

# Public Policy Education: One Custom-Made Program?

## Behind the scenes of public policy education program

Continuous education of the employees has multiple benefits for individuals, work organizations, and society at large by enhancing employability, fostering innovation, and making individuals active citizens. Comprehensive and rapid changes in the modern labor market lead to the emergence of new jobs, as well as constant changes in the content of the existing ones. One of the inevitable drivers of changes in the labor market is certainly modern technology. According to a report by the McKinsey Global Institute, which examines possible scenarios for the automation (robotization) of jobs, it can be expected that 400 to 800 million employees worldwide could lose their jobs by 2030 as a result of robotization. Some of the administrative jobs are cited as the "most vulnerable" to automation. Finally, apart from modern technology, an important feature of the modern labor market is the aging of the workforce and the extension of working life. The share of employees aged 50 and over in the labor market increased from 24% to 31% over a 10-year period. As the OECD report vividly states about education and the need for lifelong learning, if one took the example of a person who would start working at the age of 22 and retiring at the age of 66, that same person would have a quarter of working life ahead at age fifty-five. With all of the above in mind, the only thing that is certain is that individuals will have to learn constantly, and above all, in order to change their jobs, and finally themselves, through continuous improvement.

When it comes to changes in the labor market and innovation, the first association is usually not the public sector, but the public sector is a necessary link where innovation is "filtered out", for example, so that they are given a formal and legal frame of reference, or broader, social application. In addition, the indispensable decision making in all the important changes in democratic societies has the civil sector, which is an indispensable partner in making important social decisions. Naturally, one can say in common, in the case of Serbia, quite sensitively, the meeting place of these three sectors is the domain of public policy. In Serbia, there are currently no results and a systematic study program that covers the range of topics relevant to public policy making and analysis. In this regard, meeting with three sectors in the field of public policy, at the same time present the meeting of individuals of different education, experience, years of service and motivation. In addition, these actors come from work organizations that have a different attitude towards people's education, development and employment, as well as from different organizational cultures.

The Interdisciplinary Short Cycle Program in Public Policy Creation and Analysis (PPMA) is an Erasmus + KA 2 project emerging in the context of public administration

reform launched in 2014. Since there is no targeted and systematic study program in Serbia covering the whole range of areas important for policy making and analysis, the PPMA aims to design and implement a dozen contemporary, interdisciplinary local short cycle programs / modules in public policy at universities in Serbia.

### Employee motivation for public policy education

The first step in designing and developing public policy education programs is to analyze the knowledge and competency needs of public policy employees from the public, private and civil sectors. An important component of the needs assessment in this area is the evaluation of employees' motivation to participate in the public policy education program. Therefore, a special study was designed to examine and identify factors (topics) that can influence employees' motivation to participate in the program. The content of the program was analyzed within the research (a proposal of about a dozen courses, but respondents were also asked to provide their suggestions on the expected form and content of the program); the support of the training organization and the desire for training in public policy. The above topics were selected on the basis of the insights from the research in the field of motivation for learning and training of employees, as well as on the basis of discussion on the needs of concrete research with representatives of the project team.

### How was the research conducted?

The research used the qualitative methodology - focus groups and in-depth interviews. The qualitative methodology was chosen because it was necessary to identify and understand all topics relevant to understanding the motivation of the employees to engage in PPMA. The research included a total of 22 interviewees. 12 of which are public sector interlocutors (4 of which are senior advisers / directors); 4 directors / senior managers from the private sector; and 6 civil sector experts. All respondents, to varying degrees, and from different angles, are engaged in public policy.

### What are the main findings of the research?

As it can be seen from Table 1, there is a need for public policy education predominantly in the public and civil sectors. Again, when it comes to organizational support, there is considerable similarity between the public and private sectors, characterized by the limited time resources for further training and the greatest support given to short-term and targeted ("situational") training. The desire for improvement in public policy is most highlighted in the civil sector, and least expressed in the private sector, where the greatest value is the instrumentality of training and transferability of

knowledge in order to increase employability in the private sector. It should also be emphasized that the public and private interviewees had some reservations about universities as the main organizers of the program, which in their view should be "practical" and "applicable". On the other hand, civil society interlocutors see the university as a synonym for acquiring systematic, basic knowledge.

Table 1. Overview of the most important insights received from public and private sector interviewees regarding motivation for public policy education

	Public sector	Private sector	Civil sector
Content and form of the program (extrinsic factors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct consultation on specific public policy is most desirable</li> <li>• short-term, targeted trainings, with an emphasis on day-to-day tasks ("situational learning") are sought for</li> <li>• Most often cited is the need for knowledge in the field of Economics and Public Policy Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They want a "map of public institutions" and information on how to communicate, whom to turn to for help, who to negotiate with, etc.</li> <li>• The public policy education program is more "general education"</li> <li>• Short-term, targeted trainings are sought, with an emphasis on competitiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A metaphor program for a "meeting place" of all relevant actors - an opportunity to get to know each other, create shared resources</li> <li>• They see the certificate as a good basis for communication and partnerships</li> <li>• Most interested in topics related to economic and financial aspects of public policy</li> <li>• They would like the program to help them map public institutions, systematize steps in public policy making, how they communicate with decision makers</li> </ul>
Organization support (extrinsic factors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex process of approving of training / further education</li> <li>• Few days available for education leave</li> <li>• Those who have multiple and demanding jobs have the least opportunity to be trained</li> <li>• Support for further education is highly dependent on the superintendent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater openness to market offerings if they are tailored to develop specific skills</li> <li>• A strict attitude towards absence due to training / education</li> <li>• The effects on work must be clear and visible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The support of the organization is significant, but a small number of employees and demanding projects are an obstacle</li> </ul>
The desire for improvement in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is, in principle, an interest in professional development in this area,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They highly value transferability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is considered very attractive, transferable, interesting and useful</li> </ul>

<p>public policy (intrinsic factors)</p>	<p>but "satiety" and "burnout" are evident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They find it difficult to take the time to learn unless they are physically separated from their jobs</li> <li>• Prices of practitioners who "actually did what they talk about"</li> <li>• They are hindered by highly specialized jobs that do not see the bigger picture, and therefore the need for training in this area</li> </ul>	<p>of skills and in that sense their main question is how much and whether the program will contribute to their employability (motivation is more extrinsic, instrumental)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are not clear about the place of the private sector in public policy</li> </ul>	
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## What next?

This research has raised many important questions, and one of the most important is certainly whether it is possible to create a comprehensive public policy education program tailored to all stakeholders. Also, how and how often these actors meet, how they improve in this area, and whether they use and share some common resources. Finally, do they and how much do they have awareness of labor market trends and do they recognize the area of public policy as a place of mutual encounter that can trace their future and shape their careers?

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