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CHALLENGES AND SECURITY
PERSPECTIVES**

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ОБЛАСТА НА БЕЗБЕДНОСТА -
ОБРАЗОВНИ ПРЕДИЗВИЦИ И
ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ЗА БЕЗБЕДНОСТА**

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EDUCATION IN SECURITY STUDIES: EXPERIENCES WITH THE STUDY PROGRAM OF SECURITY AT THE FACULTY OF SECURITY - SKOPJE

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Abstract

Education in security studies proves to be crucial for the development of human resources in the institutions of the security system in the Republic of North Macedonia. In response to the requirements for education of staff needed in the security sector, several higher education institutions in the country have accredited study programs in this area. Thus, ten years ago, the first generation of students were enrolled in the study program of security in the first cycle of studies at one of the oldest faculties in the field of security in Southeast Europe - the Faculty of Security - Skopje, at the St. Kliment Ohridski University - Bitola, in order to expand the offer of study programs.

The main idea of the paper is to present the historical development of higher education in the area of security in the country through a comparative analysis of the current conditions in certain countries, and to present the results of the limited research conducted on students enrolled in the study program of security at the Faculty of Security - Skopje.

The main goal of the paper is to emphasize the importance and significance of education of personnel in the field of security as a necessity in the organization and functioning of the security system, but also to present the experiences and perspectives of authors and students enrolled in the study program. The historical method, the comparative method and the method of analysis will be used in achieving the goals of the paper.

Keywords: *higher education, security, students, study program.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Investing in higher education by creating offers for study programs based on the needs of the community and introducing competitiveness between higher education institutions should be the best approach of a country in the planning and implementing its policies in higher education and ensuring stable competition in the labor market.

The tradition of having special study programs in the area of security studies in higher education in Macedonia shows a strong interest among future students for this type of studies, but also an appropriate reaction by higher education institutions through offers of study programs in security studies, as the most affected entities which create and implement these study programs.

From the classical studies intended for the police and the civil and military part of the defence, trends in the conception of the studies go to defining a structure that has a pronounced civil dimension and correlates with the events in the domestic and international security environment. Exactly such an approach is included in this critical analysis, based on the approach chosen when creating the study program of security. The analytical and critical approach to the stated study program should answer whether the offered study program interacts with a broader approach in security studies and whether it meets the expectations of the end users – the first cycle students.

2. HISTORY AND CONDITIONS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SECURITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

In 1977, the Centre for Education of Security and Social Self-Defence Personnel (COKBOS acronym in Macedonian) was established by law (“Official Gazette of the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia”, nos. 30/77, 29/83, 34/83 and 36/88), within which, as separate organizational units were established: the High School of Internal Affairs, the Faculty of Security and Social Self-Defence, the Sector for permanent education, the dormitory and the general services. The establishment of the Centre came as an answer to the perceived needs to train staff for the security services, in which, in addition to the Internal Affairs Services as the main potential employer, they also include the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, the Republic Secretariat for Territorial Defence, joint labour organizations for the execution of criminal sanctions and other institutions that possess certain powers and competencies in the field of security.

The COKBOS in Skopje was established as the first and only higher education institution for education of staff in the field of security and social self-protection of the former SFR Yugoslavia. In SFR Yugoslavia there were high schools for internal affairs in all republics and the Autonomous Province of Kosovo, except in Montenegro, and higher schools for internal affairs in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, Socialist Republic of Croatia and Socialist Republic of Slovenia (Faculty of Security - Skopje, 2017:5) until the collapse of the country and in the first decade of independent Macedonia. The faculty in the mentioned period was a member of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje with an educational profile for performing scientific research work in the field of security, but also applied activity related to providing forensic and technical expertise.

In 1995, Article 29 of the Law on the Establishment of a Centre for Education of Security Personnel (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia”, no. 27/95) stipulated that the activities of the Faculty of Security and Social Self-Protection should end by 2002. Article 25 stipulated that the Faculty of Security and Social Self-Protection will not enrol full-time and part-time students and postgraduate students after the enforcement of the law. Article 26 prescribed the teaching for the current students at the faculty to be conducted until the academic year 1997-1998, and Article 27 prescribed the duty of students who have acquired the status of graduates to complete their studies within three years of studying. Students enrolled in postgraduate studies were required to obtain a master's degree within two years of passing the postgraduate examinations, but no later than September 30, 2002. Due to the effects of the politicization of higher education in security and because of the Police Development Strategy (2003), a special Law on the Police Academy (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia”, no. 40/03) was adopted in 2003. The legal basis enabled the Faculty of Security to continue its activity, but this time under the concept of Police Academy and as a member of the St. Kliment Ohridski University from Bitola. In

2008, the Police Academy was transformed into two separate institutions. One of them is the Faculty of Security - Skopje (Law on the Establishment of a Higher Education Institution “The Faculty of Security-Skopje” within the St. Kliment Ohridski University in Bitola (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia”, no. 81/08) which continued to perform its work as the legal successor of the Police Academy and again as an organizational unit of the University of Bitola.

