Public Administration Education in Slovenia

Miha Brejc

1. Historical Framework

Slovenia, bordering Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary and with a Mediterranean coastline, is frequently described as being at the crossroads of Europe, between East and West and between the Mediterranean and the North. Its population is small, 2 million, which is a significant characteristic of the country when considering the planning and implementation of European ideas and concepts within its public administration system.

Slovenia is fortunate to have a School of Public Administration that enjoys a 40 year history of experience within the public administration system. The experiences, contacts and knowledge from the past can all be usefully assessed and it is encouraging that it is not necessary to “start from scratch” or spend an initial period fighting to become independent of a dominant Faculty.

The School of Public Administration was established in 1956 as a College of Tertiary Education by decree of the Government of the People’s Republic of Slovenia and its first generation of students were registered in 1957. The students recruited were all government administrators.

As there was very little independent, professional or responsible public administration in the former socialist countries, the School of Public Administration is the only university institution of its kind in Eastern Europe that can boast of a tradition stretching back for forty years.

The first curriculum was based on the empirically established need for "general type desk officers" capable of adapting quickly to administration tasks in various sectors of administration in different organisations. The curriculum offered comprehensive coverage of the governmental system and social order, political economy and managerial economics, employment relations, finance, economics, statistics and analysis, selected areas of civil law and public administration.

At that time the basic feature of public administration study was legal knowledge (70% of the programme) while economic and organisational subjects ensured the interdisciplinary character of the programme and thus produced graduates with a wider ranging competence.

In 1958 extramural courses were introduced, with regular study courses following four years later. In most West European countries the study of public administration was designed as a postgraduate study programme for employees who had already gained experience in public administration. In Yugoslavia, however, grammar school pupils were also admitted to university colleges of public administration with no practice at all in public administration or in any other fields.

After the initial few years it was observed that graduates were also finding employment in commerce and industry. Therefore the school altered its curriculum, by reducing the amount of legal courses and by increasing the weight of subjects from the fields of economics and organisation. So by 1972/73, the programme broke down to 46 percent on legal courses, 19 percent for economics and 23 percent for organisational studies; the first information course was also introduced. In the years to follow the percentage dedicated to legal studies was reduced a little further, as also was the amount of organisation studies, while the economic disciplines were increased.

In 1975 the Tertiary College of Public Administration became a member of the University of Ljubljana. In addition to regular and extramural study the School of Public Administration has supported relatively comprehensive research work; particularly relevant has been its contribution to the development of various forms of operational training. Over several decades the school has developed numerous forms of education and training for civil servants.
When in 1991 Slovenia became an independent country, pressure for reform of public administration was intense. This was partly due to internal dynamics in Slovenia itself and partly to the encouragement of the European Union. As an associate member of the European Union, Slovenia is developing its systems of public administration as quickly as possible in order to become compatible with the European and other systems of public administration.

A new Law on Tertiary Education was introduced on the basis of which the School of Public Administration became a college with a three-year university curriculum in Public Administration providing higher vocational education and a degree. Even while that law was still in preparation the School of Public Administration of the University of Ljubljana was developing three and four-year vocational programmes in Public Administration, in co-operation with the Institute of Public Administration, Liverpool, Caledonian University, Glasgow and Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften (Postgraduate School of Public Administration) Speyer within the framework of a TEMPUS project. Its three-year programme educates a professional employee capable of performing substantially diverse professional and also managerial jobs in public administration. The inter-disciplinary programme allows the graduates to adapt quickly to changing circumstances in the workplace. This three-year course was started in the academic year 1995/96.

The School of Public Administration and the University of Ljubljana’s Faculty of Economics have also developed a university programme, “Management in Public Administration” which is expected to be taught jointly and to start in the academic year 1999/2000.

An important new field of study at the School of Public Administration is Human Resources Management. In co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior and with the assistance of the government of Austria and of the Verwaltungsakademie des Bundes from Vienna, the School of Public Administration, in a two-year project, will train 15 experts who will carry out, within the framework of the education system for civil servants, comprehensive seminars on this subject in the following years.

