Revising the Curriculum of Governance Teaching Post COVID-19

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Abstract

Governance has become a common part of teaching curriculums for most business schools, public administration schools and other related faculties. This paper questions the content of governance curriculums taught before COVID-19 pandemic in 5 European countries and provides a comparative assessment. Research findings indicate that apart from teaching general governance courses, governance is most often taught as specific for certain organizational or industrial context. This is followed with governance from perspective of leadership and change management, but also governance within business administration discipline of strategy. However, the intensity of governance as a topic within curriculums differs significantly. Only limited number of curriculums include resilience topics which have proven their importance during COVID-19 pandemic. Findings of this paper can be used to develop unitary and internationalized curriculums on governance studies at European universities in a post COVID-19 world.

1. Introduction

Governance is a relatively recent discipline compared to many other subjects that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) cover. Nevertheless, governance problems are not recent. Long has it been recognized that possible conflicts of interest arise when decisions are made on distributing scarce resources. During the 17th century, Adam Smith (1776) was the first to describe fundamental governance dilemmas of non-alignment of interests, between an entity (agent) acting on behalf of another entity (principal); which was later to be coined as the "agency problem". A separation of owning and controlling lies behind the agency problem, as termed by Berle and Means in 1932. These are relatively new examples of governance matters compared to when the Roman statesman, lawyer and philosopher, Marcus Cicero, complained about lack of good governance in the Roman Empire a century BC. Since teaching governance became a field of study in many HEIs in the mid-20th century, the governance matters described above became central to the governance curriculums implemented.

Variations in curriculums teaching governance are numerous and often depend on how governance is defined, since no alignment or consensus has been made on the definition of governance. Objectives on what governance is seems to depend on interests of different stakeholders. Investors, for example, make shareholder value the central objective in governance and focuses on the relationship between a company and its shareholders (Shleifer & Vishny, 1997). How companies should be held accountable is the focus of accounting scholars and professionals, who apply annual reports and other financial information. Politicians and media tend to focus on business ethics and corporate social responsibility by analysing fraud, financial scandals, and corruption. Networks, socialization, and values are the focus of sociologists. Motivation, behaviour, and team dynamics can be a central governance issue for psychologists. All these differences of what governance is has characterised teaching governance at HEIs; or so has it been throughout the 20th century.

Confidence in governance deteriorated at the beginning of the 21st century when many well-known companies made the headlines for bad governance. Many began to question how teaching governance was conducted at universities; and the role governance has and should have in society and especially in business. Of course, there has always been a discussion on theory development within governance, but from the turn of the century and until after the 2008 financial crisis, the discourse became common in both academia and the corporate world. Ideas varied from a complete denial of good governance due to the perceived fundamental unethical nature of business, to an all-encompassing embrace of governance in all facets of society and business. The fact is that scholars have found out that many industry experts do agree on that the impact of ethical behaviour as part of good governance might be limited in many organizations (Vaiman et al., 2011). This limited impact might be explained by a significant gap between theory and practice in the field of governance. Furthermore, some have argued that academics have not really done a good job in understanding and explaining all the complexities of a contemporary society and thereby businesses. For that reason, HEIs have not been able to provide both scholars and managers with adequate conceptual and practical frameworks for practising good governance and take ethical business decisions.

HEIs are claimed to have a role of preparing students for participation in a democratic society, as is the vision of many universities and university associations (e.g., AACSB International, 2009; GMAC, 2012). Some scholars have doubts that universities have

succeeded achieving this vision, especially students' ability to deal with societal challenging issues (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005; Ferraro et al., 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Podolny, 2009). Furthermore, managers complain that universities do not graduate sufficiently well-prepared students and especially them not being able to deal with governance and ethical dilemmas (Bryant et al., 2018). It is therefore vital to understand the content of the governance curriculum and which student-centred teaching methods best enhance students' ability and capacity to deal with governance issues in society. Social changes continue to happen and that puts continuous pressure on HEIs to develop and upgrade their curriculum. The latest development is a call for responsibility of sustainability at both societal and corporate level. The impact of the recent COVID-19 crisis is securing strong focus on sustainability and here HEIs' curriculum comes again into play.

