition is to obtain accreditation for the relevant course. The Ministry of the Interior (MICR, 2019b) draws attention to the

unfavourable development in recent years where many organisations pretend to be accredited educational institutions. At present, the organisations that provide educational services cannot be unjustifiably sanctioned. There is also a lack of control over the content of the training. Especially in recent years, the implementation of courses in the field of soft skills has been expanding. Because the control of outputs is difficult, educational institutions may provide a course with a low quality of service in many cases.

The adverse facts mentioned above lead the Ministry to consider shortening the compulsory education period. At present, the official is required to attend continuous training for 18 working days over three years. However, this may not be very easy for the office as the public officer will be not able to do his/her job at that time. The mandatory time would be reduced to 9 working days in three years by shortening the training period. Also, the difficulties described above with ensuring sufficient quality of soft skills courses means that it will not be possible to obtain accreditation for this future training.

The mentioned low quality of the provided courses leads to a reflection on how universities that focus on their students' professional competence in classical education could contribute to the relevant educational process.

### 3. Case Study: Organisation of Education at the University of Pardubice

The University of Pardubice and its Faculty of Economics and Administration (hereinafter FEA) were selected for the case study. The Faculty of Public Administration, which was renamed as the Faculty of Economics and Administration, was founded in 1991 and has been providing educational programmes focused on PA since the very beginning. Although there has been an interest in educational programmes throughout its existence, FEA of the University of Pardubice is not the largest education providers in this area. The universities with the most extensive student base include Masaryk University in Brno and its Faculty of Economics and Administration and the Technical University in Ostrava and its Faculty of Economics. Because the FEA of the University of Pardubice is one of the smallest institutions, from this point of view, it can be expected that the evaluation of the interest in studying programmes focused on PA will not be so burdened by the brand, which is carried by the two largest faculties in Brno and Ostrava.

Another reason for the choice is that the University of Pardubice is one of the first five universities that in 2018 received the so-called institutional accreditation in the first round. This fact indicates the institutional environment's quality and the FEA's efforts to maintain the necessary quality in education.

The FEA of the University of Pardubice provides education in three study programmes; Economic Policy and Administration, Systems Engineering and Informatics, and Business Economics and Management. In all these programmes, the study trend is realised in the form of a bachelor's, master's, and doctoral study programme. In particular, the study programme Economic Policy and Administration is intended to educate employees in PA institutions and the public sector. The following analysis also considers that all the programmes offer full-time or part-time options of study. The full-time option provides a traditional student education based on a weekly schedule, including attending lectures and seminars. The part-time option is primarily intended for students already in employment. The student commutes to the faculty premises as per the set schedule only three to four times per semester. The lessons are realised mainly on Friday and Saturday, when the students participate in direct consultations of the studied subjects with the lecturer. This direct education is complemented mostly with distance learning, which does not require the students to be at the faculty premises.

Along with obtaining institutional accreditation, the hourly subsidy for direct teaching of part-time students is also increasing. In the past, part-time students were taught in the form of tutorials and consultations, with the emphasis being placed on distance learning and the use of e-learning. Direct teaching in one subject was realised in the range of three to six hours per semester. Obtaining institutional accreditation required the extension of direct education to 14 hours per semester in the case of one subject (University of Pardubice Faculty of Economics and Administration, 2020).

### 3.1. Methodology

The analysis aims to identify the interest in PA education amongst PA and public sector institutions. It focuses on the study programme Economic Policy and Administration, which is tailored specifically for PA and public sector organisations. It should also be noted that the analysis of public sector education takes into account the division of students into full-time



and part-time modes of study. Full-time study is associated with a larger number of students, which makes it possible to integrate statistical methods into its analysis more functionally. However, to better capture the role of education for PA and public sector institutions, it would be more appropriate to consider study programmes offered on a part-time basis. This includes a larger percentage of students who are directly related to PA or who intend to work in public sector institutions in the future. The study programme Economic Policy and Administration trains generally educated economists who can also find employment in the private sector. Whereas full-time students have a wide array of possibilities in terms of future work and can explore different career directions, part-time students are already employed, and in many cases, undergo studies because of a prior need to complete their education. According to the information and advice centre, several facts can be observed behind the lower share of part-time students. The vast majority of this group of students are already employed people who are completing their education (often due to the employer's requirements). However, according to students' reactions, it is often difficult to combine work and study responsibilities so that the performance of both activities reaches the required quality level. In many cases, personal requirements to ensure the running of the family are added to this. Traditionally, a higher share of the full-time students has been seen since beginning of the faculty's existence. According to the MEYS (2020) database, full-time students make up approximately 77% of all students studying higher education programmes.