The School of Public Administration is a member of the most relevant international organisations in the field of public administration (IASIA, IIAS, EGPA, NASPA, NISPAcee).

2. Institutional Setting

Slovenia has two universities, situated in Ljubljana (approximately 35000 students enrolled) and Maribor (approx. 12000 students). The only institution which provides a programme in Public Administration (defined as “academic degree programmes of at least one year, the primary focus of which is governance”) is the School of Public Administration (Visoka Upravna Šola) which is part of the University of Ljubljana. Currently at the design stage is a university programme that would be run by the School of Public Administration working in conjunction with the Faculty of Economics in the future. Courses in Public Administration (not programmes) are taught in the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law.

The School of Public Administration has a teaching staff of 37 (20 permanent) with 3000 undergraduate students (900 full-time, 2100 part-time).

It comprises the Institute for Local Self-Government, the Institute for the Introduction of Information Technology into Public Administration, the Research Institute for the School of Public Administration and the Chair of Public Administration, of Public Sector Economics and of Organisation and Information Sciences. There is also a Seminar Activities section and the Department for Student Affairs.
3. Positioning Academic Programmes in Public Administration in Relation to the Disciplines to which they are Most Closely Related

Programme: Degree in Public Administration (School of Public Administration: 3 years)

The public administration programme of the School of Public Administration was established on an interdisciplinary basis. Originally legal courses were dominant (70% of the curriculum), but this dominance has steadily receded. Currently legal sciences (including administrative and legal courses) form 46% of the curriculum.

Given that the School has always been a dedicated Public Administration institution, the weighting of professionally oriented courses concerned with issues of governance is very strong, and the current trend is towards increasing the weight of professionally oriented administration courses. The School has always taken into account the fact its graduates may find employment outside the public sector, and because of this the dominant approach to the development and delivery of Public Administration programmes in Slovenia is an interdisciplinary approach.

4. Comparative Analysis of the Contents of Public Administration Programmes.

A graduate of the School of Public Administration will have the title:

Diplomirani upravni organizator

Candidates may register if they have passed the Matura (Slovene equivalent to Abitur/Baccalaureate) or the leaving examination from any four-year secondary school programme. Candidates must be aged 18 and over. Candidates who hold another higher education degree may enter directly into the third year. The minimum number of years required for this degree is three (3) years.

Description of main Public Administration courses

Introduction to Public Administration

Teacher: Dr. Brezovšek

Lectures: 75 hrs
Practicals: 30 hrs

Public administration is one of the most important basic introductory theoretical courses, which has to make common the phenomenon of administration and specially public administration, and it's
development, traditions, structures, functions, and it's actual social role in the actual developed democratic societies (states). It is particularly important for students to understand the relationships between government, politics, public policy, and public administration. Students have also to know the most important and influent theories about public administration, as they have to understand the importance of organisational and functional approach to the PA. Module gives the knowledge of dynamics of PA, of it's input and output, and treats some important aspects of it's interactions within the administrative system and with its interactions within the administrative system and with its social environments.

**Administrative Law**

Teacher: M.Strmecki

Lectures: 60 hrs  
Practicals: 60 hrs

The aim of this course is to give an insight to students of a whole range of issues with which the public administration is concerned when confronted by a policy or service decision, where it is potentially constrained or affected in such decision by laws or other legal requirements. It is assumed in this course that the public administration and government in general is there to safeguard individual and collective rights, legal interests of the governed and that the public interest within the limits of the Rule of Law.

The course also highlights the European Union dimension at particular points of the curriculum, whenever such an approach is seen as necessary for a better understanding of complex issues that transcend the narrow limits of the *lex nationalis* of this country.

**Human Resources Management in Public Administration**

Teacher: Dr.Brejc

Lectures: 45 hrs  
Practicals: 45 hrs

Effective human resource management is vital for the success of any organisation. In this course student should a greater understanding of the role human resource issues in public administration, increased expertise in several personnel management skill areas including job analyses, job evaluation, career development and improved analytical, especially relevant to the personnel function.