The research presented in this paper assesses governance curriculum of five universities in five European countries by analysing the content of governance related courses. From a baseline assessment of the specificities of national curriculum of each of the universities a comparative curriculum assessment is made. The research theme is therefore to produce an assessment of the composition of five different national curriculums as well as assessing the teaching practices involved (e.g., online, and offline resources, class activities, case studies, practical activities, interactive activities). The assessment produces an innovative element of a common curriculum for good governance in times post the COVID-19 crisis. It thus furthers the potential for a simultaneously unitary and internationalized curriculum on governance studies in European universities.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, attention is turned to the literature review of current development in governance with an emphasis on sustainability and resilience towards crisis. Then research questions are developed, which guide the study of how an updated governance curriculum can result in a positive teaching effect. Section three provides a description of the research method and data, followed by section four which presents research findings. In the fifth and the last section are conclusion and discussion, followed by suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Governance in different organizational settings

The notion of "governance" in general refers to the manner or act of governing in different organizational settings, and relationships between different actors who tend to support or affect each other in various ways. The development of governance framework is constantly influenced; from new practices to knowledge exchange, by societal appropriation, changes in public or industrial structures, or the establishment of new markets. Governance, both as a form of action and mindset, can never be neutral, and it constantly develops by responding to changes in, direct or indirect, individual, institutional, national or international eco-systems. Many authors (e.g., see Barben et al., 2008; Heritier & Lehmkul, 2008; Rip, 2010; Rotolo et al., 2015, etc.) in the age of technological transformation agree that uncertainty in developing a framework for enhancing changes requires an approach of tentative governance with a combination of some form of definitive governance.

According to Kuhlmann et al. (2019) definitive governance in different settings is observed when public or institutional policies move along decisive paths to accomplish specific objectives, while tentative governance is observed when public and private interventions

are designed as a dynamic process that is prudent and preliminary rather than assertive and persistent. Governance with regard to organisational structure responding to and being shaped by a variety of inter-dependencies could be characterized as tentative governance. The relationship between tentative and definitive modes of governance is mediated by uncertainty and different perspectives of actors in developing business or policy certainties. Although one may argue that uncertainties in governance are not peculiar to the current period of technological transformation, particularly enhanced by COVID-19 pandemic, Kuhlmann et al. (2019) observe that in the business and public sector the awareness of different uncertainties seems to have increased, largely by disruptive products and processes, like nuclear technology, artificial intelligence, COVID-19 pandemic, war conflicts, etc., which confronted all the actors participating in governance with unexpected risks, societal impacts or lack of resilience (Lyall & Tait, 2005; Quack, 2013).

Different theories of governance help societal and business groups to understand the national and global context. Even though technologies bring a new opportunity to improve governance through e-governance or GovLabs (Barben et al., 2008; Rotolo et al., 2010), additionally, big data and artificial intelligence empowers the new toolkits for more open and transparent modes of governance (Chen et al., 2018; Kuhlmann et al., 2019). In an uncertain context, specifically in business, where the priorities of stakeholders may change unpredictably due to the growing access to knowledge, formulating a long-term business strategy becomes problematic. Although theories on governance (Weber, 1946; Osborne et al., 1992; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011) have tended to develop on the scale of decades, the twenty-first century's interactions have "speeded up" the emergence of tentative factors in governance and the science took one of the central places in decision-making processes in different organisational settings (Chen et al., 2018; Héritier & Lehmkuhl, 2008). It should be emphasized though the devastating effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic or war conflict in Ukraine resulted in a new model of governance: tentative co-production (McMullin, 2020; Paniagua & Rayamajhee, 2021), bringing governing bodies and citizens even closer, mobilizing the efforts of business and public authorities, empowering international organisations, like OECD, EC or UN. Faced with uncertainties, modern businesses and governments often must rely on expectations (Budde & Konrad, 2019), and as recent global events and the roles taken by national and international governing bodies have shown that these are more collective expectations, rather than knowledge-based evidence.