Currently (2022) at the Faculty of Security there are security studies of the first, second and third cycle. Namely, within the first cycle of studies, students acquire basic knowledge about the security of all study programs, and more detailed knowledge about security is acquired at the study programs in Security, i.e., Security and Euro-Atlantic Integrations. The second cycle of studies accredited two academic study programs for security which offer advanced and upgraded knowledge, with different duration of the study process (one and two years), as well as a specialized study program for professional studies in security lasting one year. In the third cycle of studies, the faculty has accredited one study program in Security.

The study program in Security (Faculty of Security - Skopje, 2022) of the first cycle of studies, which was first accredited ten years ago, is the main axis in the overall continuity of studies at the faculty. It offers general knowledge from security studies, with a special focus on the national, regional, and Euro-Atlantic context in the security studies. As a study program which has two successful accreditations, it is quite acceptable to be the subject of analysis, to see the attitudes and experiences of the students and the faculty regarding the structure of the program, interest in studying and the recognition of the educational profile in the labour market.

In this part, it should be noted that the offer for civil studies in the field of security studies in the Republic of North Macedonia is present at other state and private universities. The study programs last for three or four years. Thus, the first cycle of studies at the European University at the Faculty for Detectives and Criminalistics within the study program of Criminalistics has content related to security studies (European University, 2022). At the American University of Europe (formerly FON University), at the Faculty for Detectives and Security, in the first cycle of studies, again within the study program of Criminalistics there are several courses through which students study security (AUE, 2022; AUE, 2022a). The Faculty of Philosophy at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje on the first cycle of studies has a study program called Security, Defence and Peace (Faculty of Philosophy, 2022). The South East European University in Tetovo (SEEU, 2022) at the Faculty of Law of the first cycle of studies has a module in Criminalistics and Security, and the State University in Tetovo (University in Tetovo, 2022) has a similar approach in positioning the subject programs of security studies.

From the above review it can be concluded that this is a kind of reaction of higher education institutions to meet the needs for accreditation of security studies and finding institutional interest (including financial) from it, in a national context filled with many security developments in the immediate and wider environment. Additionally, the alleged circumstances are influenced by the tradition in practicing security and the desire of the citizens to contribute to the strengthening of the security institutions in the country.

3. EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SECURITY STUDIES IN EUROPE

Civilian studies in the field of security and related security study programs are increasingly becoming part of the offer of university studies in the field of security studies and political studies, separately or as part of programs covering European studies, international relations and international politics.

To have a better overview of the offer of study programs from the first cycle of studies in security or safety studies, when searching with keywords (security study, Europe, university) on the Internet browser and on certain platforms (Bachelor's Portal, 2022), where all study programs in the world or a particular region are cumulated in the analysis of the found study programs, only the programs that are part of the social sciences should be analysed. This means that the selection of the results excludes all those programs that last less than three years and are in the field of technical sciences, i.e., programs that are dominated by information security and safety and health at work.

However, even with the exclusion of technical programs, there are many study programs from security and related studies in Europe whose structure is predominantly composed of social science subjects.

3.1. United Kingdom

The UK is the country with the largest offer in security studies. The International Relations and Conflict Studies (IRCS) programme at Queen's University Belfast provides students with an in-depth, interdisciplinary understanding of contemporary politics, international affairs, and conflict situations in their political, historical, cultural, economic, and legal dimensions. Dedicated modules introduce students to core concepts and debates in International Relations and the study of conflict, as well as to the European experience of regional integration. Students will acquire familiarity with the experiences of differing national politics and societies, facilitating the development of culturally sensitive cross-national comparisons. The International Relations program at Queen's is about more than just armed conflict and insurgency. It also examines such trends as globalisation and considers the challenge from the rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the process of European integration, humanitarian issues (such as poverty, development, and refugees), and the role of the media in conflict. The academic study of politics is concerned with the sources of conflict, co-operation, power and decision-making within and between societies, how differences are expressed through ideology and organisation, and how, if at all, disagreements and problems are resolved. The study's perspective regarding the conflict encompasses co-operation and its origins, dynamics, and trajectories, at theories of society, at the value and ethical basis of political ideas and action, and at politics in different national and historical contexts (Queen's University Belfast, 2022).

With the War, Peace and International Relations degree offered at the University of Reading in the Department of Politics and International Relations, there is a course that enables prospective students to specialise in war, peace, strategy and the issues that surround conflict (University of Reading, 2022).