**Informatics in Public Administration**

Teachers: Dr.Bavec, I.Sirnik

Lectures: 45 hrs  
Practicals: 45hrs
Information systems are getting more and more strategic role in development and management of modern organisations. In order to be able to use full potential of modern information and communication technology, development of information systems should be regarded as a permanent activity aiming to increase efficiency, productivity and quality of services in public organisations. Students as future managers have to understand the role of information systems in contemporary organisations and basic methods and techniques of their planning and development.

**The Legal System of Public Administration**

Teacher: Dr. Virant

Lectures: 45 hrs  
Practicals: 45 hrs

**Economics of the Public Sector**

Teacher: Z. Pečar, MBA

Lectures: 45 hrs  
Practicals: 45 hrs

**Administrative Training I (seminar)**

Teacher: Dr. Ivanko

Lectures: 30 hrs  
Seminars: 90 hrs

**Local Self-Government**

Teacher: S. Vlaj

Lectures: 45 hrs  
Practicals: 45 hrs

**Administrative Procedure and Civil Administrative Litigation**

Teacher: Dr. Jerovšek

Lectures: 60 hrs  
Practicals: 45 hrs

**Employment and Social Security Law**

Teacher: Dr. Kavar-Vidmar

Lectures: 60 hrs  
Practicals: 45 hrs
5. The European and Comparative Dimension.

The following are the courses which currently feature a significant European Public Administration content:

**Second Year Courses**

Administrative Law - M.Strmecki, M.Sc.

**Third Year Courses**

Local Self-Government - S.Vlaj, MBA
Customs and Excise System - S.Mikuž, M.Sc.
Management in the Public Sector - Z.Pečar, MBA

All the above courses are all taught regularly as an integral part of the three-year Public Administration course at the School of Public Administration.

There is definitely a growing awareness of European Public Administration in the School. This has been followed up by the creation of academic links between the School of Public Administration in Ljubljana and other institutions across Europe. Europe features strongly in professional seminars and above all, research. The government of Slovenia aims to adapt its public administration to European norms and a large part of the practical responsibility for this lies on shoulders of teachers of the School.

6. Research

*Research on Public Administration: a general overview*

The main research priorities of the School of Public Administration are geared towards the reform of Slovene Public Administration, the successful introduction of New Public Management methods and harmonisation with European Union standards. Research aims to learn as much as possible from more established public administration systems, including learning from the mistakes of others, and to choose the approaches and solutions which best fit the Slovene model. It also aims to keep abreast of the latest developments in Public Administration.

During the period before the Republic of Slovenia became an independent state, the School of Public Administration carried out research work in a special joint programme with the Research
Community of Slovenia. It also carried out numerous research projects commissioned by public administration and the business sector. Due to the large amount of pedagogical commitments and obligations and a different approach at the Ministry of Science and Technology towards carrying out research work within the University as well as other circumstances, the share of state finances of research work has seen a considerable decrease. In spite of this, research activities at the School of Public Administration are developing and are also acquiring new forms of organisation.

Thus own Slovene groups, as well as international research groups, have been established (e.g. the Ljubljana Group, established in Bovec on 28th September 1997), which have already designed and/or have been drafting important research projects for the development of the School of Public Administration as well as for Slovene public administration. International research includes work with the TEMPUS and PHARE projects.

Besides the School there is one additional research body - the Institute of Public Administration which is part of the Faculty of Law, and there are no non-University institutions that carry out research in Public Administration.

The European and comparative dimension in Public Administration Research.

Research at the School of Public Administration is increasingly oriented towards Europe. Members of all departments are in contact with and collaborating with colleagues from universities around the Europe. Being members of projects such as TEMPUS and PHARE and belonging to associations and groups such as EGPA, NISPAcee means the School takes an active part in debating and discussing upcoming issues on the European public administration scene.

Projects on the development of more effective administration, the use of Information Technology in Public Administration, the development of standards and measurements for performance evaluation in local administration to give a few examples, all include comparison and consideration of other European systems.