Every organizational setting should deal with the tentativeness of ex-ante or ex-post expectations when potential changes are considered in formulating business strategy or designing policy. Thus, governance itself may also become tentative as according to Kuhlman et al. (2019), the recent decade of research criticizes decision-makers for failing to provide long-term decisions (Melton et al., 2016) or lacking space for sufficient deliberation (Brown, 2012) bringing to possible limited opportunities or foresight. Such critical discussion brings to the assumption that the modes of governance may change more rapidly than research studies indicate or even that a defined mode of governance does not exist in the contemporary world, however, its conceptualization through tentative elements in governing may help different organizational settings avoid unrealistic visions and show conditions, contexts, limits, or failures in the rationalisation of the governing process.

2.2 Teaching governance in higher education

Contemporary societies change at a rapid pace facing everyday challenges, especially from the external environment. These constant changes and challenges, together with the

increasing expectations of political leaders, societies and public administration, create the stringent need for governance to become more resilient. In this context, teaching governance in the academic field stems from the need to prepare future managers, political leaders and public administration practitioners for managing the imminent challenges, changes, shocks, and stressors (Rosenbaum, 2014). Scholars recognized the need to improve and rethink the education and training process in public administration as well as business and economics programs, inclusively by integrating governance as key discipline to be taught (Wooldridge, 2004; Awortwi, 2011; Cepiku, 2011). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on societies' well-functioning and the manner in which politicians and the public administration managed the outcomes of the pandemic revealed once more the need of teaching governance in higher education in order to prepare future practitioners to cope better with these situations.

In order to analyze the different approaches to teaching governance, the key tool is the curriculum, which stands as a mirror that shows how good governance is operationalized and integrated by various educational and training programs (Haruna & Kannae, 2013: 494). Research and teaching governance should incorporate the dynamics of social changes such as COVID-19, economic and financial crises, wars etc, which should be reflected in the governance curriculum. Besides looking at how governance principles are blended in the curriculum, another important aspect has to do with the results of the teaching process, which can be expressed through the knowledge and competencies of students/ trainees.

In order to assess the governance curriculum, apart from syllabus analysis and faculty and students' feedback, another useful instrument is to benchmark the curriculum against a set of well-established standards, such as NASPAA (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration) standards (Haruna & Kannae, 2013: 504-505). These standards refer to different aspects such as: students should develop their management and leadership skills, learn how to interact with various stakeholders, how to get involved and contribute to the policy-making process, develop their critical as well as analytical thinking and acquire communication skills in order to be able to relate to different organizations and stakeholders (Lazenby, 2010; Raffel et al., 2011; NASPAA, 2014). Teaching governance can help students develop all the aforementioned competencies.

In addition, teaching governance per se implies the need to capture the challenges and dynamics societies face nowadays, in a global world characterized by fast technological advancements, conflicts, economic crises, natural disasters etc. Therefore sharing international, comparative, and cross-cultural experiences in order to develop analytical and critical thinking abilities, as well as independent and autonomous thinking, is a distinctive feature of teaching governance in higher education (Haruna & Kannae, 2013: 499; Capobianco et al., 2018: 178; Wessels, 2020: 1).

Another crucial aspect for teaching governance in higher education is to establish which is the relevance of such a discipline for the core competencies needed by the graduates in practice and to shape the course content as to contribute to the acquiring of these competencies. Another issue relates to blending theory with practice, enabling students to make use of theoretical knowledge to solve real-life situations, thus developing competencies needed in practice (Battaglio & Scicchitano 2013; Hatcher, 2015; Radin, 2013; Wang et al., 2013). Additional challenge is related to the teaching methods that should be used to make students understand the practical implications of governance-related disciplines.