The analysis in this study focuses on the following indicators: the number of students in the field of study, the number of graduates, and the number of students enrolled in the first year. The premise is to follow the development trend in student numbers (graduates) of the study programme Economic Policy and Administration over time. This trend will be compared to the development of student numbers in the other study programmes. The aim is to determine student interest in the programme. However, the number of students is influenced by numerous external and internal factors. Fundamental factors include the effects of the demographic structure of the Czech population. The Czech Republic's education system has been influenced over the years by periods when fluctuating population demographics reflected on the educational system. The number of institutions providing higher education, on the other hand, does not change much.

In the case of population-weak years, the competition between individual educational institutions intensifies. Students during these periods have a

more significant opportunity to disperse among respective universities. The current state policy in the area of university education financing also has an impact on this division. Although the scientific performance indicator has been promoted as a criterion for funding university education institutions in recent years, the number of students is still essential as a fundamental criterion for the distribution of funds. The analysis, therefore, excludes the impact of the demographic situation. Furthermore, the research does not only focus on student number development at the University of Pardubice, but the analysis bases its comparison of the student number development in other universities of economics that provide education for the public sector.

As a first step, the student number development across seven economics faculties of public universities in the Czech Republic was compared. This analysis aimed to determine the primary trend in growth over time. Subsequently, the student number development at the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Pardubice was compared to this trend. The analysis was conducted in the University of Pardubice context since it has sufficient infrastructure for PA education in the Czech Republic. The basis for determining the student number development at universities was the average number of students. Since individual faculties can take in different numbers of students, it was necessary to monitor the average number of students at universities in the Czech Republic as a weighted average. Thus, for example, to determine the average number of students in a part-time form of study in a bachelor's degree programme, the relation was:

$$\frac{\sum_i SKBc_i}{\sum_i S_i} = \sum_i \frac{SKBc_i}{S} \cdot \frac{SKBc_i}{S_i} = \frac{\sum_i S_i \frac{SKBc_i}{S_i}}{S}$$

where:  $SKBc_i$  – is the number of students of the faculty also in the part-time form of study of the bachelor's degree programme,  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ ,

$S_i$  – is the number of faculty students  $i$

$S$  – is the total number of students at all faculties.

The relation  $\frac{\sum_i SKBc_i}{S}$  is equal to one and thus represents weights. Therefore, we can simplify the relationship to:

$$\sum_i w_{S_i} \frac{SKBc_i}{S_i}$$

The average number of enrolled full-time bachelor's degree students per faculty was also expressed analogously. Similarly, this relationship was used for part-time and full-time master's degree programmes. As a result,

the trend was determined by the average number of students. This trend was taken as the point of reference when analysing the student number development in the FEA at the University of Pardubice. Another part of the analysis was aimed directly at the evaluation of the development of interest in education at the Faculty of Economics and Administration at the University of Pardubice. This part of the analysis was also based on the comparison between trends in the number of students and graduates.

### 3.2. Public Administration Education at Economics and Administration Faculties

The evaluation of interest in the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Pardubice needs to be adjusted by other influences that affect student development. It concerns the effects of demography, where a change in the number of young people significantly affects the Czech Republic's education sector as a whole. The birth rate in the Czech Republic has been changing over the last decades, and there are fluctuations in the number of young populations. This situation affects all schools in the education system (i.e., primary, secondary, and higher education). One way to eliminate this influence would be to involve only part-time students in the analysis as these students' age distribution varies. However, this would mean losing a significant part of the sample size, considering the uneven proportion of part-time students to the total number of students enrolled at the university.

The second option is to focus on evaluating the trend at all universities that provide similar education of economic direction for PA. Thus, the rationale is to find out whether the movement of interest in studying at several universities is the same. A total of seven faculties in the Czech Republic were included in the analysis so as to express the primary trend across universities in the Czech Republic. These universities can be listed as follows: a) Faculty of Social and Economic Studies, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, b) Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, Brno, c) Faculty of Informatics and Management, University of Hradec Králové, d) Faculty of Economics, Technical University of Ostrava, f) Faculty of Economics, Technical University of Liberec, g) Faculty of Economics, University of Economics, Prague, h) Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Pardubice.