The Institute of Public Administration is about to embark on projects including a comparative study of several EU members’ local government regulations and research into the doctrine of “subsidiarity” in countries with developed local self-government.

The remit of the above mentioned “Ljubljana Group” is to study topical issues in the public sectors of the relevant countries (Britain -Liverpool and Glasgow-, Slovenia and Germany) as well as more broadly.

Research into New Public Management of course looks at the public sectors of countries more advanced in its implementation.

Approximately 20% of projects have a clear European dimension and many others make reference to or are influenced by European issues.

List of main researchers

Dr. M. BREJC, Professor

Dr. Stanka SETNIKAR-CANKAR, Assistant Professor

Dr. Mirko VINTAR, Assoc. Professor

Dr. Grega VIRANT
Public administration graduates are perceived as competent and fully satisfactory. They usually perform middle-management functions, or work as inspectors or advisors. Graduates of the School can be found at all levels of the Slovene Public Administration. Due to the dynamics of Slovene society and given the relatively small size of many of her regional administrative centres it generally takes graduates longer to find employment outside of Ljubljana. Being the seat of Government and also the largest city, the lion’s share of administration jobs in Slovenia are available in the capital itself. However job prospects of graduates in general are good. Even those who decide not to go directly into public administration are successful in finding employment.

An estimate, based on a project looking at the professional profile of graduates, is that 70% of graduates find work in Public Administration. It is not possible to give more precise information regarding the question of whether they are centrally or locally employed at the moment.

The School of Public Administration has been producing graduates for over forty years, in cooperation with Slovene public administrators and because of this the School is obviously very well known in the public administration circles of Slovenia. The curriculum is specifically designed to produce professionally qualified graduates with wide ranging administrative competencies. Therefore it is not surprising that a high proportion of graduates go on to work within the public administration system.

As yet in Slovenia there is no market style system for research whereby the Government would purchase research as an end product of universities. Financing of research, however, does also come from the Government as well as from other sources.

8. In-service training and staff development

Post entry pre-service training for employees of the Slovene public administration is carried out by the School of Public Administration and the Academy of Public Administration.

The Academy is part of the Ministry of the Interior and is playing an increasing role in this kind of training.
Introductory courses are available for newly recruited staff. Currently the School runs about 60% of pre-service training seminars and the Academy about 40%, as the Academy has increased its role in such matters over time.

Further work includes elected representatives receiving training when they gain office, as do their administrative staff, e.g. seminars for new mayors, seminars for municipal secretaries on running a budget. The School has also prepared manuals on a whole series of matters relating to local government, e.g. chairing a meeting, administrative principles etc.

The School of Public Administration is also the leading institution in the field of on-the-job-training for public administration employees in Slovenia. In 1997 the School organized over 40 different seminars, covering 12 subject matter fields with 1217 participants.

The most important of these are seminars to prepare public administration employees for professional examinations.

Another type of entirely new seminar has been organised for employees in local self-government. Together with specialists the School prepared the first draft programme containing more up-to-date approaches as suggested by the European Council.

The School adapted the programmes of other seminars to general trends of development within public administration science around the world also to the current needs for reform of Slovene public administration and the market orientation of the Slovene public sector as a whole.

In designing the new seminars priority was given to the following themes:

- Development of democracy
- Introducing New Public Management
- Evaluations required for assessing service delivery in the public sector
- Accession to the European Union and Slovene public administration reform
- Human Resource Management
- Economics of the public sector and of local communities
- Re-engineering administration processes
- Development of Public Administration
- The role of Informatics and the media in democratic societies
- Privatisation, licensing, public contracts
- Customer-oriented public service delivery

In order to inform interested parties and as part of the continuous education of employees in public administration, regular seminars are organised in agreement with major clients on subject matters adapted to their respective requirements.