Moreover, one of the first steps in teaching governance in HE is to shift the paradigm from focus on teaching policy implementation at national level to focus on all stages of the public

policy process, such as policy design, stakeholders involved, proper implementation process and finally, assessment of outcomes. In teaching governance in HI all the actors involved in the public policy process from both national and international levels must be taken into consideration. This particular approach offers students a comprehensive view regarding governance and facilitates a clear understanding of the fact that "governance" means more than "to govern". Thus, governance implies a joint effort of all sectors, stakeholders and citizens' involvement (Kettl, 2002). The main aspect that should be considered in teaching governance is that all the stages of the public policy process- design, implementation, assessment, and their dynamic, must be taken into consideration as well as the context in which public policies are derived, their impact on society and the roles played by the involved stakeholders (Olowu, 2002).

Regarding the most appropriate methods for teaching governance, Kettl (2002) argues that the case-study approach, enables students to better understand the practical implications of this discipline. Moreover, case studies capture the best practices in the field from other countries and challenge students to come up with solutions for improving governance. Case-studies also help students improve their analytical and critical thinking (Kettl, 2002). Furthermore, team projects should be used as an instrument to teach students to solve real problems from society related to good governance. Another method could be to simulate various games and organize debates as to help students to understand the process of collaboration with stakeholders and to widen their perspective on governance-related problem-solving.

So far, there is scarce evidence in the literature review on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teaching governance in HE programs. From authors' personal, limited experience, we consider that the pandemic emphasized the need to teach governance in HI and also created an opportunity to vary the teaching methods and to fill the gap between theory and practice in education. The shift from onsite to online teaching provided the opportunity to modernize the teaching process by focusing on teaching methods based on more engagement and visual elements. Also, case studies were more frequently used, and the education process focused less on teaching theory and more on exercises, debates, explanations, and team projects which made students better understand concepts such as governance.

## 2.3 Governance curriculum innovation

HEI students need to understand and appreciate the impact they can make as future employees and as responsible citizens. Part of that is learning the value of critical thinking (Sigurjonsson et al., 2015), which equally applies to students at the undergraduate, graduate, or executive level. Critical thinking is an essential part of success at work and in life as students should be taught theories and how to apply them in the "real world". The question is whether existing teaching methods manage to do that. For decades, teaching has rested on the lecture style, often mirroring textbooks, and lacking theoretical and methodological application whilst preparation for practical employment was often in shortage. Universities have the role of preparing students for participation in a democratic society and a diverse economy, being a central vision of many universities and university affiliates (e.g., AACSB International, 2009; GMAC, 2012). Some scholars doubt that universities have succeeded in achieving this vision, especially fostering students' ability to deal with challenging societal issues (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005; Ferraro et al., 2006; Ghoshal, 2005; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Podolny, 2009).

When it comes to managers, those who recruit graduates, they complain that universities have not graduated sufficiently well-prepared students, especially those able to deal with ethical dilemmas (Sigurjonsson et al., 2014; Bryant et al., 2018). Managers were at one-point students themselves and should therefore be able to judge how they were equipped upon graduation to solve ethical dilemmas (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Mayer et al., 2010). It is vital to understand which student-centered teaching methods best enhance students' ability and capacity to deal with social issues in society.

Many current scholars are sharing their apprehension regarding the current state of education in applied sciences. Multiplying corporate scandals have fueled anxiety that graduating students lack sound business ethics. Consequently, research that focuses on the minimal impact that business ethics teaching has had on students is emerging. Reflecting on these core problems, some faculty have concluded that the case method might be a satisfactory solution because it is the teaching method that comes closest to students dealing with real world issues (Mauffette-Leenders et al., 2014). Mauffette-Leenders, Erskine and Leenders (2014:2) wrote that a "…case is a description of an actual situation, commonly involving a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, a problem, or an issue faced by a person (or persons) in an organization. A case allows students to step figuratively into the position of a particular decision maker", and by that way actually become more active learners. In an immensely helpful vein, this description addresses some of the concerns that managers, students, and scholars have expressed in relation to the gaps found in much education of applied sciences.