The faculties are of different sizes when measured by the number of students (see MEYS, 2020). For instance, traditionally large faculties include

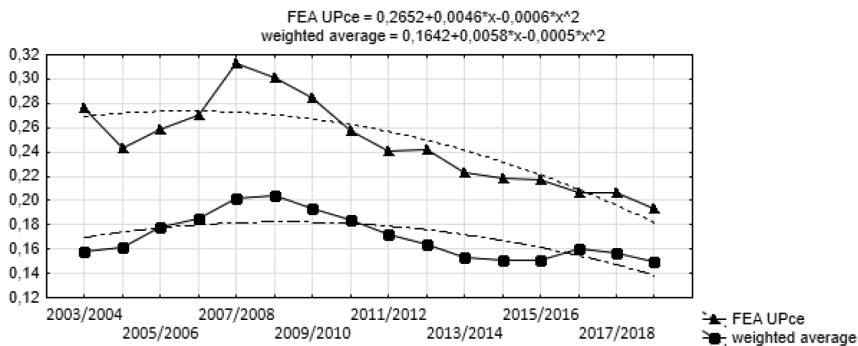
the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University and the Faculty of Economics, Technical University of Ostrava, where over 1,200 full-time undergraduate students were enrolled in 2019. On the other hand, the lowest number of full-time students in the comparable study programme can be found at the Faculty of Social and Economic Studies in Ústí nad Labem. Over the years, the number of students has changed. In the academic year 2009/2010, the faculty in Ostrava had up to 3,500 enrolled students (compared to around 1,300 students at the other universities at that time). The average trend between individual faculties can be not easy to express. There is a risk of distortion when using the arithmetic mean. For this reason, the weighted arithmetic mean was used. The weights were expressed here as the proportion of students enrolled in the programme to the total number of students enrolled in a given year.

The analysis of the number of students per faculty was made according to the distribution: Bachelor's degree programme – part-time mode, Bachelor's degree programme – full-time; mode, Master's degree programme – part-time mode, Master's degree programme – full-time mode.

Consequently, the trend was calculated using a weighted arithmetic mean over a time series beginning in the academic year 2003/2004 and ending in the academic year 2018/2019. A time series of 16 academic years was created. The indicator values of the number of students at the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Pardubice (hereafter FEA UPce) were compared with the observed trend (University of Pardubice, 2020).

Figure 1. Comparison of the student number development of FEA UPce in the part-time bachelor's degree programme with average values for reference faculties in the Czech Republic

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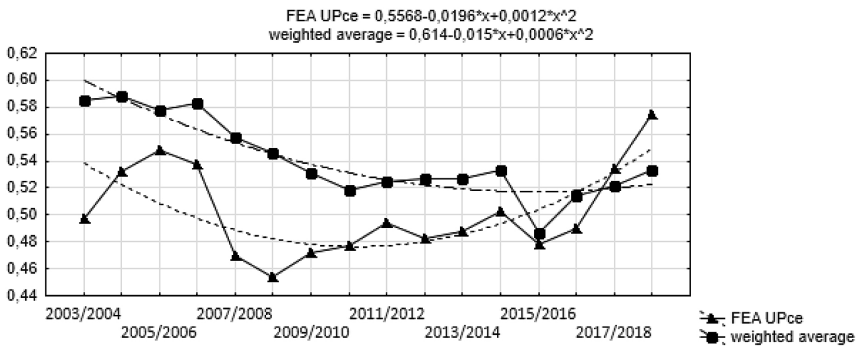


Source: MEYS (2020), own calculation.

Figure 1 shows the development of the converted number of students at FEA UPce compared to the average of seven economic faculties. For both series, a trend was expressed for the actual comparison of the development (see also the relevant regression equations). The stated  $R^2$  determination index helps to specify the degree of compliance of the trend with the original data. In this example, the trend was based on the quadratic function. The trend function for FEA UPce captures the original data better ( $R^2 = 0.73$ ) than in the case of the trend for other faculties ( $R^2 = 0.52$ ). If a lower determination index is accepted for the weighted average for all universities, a visual comparison of the trend of both functions can be made.

From the graph shown in Figure 1, a similar trend can be observed for both time series. Alongside the same impact of demographic development in the Czech Republic, another factor can be pointed out (interest in studying at FEA UPce). The student preference towards the undergraduate part-time mode of study does not differ significantly between the universities' individual faculties.

Figure 2. Comparison of the student number development of FEA UPce in full-time bachelor's degree programme with average values for reference faculties in the Czech Republic.



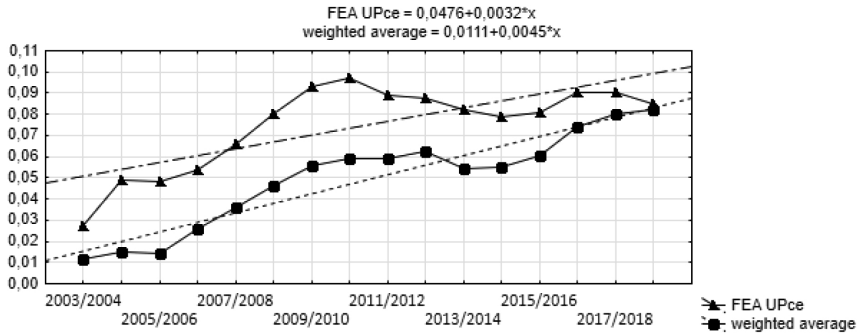
Source: MEYS (2020), own calculation.