In 1996, with the financial assistance of the Austrian government and the Academy of Public Administration in Vienna, the School of Public Administration organised and carried out a cycle of four one-week seminars and in 1997 of seven one-week seminars on Human Resource Management for 16 trainees from the Ministry of the Interior. The project was completed in June 1998. At the same time this project offers the possibility of complementing the cycle of seminars with specialist study in the field of Human Resource Management and of training new trainers for seminar activities.

Other types of training are found at the School of Public Administration, though they are not given as much weight as the fundamental areas of public administration support. The school runs some seminars on administration for businesses and we are able to apply our expertise to particular fields as and when clients show an interest.

European and comparative topics do not as yet directly play a very large role in training system, in spite there is a large influence from Europe which is increasing rapidly. As Slovenia remains a country in transition there are many areas and particular local circumstances, brought about by both our size and previous socialist administration, which require urgent attention. As response to these
prioritised training needs there is undoubtedly a strong indirect influence from Europe, especially as a clearly stated goal of the current Public Administration reforms in Slovenia is to prepare for accession to the European Union. Indeed one of training seminars is entitled, “Accession to the European Union and Slovene Public Administration Reform”.
So despite European and comparative topics not yet playing a large role in terms of percentage of dedicated seminars, these topics are nevertheless of considerable importance. Given the research carried out by the School, the stronger links with European academic partners as well as the overall aim of the reforms, and the widely acknowledged feeling within Slovene public administration that Europe is the next “big issue” there can be no disputing this importance.

9. Conclusions

It is clear that ‘Europe’ is a growing dimension in the academic programmes in the field of Public Administration in Slovenia. Europe has become an important theme in theory, but in practice the courses that are definitely “Europeanised” remain a minority of the overall total.
The main focus of Slovene Public Administration at the moment is reform. The reforms are intended to change the system from top to bottom, introducing a more customer responsive administration system through the implementation of New Public Management concepts. The system will become less centralised, more open and accountable and more efficient. There is certainly a lot of work to be done to achieve our goals.
As one of the overall goals of the reforms is accession to the European Union, it is clear that Europe is a keynote idea within the reforms. Indeed, advice and suggestions from the European Council have been major factors in initiating the renewal of the Public Administration.
So, in the short term, we are sure that the “European” courses and seminars will increase as Europe gradually becomes the main issue in Slovene administration, which should occur as the reforms progress. Already other European institutions have collaborated in the preparation of training courses.
In the long term we expect that a balance will be found between courses, research and seminars that will study issues with a European dimension and courses, research and seminars that will focus on local conditions that are specific and relevant to Slovenia.

Appendix 1

Public Administration Programmes Taught in the Republic of Slovenia:

Degree in Public Administration (3 years)
Slovene Title: Diplomirani upravni organizator
Appendix 2

A Complete List of Courses in the Slovene Higher Education Degree in Public Administration:

1st Year

1. Introduction to Public Administration
2. Introduction to Law
3. Constitutional Law
4. Statistics
5. Informatics
6. Foundations of Economics
7. Foreign Language (English or German)
8. Computer Training (seminar)
9. Physical Education

Practical Work

2nd Year

1. Legal System of Public Administration
2. Commercial Status Law
3. Administrative Law
4. Human Resource Management in Public Administration
5. Informatics in Public Administration
6. Economics in the Public Sector
7. Business and Office Communication
8. Administrative Training I (seminar)

Practical Work
3rd Year

Compulsory subjects:
1. Local Self-Government
2. Administrative Procedure and Civil Administrative Litigation
3. Employment and Social Security Law
4. Information Systems
5. Administrative Training II (seminar)

OPTIONAL MODULES:

A. Finances and Taxes:
1. Public Revenue System
2. Budgetary Financing
3. Principles and Techniques of Financial Control
4. Accountancy

B. Public Administration and Law
1. Administrative and Legal Home Affairs
2. Regional Planning and matters related to building
3. Customs and Excise System
4. Methods and Techniques of Administrative Work

C. Organisation and Informatics
1. Operation and Application of Information Sources
2. Management in the Public Sector
4. Organisation of Work Processes

Dissertation
## Appendix 3

**Contact Details for Research Staff at the School of Public Administration**

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