To apply the Mauffette-Leenders et al. (2014) educational notion of the case method, it rests on three major dimensions: analytical, conceptual and presentation. These are steps which provide students with a thorough learning experience (see *Figure 1*). There is a conceptual dimension which rests on the belief that teaching is to be research-based. It invokes theories, concepts and teaching techniques that might be useful in understanding a case situation. Analytical means that students actively practice understanding a situation (problem, challenge, an opportunity, etc.). Next, they must establish a decision criterion, reflect on alternatives and then they take a decision. The presentation dimension provides an opportunity to develop students' skills in sorting and structuring information and presenting it in a coherent way.

Figure 1. Teaching through case study method
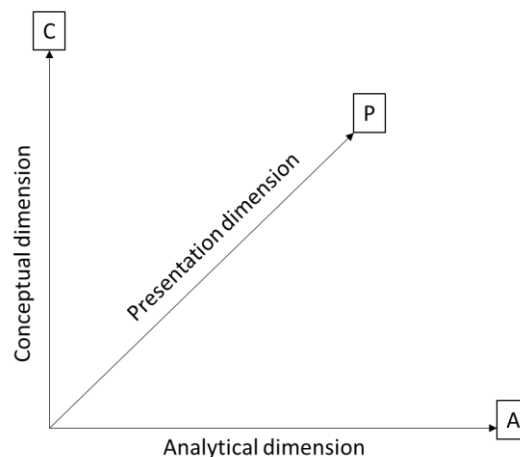
Source: Mauffette-Leenders et al. (2014)

Education's role, as set forth by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), is to "prepare students to contribute to their organization and the larger society and to grow personally and professionally throughout their careers." The debate whether universities, especially business schools, have managed to confer degrees on socially responsible and "contributing" students has produced a lack of trust in management education (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005; Ferraro, et al., 2005; Ghoshal 2005; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Podolny, 2009). This is unsurprising, as some graduates have been associated with ethical misconduct (Ashforth et al. 2008; Sackett & DeVore, 2001). As a result, scholars and media have blamed especially business schools as being partially responsible for the unethical behaviour of their students (Donaldson 2005; Ghoshal 2005; Pfeffer, 2005). Many have expressed concern about the way management education is provided and about the curriculum, claiming that business schools might have even contributed directly to the problem (Gioia, 2002, 2003). Hence, management education is especially criticized for not connecting what business students are taught and the multiple challenges – ethical and otherwise – they will encounter when entering the workforce (Schlegelmilch & Thomas 2011; Mintzberg & Gosling 2002). This is a significant accusation that academia should confront.

University educators should see themselves responsible for encouraging students to take a socially responsible view towards integrity in organizations. Their role is to support students' intellectual growth through curriculum. At the same time, students are showing increased interest in business ethics by signing up for elective courses (which has been an international trend. Universities that seek to be accredited by the AACSB must now demonstrate consideration and implementation of business ethics learning processes (AACSB International, 2009).

3. Research Methodology

Governance as a research and teaching topic is an eclectic discipline covering theoretical frameworks from several disciplines such as sociology, law, accounting etc. At the same time these courses can tackle the subject in a more or less focused way, covering only one segment of the phenomena in the context of different subjects or focusing on particular segment of governance (such as governance in non-profits, in developing countries or as a tool of competitiveness).

The main research question of this paper is what is the current state of governance curriculums in Europe, and what is its alignment with current situation, namely post COVID-19 business environment. Particular interest of the paper is the assessment of importance of the topic of resilience within the governance courses since we argue that resilience is of paramount importance for organizational sustainability, as seen is the past two years. The research assesses governance curriculums in five European countries: Croatia, Iceland, Lithuania, Romania and Spain. Altogether the research covers 102 courses that are taught within universities in the observed countries.