Figure 2 shows that the trend for FEA UPce is similar to that of the weighted average, i.e. the selected seven faculties of economics in the Czech Republic. In terms of both trends, using visual comparison can be more functional. A quadratic function was used to compare the trend. In the case of FEA UPce ( $R^2 = 0.49$ ), it is still possible to visually predict a

similar trend if a lower determination index is accepted. For completeness, it is worth mentioning that  $R^2$  for the weighted values of all economic faculties reaches 0.83.

The trend of interest in studying at FEA UPce in full-time mode has increased in the last two years. Nonetheless, it will not be possible to determine whether the interest in learning at the FEA UPce has been rising long term. Therefore, it may be a small correction in the data. It can be stated that the interest of full-time students in FEA UPce does not differ much from the situation at the level of the selected faculties of economics.

Figure 3. Comparison of the student number development of FEA UPce in part-time master's programme with average values for reference faculties in the Czech Republic.



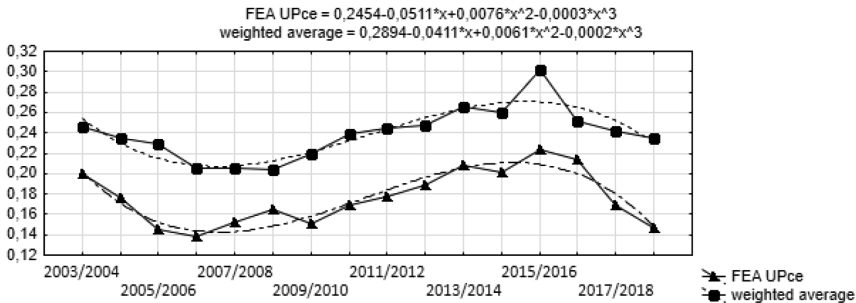
Source: MEYS (2020), own calculation.

In the case of a master's degree in part-time mode, a similar trend is observed when comparing the FEA UPce with other faculties included in the analysis. The situation does not differ much in both cases. Nonetheless, the linear trend showing the problem at selected faculties in the Czech Republic has a slightly higher value of the directive. In this case, it is relevant to state the importance of the determination index to demonstrate the possible distortion. While  $R^2$  is 0.89 for the weighted average,  $R^2$  is 0.58 for FEA UPce.

Finally, Figure 4 shows that the student interest in the full-time master's degree programme is not different from the other faculties included in the study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the situation at the individual faculties of economics is approximately the same. The impact of factors such as population change or student interest in a particular faculty is roughly the same as well. The comparison underlines similar values for  $R^2$ .

In both cases, the values exceed 0.8, specifically  $R^2$  for FEA UPce is 0.88, and for weighted values for all faculties, this index is 0.8.

Figure 4. Comparison of FEA UPce student development in full-time master's degree programme with average values for reference faculties in the Czech Republic.



Source: MEYS (2020), own calculation.

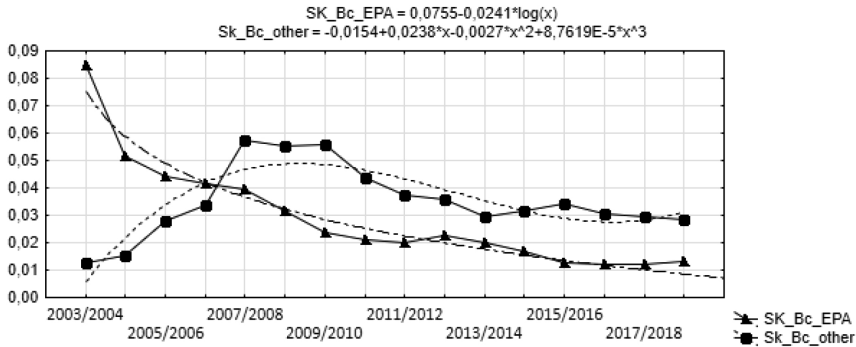
The comparison shows not only a trend that is the same as other faculties of economics, but when comparing the situation in the whole Czech Republic and the number of students at all universities, the share of FEA in the case of full-time students is 0.5%. This proportion is essentially the same in the time horizon examined. In the case of part-time students, their share is 0.67% (2019). In this case, there is a small decrease. For example, in 2005, part-time FEA students accounted for approximately 1% of all part-time students. Over the years, therefore, there has been a smaller decrease in these students. Accordingly, it can be confirmed that studying at universities (including FEA) goes hand in hand with the demographic development, which is reflected especially in full-time students who directly follow their secondary school studies.