Alongside the core spine of the Global Challenges (Security) degree at Brunel University London, there are side topics such as climate change, sustainable development, migration, terrorism, inequality and poverty and how they affect the world we live in, this pathway will give you a greater understanding of security issues, in space or in cyberspace (Brunel University London, 2022).

The undergraduate studies in Crime and Security Science at the University College London (UCL) aims to create a generation of leaders in the crime, intelligence and security sectors (UCL, 2022).

While placing University of Bradford's International Relations, Politics and Security Studies within historical context, it focusses particularly on recent and contemporary processes, trends and problems: examining efforts to respond to international and regional challenges in the spheres of policy and practice (University of Bradford, 2022).

Most often, the programs are combined with studies in political science and have a pronounced dynamic part that means monitoring/observation of the current and most relevant security developments in the world. The approach is not only theoretical, but also touches on the processes of analyzing the security situation through a cognitively stimulating process that involves the practical implementation of critical theory from security studies and gaining skills in the decision-making and security policy-making processes.

Some of the programs have built-in content that is not purely security but are the main triggers for security phenomena, such as climate change and migration.

3.2. The Netherlands

The Netherlands is also a dynamic environment in terms of pragmatism in creating study programs and detail with relevant topics. Security challenges such as terrorism and cybercrime rank among the most pressing issues. In the Security Studies programme from Leiden University the focus of the study programs is in the 21st century security challenges and to teach students to devise strategic solutions to a complex world (Leiden University, 2022).

It is hard to think of a recent news story that has not involved safety and security. Headlines talk of conflicts, crime, terrorism, racial violence and threats. Safety & Security Management Studies (SSMS) specialists are at the helm in the control room in a crisis and at the frontline with organisational safety and security issues. Safety and Security Management Studies is offered at the Hague University of Applied Sciences (The Hague University of Applied Sciences, 2022).

3.3. Czechia

BA in International Relations: The study program of security at the Anglo-American University is carried out by a number of experts from all over the world who bring years of professional experience to the classroom. This program enables students to fully experience the cultural dynamism of Central Europe. Students can expect to gain a solid background in international relations and political theory, history, philosophy, nationalism, security, etc. Security studies is a traditional subdiscipline of international politics dedicated to war, security, violence, terrorism, and the role of states, organizations, and individuals in perpetrating and combating the afore mentioned. Critical security studies are not limited to violence only; they also cover issues pertaining to use and misuse of power, justice and citizen's rights. Upon completion, students acquire an ability to critically examine and address the international/intercultural challenges of our time, such as global qualities, economic dependency, conflict and security, or globalization, including the evolving roles of organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union (Anglo-American University, 2022).

4. RESULTS FROM A RESEARCH OF THE STUDY PROGRAM OF SECURITY AT THE FACULTY OF SECURITY - SKOPJE

In the research conducted for the purposes of the paper, 62 first cycle's students took part. 43.5% of them were from the first year, 17.7% from the second year, 11.3% from the third year and 27.4% from the fourth year. 45.2% of the respondents were male and 54.8% were female. 48.4% of the respondents have completed secondary high school education, and the rest (51.6%) have completed secondary vocational education.

Regarding the reasons why students chose to enrol at the Faculty of Security - Skopje, personal desire dominates (88.7%), for 6.5% of respondents graduation at the faculty is a prerequisite for secure employment, for 3.2% enrolment is related to a certain family tradition to study at the faculty (including the fact that someone from the family is or has worked in the police as a result of graduating from the faculty), and only 1.6% of the respondents stated that they chose to study at the faculty for the carrier advancement in the current job.

Surprising are the attitudes of exactly 50% of the surveyed students that before enrolling at the Faculty of Security they had sufficient knowledge of security, while 45.2% of the students had partial knowledge of security and only 4.8% of the respondents had no prior knowledge of security. Since no additional sub-questions were created to understand what security knowledge implies for students, the content of the answers obtained can be interpreted in several ways. The reasons for such answers can be sought primarily in the interest of young people for good action movies from various productions with crime plots and the interest of young people to empathize with the main characters of crime investigators where justice overcomes injustice.

Such answers deserve further research, which should include certain additional questions in the questionnaire, to see how well the answers match the reality of their perception and to validate the basic assumption of the above position.