The research consisted of several stages. The first step included content analysis of curriculums of the governance courses from the five European countries. Information to understand the magnitude of differences and commonalities was collected and compiled in an Excel database which was used for further analyses. Comparative analysis of courses was based on the methodology proposed by Sosnovsky (2018). The complete list of the analysed course characteristics include: course type (Bachelor or Master level),

year/semester of studies (1/2/...), elective or mandatory nature, relations to other courses in the program, prerequisite courses, department teaching the course, course load (overall number of credits according to ECTS regulations, particular course activities (lectures/tutorials/practical work/homework/etc.).

In addition to the content analysis, we have observed the governance curriculums' content from the perspective of focus on resilience, such that each course was evaluated as being directly connected, semi connected or indirectly connected with resilience. Another focus was on governance from a threefold evaluation scheme, based on the following categories of governance: general governance, public governance and European governance. Finally, elective or mandatory position of governance courses was also analysed. This distinction is significant because it approximates the perceived importance of the governance curriculums within the field of study. Further on, we are focusing on the issue of governance courses position within specific year of the study. On the other hand, since the preferred way of teaching is also influencing the quality of the course, as a part of the comparative assessment we analysed the intensity of online teaching, language in which the course is taught and the way how the exams are carried.

The observed 102 courses were picked by researchers from five countries as specified in Table 1. Courses were selected for their relationship with governance, in the broad or narrow sense. Analysed institutions are dominantly authors' home institutions: Complutense University of Madrid, University of Iceland, University of Vilnius, Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) and Faculty of Economics and Business at University of Zagreb. Overview on the number of courses is shown in ***Table 1***.

Table 1. Number of analysed courses per country

Country	Number of analysed curriculums
Croatia	12
Romania	36
Lithuania	14
Iceland	21
Spain	19

Source: Author's own work

4. Research Findings

The first step of the empirical analysis was to analyse the content the curriculums of the observed governance courses. For each analysed curriculum, a focus of the course had to be determined. Each course could have just one focus and thus could be classified to only one category. The results of the authors' preliminary analysis showed 12 distinct categories of the courses which involve topic of governance. All these categories together with the exact number of the courses that cover governance from these distinct perspectives are presented in ***Table 2***.

Table 2. Main focus of the analysed governance related curriculums

Main focus of the analysed governance related curriculums	Number of courses
Governance of different organizational contexts	16
Leadership and change management	13
General governance	12
Strategy	11
Management and communication	10
Comparative governance and governance in Europe	8
Resilience and sustainability	7
Economics	7
Risk and crisis management	7
Environmental issues	5
Financial and accounting issues of governance	4
International relations	2

Source: Author's own work

Governance in different organizational and industrial context is covered in 16 of the analysed courses making it the biggest group of governance related courses. Within these curriculums the focus is mostly on public sector governance and local governance but also covers more specialised areas such as governance within urban development or governance of protected areas. Such findings indicate that apart from general governance, academia has already recognized the need for a specific approach to governance.

Second biggest group of courses that deal with governance is from the perspective of leadership and change management. Altogether 13 courses in our analysis fall into this group of topics. Most of the courses include governance topics within leadership and organizational behaviour curriculums which are usually complimented with the analysis of change management conceptual framework.

The highest concentration of governance topics is within the general governance group of courses which encompass 12 courses. Besides governance topics, content analysis suggest that these curriculums usually include topics of ethics. Additional 11 of the analysed courses cover topics of governance within business administration discipline of strategy. In courses that are focused on the topics of strategic management, business strategy, portfolio management and business services the topic of governance emerge from time to time in the context of its importance for the companies' long-term competitiveness.

Courses that are primarily dealing with management issues cover topic of governance in the case of 10 courses out of the observed sample. The topics which are in the focus of these courses are primarily organizational communication and different aspects of human resource management. Comparative governance and governance in Europe is in the focus of eight out of observed 102 courses. Focus of some of these courses in comparative governance within the European countries while some courses deal with specific governance in their countries (Romania and Danish system of governance in one of curriculums from Iceland).