### 3.3. Public Administration Education at the University of Pardubice

Having concluded through the analyses above that the demand for education at FEA UPce does not differ much from other universities' situation, now the focus can be on the next part of the analysis. It will be devoted to the research of PA and public sector employee education at FEA UPce. The analysis procedure is based on the same premise as the

previous analyses. The analysis will now focus on comparing the changes in the number of students studying at FEA UPce in the Economic Policy and Administration (EPA) study programme with students in other programmes. The degree level (bachelor's or master's) and the study mode (full-time or part-time) categories will also be maintained. Since part-time mode graduates are most likely to continue their employment in the field of PA and public sector institutions, the analysis will also start here with the part-time mode. Figure 5 shows the student number development in the EPA study programme (SK\_Bc\_EPA) compared to the other programmes (SK\_Bc\_other).

Figure 5. Comparison of the student number development of the EPA programme with other study programmes in part-time bachelor's degree programmes.

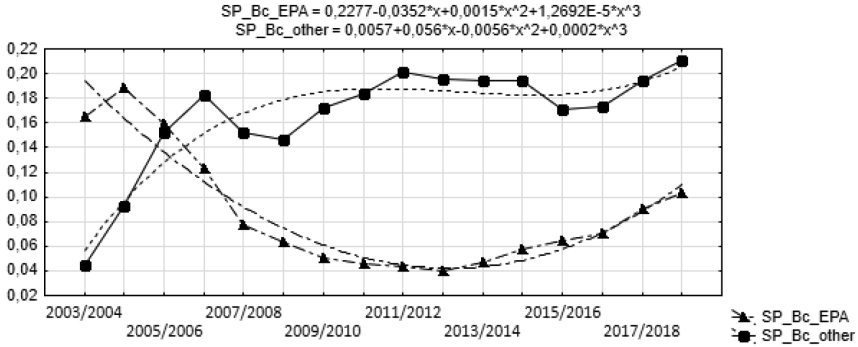


Source: FEA UPce (2020), own calculation.

The development in Figure 5 is influenced by the fact that education in the EPA programme has a long tradition at the FEA UPce. The major that is most populated by students is the Economics and Management programme. This study programme was created in 2005, and especially in the early years, there was an increase in the number of students. At the same time, the trend associated with the decline of students in the EPA programme began to show itself. For completeness, the values of the determination index are again stated here. The trend function for the EPA study program is very high in the amounts of the displayed points. R<sup>2</sup> reaches 0.95. The trend for other study programmes is supplemented by a lower value of the determination index. This value is 0.78, which allows full comparison.



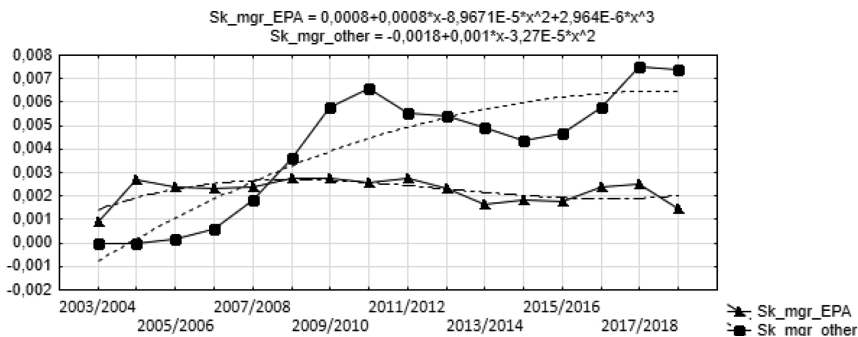
Figure 6. Comparison of the student number development of the EPA programme with other study programmes in full-time bachelor's degree programmes.



Source: FEA UPce (2020), own calculation.

The trend outlined above is similar to the part-time mode. The students' interest has decreased here as well. The exception is the situation in recent years, where the trend is reversed again. A similar trend also emerges for other programmes in comparison. The comparison can also be concluded with the evaluation  $R^2$ , which in both cases reaches high values (over 0.8). Although this study attempts to suppress the impact of demographic changes in society by calculating the trend on a weighted average basis, its total elimination is not possible. Increasing interest in the study is also partly related to the beginning of the so-called demographic curve.