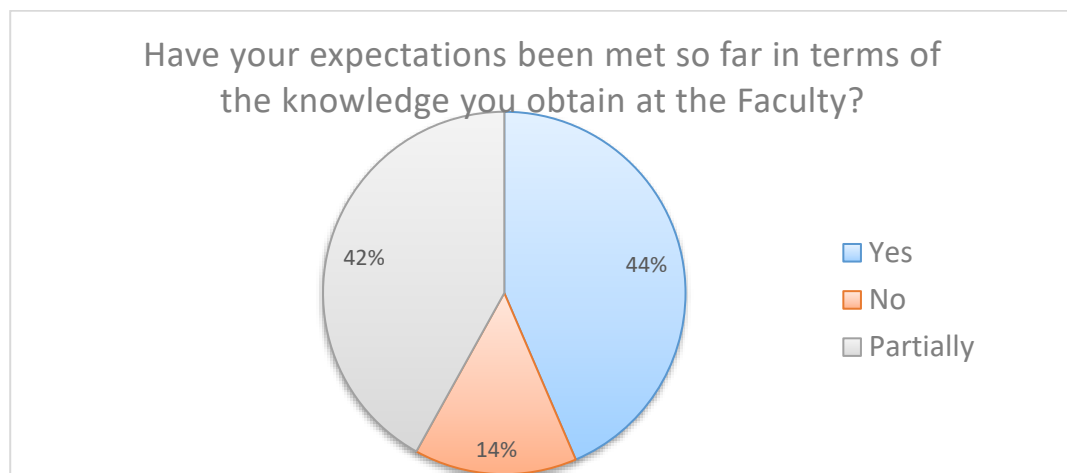


Figure 1: General overview about expectations of the students after graduation from the Faculty of Security-Skopje

Given the students' answers to this question, it is undoubtedly necessary to pay more attention to the qualitative redesign of the study program of security in the first cycle of studies. The subject contents of the program should be enriched with topics that imply the acquisition of broader knowledge (of political, economic, geopolitical, and other character) so that the students of this study program can gain skills and knowledge for a more analytical approach to certain security developments and conditions. In addition to the political processes which are an integral part of the analysis of the security situation, students should gain skills and knowledge to identify indicators of disruption of national, regional, and international security, as well as the overall decision-making process in a more complex security ecosystem.

To the question of what their expectations after graduation are, the main expectations of the respondents after graduation are to be employed in the Ministry of Interior and other security institutions. The answers indicate that they do not have a clear idea of the competencies, functions and the mission of the Ministry of Interior and other security institutions, nor do they distinguish between what the professional dictionary defines as public and state security.

The answers of the respondents to this question completely coincide with the real situation regarding the interest in employment in the Ministry of Interior and other security institutions. Namely, years ago the interest in police officers was ten and more times higher than the announced admission quotas. Competitions for admission to highly educated staff are not so frequent, so often active, and graduate students are firstly applying to be employed as police officers (with completed secondary education). Students during their working life activate the benefits (diploma) from the completed higher education in accordance with the acts of systematization of jobs in security institutions and use that path for carrier promotion.

On the other hand, the fact is the continuous need for employment of new staff in the police and security institutions in Republic of North Macedonia. The lack of staff in the institutions is, among other things, a result of the shorter working life of the employees, using the beneficiary length of service opportunities. With the beneficial length of service, most of them, when they are at the peak of their work experience, at the age quite above 50, retire, due to which there is a need to hire new young staff.

Due to the long-term inconsistency of the personnel (human resources) policy in the mentioned institutions and the implications for the security in the country for a long period of time, there is a need for employment of appropriate highly qualified staff with security studies background. Graduation from the Faculty of Security - Skopje in some way increases the employment opportunities in these institutions. Exactly the mentioned circumstances are the main reason why the candidates who enrol at the Faculty of Security expect their faster employment in the security institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

The Faculty of Security - Skopje is one of the top relevant institutions which has accredited several study programs where the phenomenon of security in all cycles of education is studied. Certainly, the trends of creating study programs in security studies require a qualitative ongoing redesign of the study programs in security at the Faculty of Security in all study cycles. In particular, the program in the first cycle of studies should be enriched with topics that imply the acquisition of broader knowledge (of political, economic, geopolitical, and other character) so that students in this study program can gain skills and

knowledge to analyse the security situation, locating indicators of breaches of national, regional and international security and of the decision-making process in a complex security ecosystem.

The motivation for studying should reflect the more realistic arguments of the students regarding the desire to study. Applicants who enrol in the Faculty of Security before enrolling should be acquainted with the differences in the concepts of the study programs regarding the knowledge, i.e., what they should expect from the study programs and employment opportunities. It is important for the candidates to have an idea of what knowledge they can expect, for example if he/she decides to enrol in the study program of criminalistics, and what in the study program of security, and where the acquired knowledge will be most appropriate to practice, in accordance with the mission of the institution where they shall get their employment – police, intelligence services, government supporting institutions, etc. Surely, continuous work on better visibility of the study opportunities and an emphasis of the advantages after graduation must be a long-term strategy of the Faculty of Security - Skopje.

The core of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Security, whose specialty is security, needs to be increased and the same staff should be involved much more in following the innovations in security studies, including better interaction with the advanced academic environment.

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