When it comes to teaching resilience as a part of governance courses, three distinct groups of courses are determined. Topics of resilience and sustainability are covered from different perspectives; some deal with business continuity or sustainability of certain business segment (for instance sustainable tourism development in Northern environment) while some debate topic of suitability by focusing on effects of corporate social responsibility on governance. Second group of courses that cover governance related issues are mostly concentrated on the economics topics, mostly in the area of global economic governance

and theories of development. Finally, seven courses in our sample are focused on topics of risk and crisis management.

Theoretical frameworks of corporate governance are also present in the courses that are focused on the environmental issues such as global warming, climate change, and environment control. Within our sample we have five courses that are focused on these topics. Another area that mentions corporate governance topics are the courses covering financial and accounting issues of governance. Out of four courses that fall into this group two of them are focusing on the topic of internal and performance audit. Finally, two of the observed courses tackle issues of governance from the perspective of international affairs. One of it is focusing on geopolitical issues while the other is specifically focused on the arctic policies.

If we take an even deeper look at the focus of the observed courses, we can see that the issues of governance include different areas of studies. However, the intensity of the governance topics within curriculum differs significantly. From that perspective we can define three groups of courses (*Table 3*). First one is the group which is focused on governance issues in more than 2/3 of curriculum's topics, out of the observed groups of courses in this category we can assign general governance courses as well as courses which deal with comparative governance issues. Second group of courses in respect to the intensity of governance related topics is formed by groups of courses which deal with governance in different organizational contexts and governance in respect to resilience and sustainability. In curriculum of these courses governance related topics are found in more than 1/3 and less than 2/3 of all topics. Finally, all other groups of courses cover governance issues in less than 1/3 of topics in curriculum.

Table 3. Intensity of governance related topics within the observed curriculums

Intensity of governance related topics (% of all the topics in the curriculum)	Main focus of the courses	Number of courses
Group A – More than 66%	General governance, Comparative governance and governance in Europe	20
Group B – Between 33% and 66%	Governance of different organizational contexts, Resilience and sustainability	23
Group C – Less than 33%	Leadership and change management, Strategy, Management and communication, Economics, Risk and crisis management, Environmental issues, Financial and accounting issues of governance, International relations	59

Source: Author's own work

These results can be observed from the perspective of connection of the curriculums with the key issues for our research, namely relationship of governance issues with resilience. The results of the analysis indicate that 41 courses are in direct connection with the resilience issues, 43 courses are semi connected with these issues while 14 courses are indirectly connected with theoretical frameworks of resilience. Further on, most of the courses that deal with governance issues are positioned at the graduate level of university education. Out of 102 courses only 23 are placed at the undergraduate level. Also, most of

the observed courses are taught in the national languages of each country. Out of the observed courses 28 of them are though in English and 6 in both English and national language.

From the perspective of ways of dissemination of knowledge most courses are based on blended learning while 23 courses are held only in class and only 2 courses use only e-learning.

5. Discussion

As pointed out in the previous sections, governance is a controversial concept that does not enjoy a single, overarching definition (Olowu, 2002: 345). The fact that there are various approaches to the study of governance, which corresponds to different school of thought, leads to various approaches to teaching governance in higher education. However, there are several principles and values that frame the concept of governance, which stem from international organizations (e.g., United Nations, OECD, World Bank etc), such as: participation, transparency, rule of law, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, partnership, sustainability, agility etc. These underlying normative values can be the first point in framing governance curriculums.