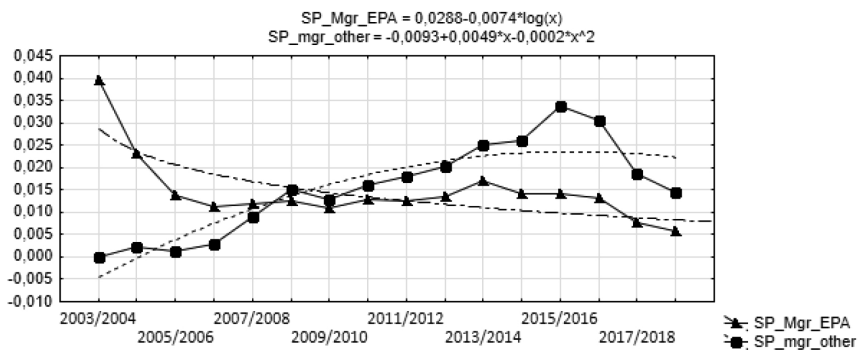
Figure 7. Comparison of the student number development of the EPA programme with other study programmes in the part-time master's study programme.



Source: FEA UPce (2020), own calculation.

On the other hand, interest in part-time education has stabilised (see Figure 7). The student interest in this study programme is relatively constant (over time and in comparison with other study interests). The comparison of both functions must be supplemented with information about  $R^2$ . In the case of other fields, its value is relatively high (0.81). In the case of EPA, a slight decrease in explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.46$ ) is observed.

Figure 8. Comparison of the student number development of the EPA programme with other study programmes in the full-time master's degree programme.



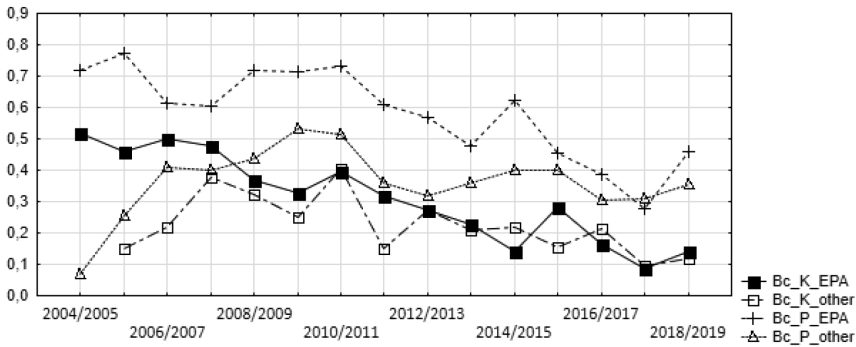
Source: FEA UPce (2020), own calculation.

Looking at Figure 8 above, it can be observed that the full-time master's degree programme also faces a similar situation. Student interest in studying EPA has been decreasing long term. Nonetheless, this trend is slowing down; and this slowing down also affects the other study programmes. Again, the demographic factor was not completely filtered out, and both values are lower ( $R^2$  for EAP is 0.59, while  $R^2$  for other programmes is 0.8). Thus, the student interest in this study will be outlined by illustrating the rate of throughput by examining the ratio of the students enrolled in the first year to the graduates of a bachelor's or master's programme. In this analysis, the situation is not rendered into trends using a weighted average. Instead, it will be based on an orientation analysis. In the research, a time shift was expected when students were expected to complete their studies correctly (i.e., the length of study in the bachelor's programmes is three years; in the master's programmes it is two years).

Nevertheless, some distortion is caused by the fact that according to Czech legislation (which is used to finance the universities), the standard period of study can be considered as  $n + 1$  years. The standard length,

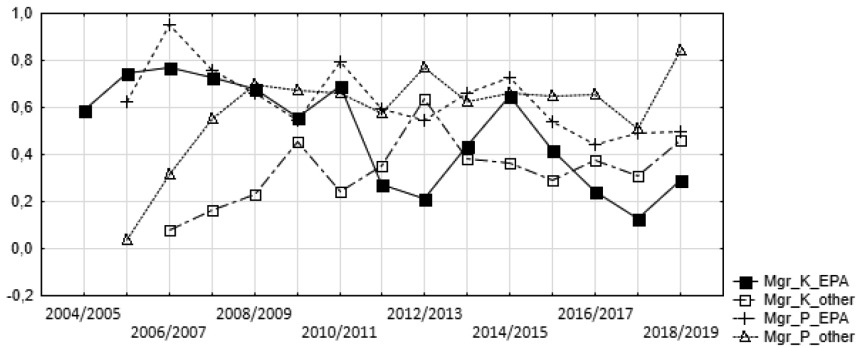
thereof, is four years for undergraduate study programmes and three years for master programmes. This means that the student can extend the standard period of study by one year without being fined. Only after this standard period of study has been exceeded can the student be given the appropriate fee for non-compliance. Nevertheless, this situation was not taken into account in the analysis.

Figure 9. Comparison of graduation rates in bachelor's degree programmes.



Source: FEA UPce (2020), own calculation.

Figure 10. Comparison of graduation rates in master's degree programmes.



Source: FEA UPce (2020), own calculation.

Figures 9 and 10 show that the success rate for the part-time mode of study (Bc\_K\_EPA and Bc\_K\_other; Mgr\_K\_EPA and Mgr\_K\_other) is usually lower. This phenomenon can be observed for both the EPA study programmes and other study programmes. This is mainly due to the na-

ture of the part-time form of study, where students are also employed. This means they must combine work, family, and study life. Another probable factor of a lower success rate in the study may be the fact that the student-teacher contact is diminished. This contact is limited to only several meetings during the semester, where not only the content of individual subjects is consulted, but also the process of particular conditions for passing the exams. The student is thus more dependent on self-study. For this reason, the FEA UPce is focusing more on the greater involvement of distance learning in the delivery of instruction.

## 4. Discussion

The education of employees for the field of PA can be divided into education and training. In this study, attention was given to the first type of education. While the analysis in many cases has shown interest in studying in the programmes, at the many public and private universities providing this type of higher education, the performed analysis showed a decrease in students' interest, especially at the bachelor's level, in the relevant educational programmes. Although an attempt was made to exclude the demographic factor from the analysis, the course of the trend in the case of the FEA suggests that this factor cannot be completely ruled out. At present, we are at the imaginary bottom of the population curve. If this is added to the significant fragmentation of study programmes (see Špaček & Nemeč, 2019), the declining trend of interest in studying is not surprising. This is especially true for part-time study, even though demography may not be reflected here, because age composition does not represent a specific age cohort but goes across generations. In the case of part-time students, there are probably difficulties associated with the need to combine study, work, and family life (after all, according to the FEA Information and Counselling Centre, this is one of the most common reasons for early termination of part-time students). From this point of view, a discussion in the framework of family policy could be encouraged. Issues of reconciling family and working life (especially in pre-school childcare) have recently appeared in the media and are the subject of political discussions. In addition, attempts have been made in recent years to counter the traditional overcrowded capacity in kindergartens and to support other forms of pre-school childcare (e.g. the project of so-called children's groups or micro-nurseries). Nonetheless, these efforts have not yet found a more comprehensive application. The difficulty of studying profession-

als is basically illustrated in the analysis by the lower graduate rate of part-time students.

Another option that could paradoxically support the higher education of officials is the tightening of conditions for training. The Ministry of the Interior has long drawn attention to a large number of training institutions which provide services of varying quality. The lack of control thus leaves responsibility for the level of courses to the training facility itself. (cf. MICR, 2019a, 2019b). It is the advantage of graduate officials that could again support interest in higher education. Improving quality in this area can be supported by the current reform of accreditation of universities (for more details, see Špaček & Nemeč, 2019). The so-called institutional accreditation which is granted, in the first round, was won by only five universities (the University of Pardubice being represented in these five). Nonetheless, this is a new issue that cannot yet be captured by the statistics.

## 5. Conclusion

Efficient PA and governance performance cannot be realised without educated and experienced workers. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of PA educational opportunities in the Czech Republic. The research itself is based on the example of the University of Pardubice, which realises the study programmes of Economic Policy and Administration at the level of both bachelor and master's degree programmes. The education can be realised through either full-time or part-time modes of study. The part-time way of study focuses on already employed workers who complete their university education for their profession.

The part-time mode of teaching in the Czech Republic is implemented through distance learning, which is complemented with direct education that takes place only a few times per semester with the student commuting to the faculty three to four times per semester. The study takes place on Friday and Saturday during which time the students are given consultations.

This fact alone could support the interest in the part-time form of education because the student is not so burdened with direct teaching. Besides, efforts to integrate e-learning into this form have recently been gaining ground.

The analysis at the level of the University of Pardubice showed a decreasing interest in programmes suitable for PA. Furthermore, in the part-time

mode of study this is a general trend. The same is reflected in other study programmes. Despite this, it is the lower rate of completion of studies undertaken that seems more problematic. The analysis evaluates the ratio between first-year students and graduates. The time delay given by the period is also taken into account. The analysis shows higher dropout rates of students accompany the part-time mode of study. Therefore, it is worth looking for steps to support the students' interest in studying. In addition to the classic employee-office relationship, the question of reconciling a professional (and educational) life with a family one also arises. It is therefore essential to take appropriate steps in family policies, especially for younger students with families. However, it is in this area that the situation in the Czech Republic has considerable reserves.

The analysis above compared interest in the education for PA and public sector institutions amongst bachelor's and master's degree programmes. It also compared two modes of study: full-time and part-time. Since part-time students are mostly employed people, the data on their studies give us a more in-depth insight into the field of education for PA. While full-time students are not as burdened by a lot of research and can find employment in the private sector, interest in studying part-time is decreasing. Nevertheless, this decline is increasingly slower. The interest in this type of education is somewhat balanced. However, a comparison of newly enrolled students and the number of graduates shows that maintaining their studies is difficult for part-time students, even though the required knowledge does not differ between full-time and part-time modes of study. This means that the problem should be sought in the context of part-time students. The part-time form of study is associated with the block form. The study is realised mainly through distance learning. Direct teaching takes place only a few times per semester. The problem therefore may not be with the education system, but instead the reconciliation of study, work and family life should be addressed.

The relationship between the professional and educational aspects is a matter of public administration's access to education itself. At the beginning of the study, a situation was mentioned where an employee is obliged to devote a certain number of days to his training and the competent authority must allow this. The difference in the levels of quality of the services provided by a large number of educational bodies is also problematic. Completed training may mean little more than an extra workload for the employee, especially when the increase in knowledge and skills does not reflect it. There is a call to link this type of education to university education institutions within the framework of lifelong learning programmes.

The qualitative aspect of knowledge can be better understood through the whole accreditation process of the programmes. Accreditation documents also contain information on academic staff. Organisation of professional training programmes that directly specialise in a certain area of PA can also be stated. As an example, on behalf of FEA UPce, the newly established professional study programme Financial Administration prepares employees for the Czech Trade Inspection Authority. However, this programme has only been implemented for one year, so it is as yet impossible to assess its success.

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## THE DEMAND FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE

### Summary

*Public administration is overwhelmingly crucial in providing citizens with the best accessible, affordable, effective, and efficient services. Governments need qualified human resources for satisfactory employment processes. Therefore, higher education institutions play a crucial role in supplying the education in the field of public administration. Universities and various institutes from all over the world have numerous public administration education programmes. In this context, students as well as professionals have a wide range of opportunities to get an education in public administration so as to be employed in the public or relevant sectors. In parallel with globalisation and the development of information technologies, new professions have started to emerge and significant changes have been observed in people's learning preferences. The Czech Republic is one of the significant Central European countries to offer an education in public administration. To this end, the study examines public administration education in the Czech Republic and looks more closely at public administration education at the University of Pardubice, which offers programmes in the area of public administration and the public sector. The analysis is performed based on a statistical evaluation of students' interest over a span of 16 years. Finally, the demand for public administration education at the University of Pardubice is analysed in order to put forth the current state of public administration education by comparing it with other relevant faculties in the Czech Republic. The conclusion of the study is devoted to considerations on the possibilities of supporting education in the Czech Republic. More consistent supervision from the position of the state seems appropriate, but also support for a family policy aimed at reconciling professional and family life.*

*Keywords: public administration education, comparative analysis, Czech Republic, University of Pardubice*

## POTRAŽNJA ZA UPRAVNIM OBRAZOVANJEM U ČEŠKOJ: ANALIZA SVEUČILIŠTA U PARDUBICAMA

### Sažetak

Javna uprava je od presudne važnosti za pružanje dostupnih, djelotvornih i učinkovitih usluga građanima. Javnim su upravama potrebni kvalitetno obrazovani profesionalci. Zato visokoškolske ustanove imaju presudnu ulogu u obrazovanju takvih kadrova. Sveučilišta i druge visokoobrazovne institucije u cijelome svijetu nude brojne programe upravnog obrazovanja. U tom kontekstu studenti, uključujući one koji su već zaposleni, imaju širok spektar mogućnosti obrazovanja prije zaposlenja ili nakon što su već zaposleni u javnoj upravi. Paralelno s globalizacijom i razvojem informacijskih tehnologija počele su se pojavljivati nove profesije, a primijećene su i značajne promjene u obrazovnim sklonostima. Češka je jedna od država srednje Europe koja nudi značajne mogućnosti upravnog obrazovanja. Cilj rada je ispitati upravno obrazovanje u Češkoj, posebno na Sveučilištu u Pardubicama, koje nudi studijske programe za rad u javnoj upravi i javnom sektoru. Analiza interesa za upravnim programima na Sveučilištu u Pardubicama provodi se na temelju statističke analize interesa studenata u zadnjih 16 godina te u usporedbi s drugim relevantnim visokoobrazovnim institucijama u Češkoj. U zaključku se ispituju načini unaprjeđenja upravnog obrazovanja. Potrebni su nadzor od strane središnje države, ali i nove politike usklađivanja profesionalnog i obiteljskog života.

Ključne riječi: upravno obrazovanje, komparativna analiza, Češka, Sveučilište u Pardubicama