Recent research on the content and structure of HEI programs shows that they still emphasize functional knowledge (e.g., marketing, accounting, economics, finance, and strategy), rather than people skills and ethical awareness (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2004; Schlegelmilch & Thomas 2011; Segon & Booth 2012). There is an urgent need to rebalance the curriculum to foster combining analytical capabilities, managerial skills and attention to ethics and good governance. In addition, COVID-19 has revealed the importance of resilience. Comparative assessment conducted as a part of this paper has assessed the content of several courses related to governance. Research findings confirm a lack of definition of what governance actually is, as governance related curriculums lack a unified focus. Apart from general governance, other courses that are related with governance have a focus in marketing, finance and accounting, strategy, economics, environmental issues and other. Nevertheless, all these topics are important in the context of tentative governance that is recently gaining importance (Kuhlmann et al., 2019), and especially considering the rapid pace of environmental changes and challenges. The need to modernize governance related curriculums was recognized by academics even before the pandemic (e.g., see Wooldridge, 2004; Awortwi, 2011; Cepiku, 2011), but recent events request not only to rethink curriculum content but teaching methods as well.

One of the aspects to highlight, based on the curricula analysed in the different institutions, is that, although the contents related to governance and good governance are present to a greater or lesser extent in all the courses within the disciplines that have considered as a centre of interest, those contents only constitute the fundamental theoretical and analytical framework in just over one third of them. Besides, where these contents are present, they mainly refer to courses in graduate programs, while they are present in undergraduate programs in a much lesser extent. In the same way, although different aspects related to the relationship between resilience and good governance are effectively dealt with in most of the courses, for only a few of them it is a central element when building the core contents and the main framework of analysis. Therefore, the challenge arises of transforming what is so far an indirect and lateral approach to the problem of resilience from the perspective of different functionally defined fields of knowledge (as stated above), to the design of a

curriculum that specifically and systematically deals with the relations between good governance and resilience as a main theoretical and analytical framework in different fields and academic disciplines.

In any step, the pandemic and its consequences have marked a turning point when considering updating curricular content to incorporate the issue of the relationship between good governance and resilience in a more specific way (Galaitsi et al., 2021). This circumstance also leads us to consider the theoretical and practical problems of the use of a concept, that of resilience, no less controversial than that of governance (Brand & Jax, 2007). On the one hand, a substantial progress has been made in clarifying the concept and its relationship with other related concepts such as risk, vulnerability and the trade-offs between resilience and efficiency (Cañizares et al., 2021) while, on the other, the problems posed by its characterization as a normative concept still remain (Thorén & Olsson, 2018). However, none of this should prevent a more extensive and coherent introduction of these contents both in undergraduate and graduate programs; rather, it should call for a continuing debate about theoretical and practical consequences of different approaches.

New contents in the curriculum should then pay close attention to governance tools and processes and how they are related to construction of resilience as an embedded capacity of organizations and institutional arrangements of any kind (Masten & Obradović, 2006). Among those governance tools, a special attention should be paid to issues such as creation of social capital in organizations and communities (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). The aim of such curriculums would be teaching how to develop complex and flexible skills, and for that purpose teaching methods should be oriented towards the use of case studies and a comparative approach (Mauffette-Leenders et al., 2014).

6. Conclusion

The governance scenario is, according to many authors, a scenario defined by complexity (Chandler, 2014), and, paradoxically, governance is a key element for managing that complexity. In addition, the scenario in which the problems related to good governance arise is a scenario characterized by the speed of technological and ecological changes (Brown, 2012). In this context, the notion of resilience has been making its way as a particularly suitable perspective for the analysis and search for solutions to the challenges faced by the governance of organizations and states (Peters & Pierre, 1998; OECD, 2014). But the link between governance and resilience presents, in theory and in practice, some problems.

The concept of resilience has its origin in the study of ecological systems, but more recently its use has been generalized for the study of phenomena and dynamics that affect social systems and, in fact, it is an important part of studies on sustainability (Lebel et al., 2006; Garmestani & Benson, 2013). There are several issues to consider when it comes to the relationship between governance and resilience. On the one hand, to what extent is the concept of resilience useful for examining and better understanding governance problems; on the other hand, in what sense does resilience constitute an objective of good governance and, finally, what instruments of good governance are necessary to achieve more resilient social systems.

Every organisation should deal with the tentativeness of ex-ante or ex-post expectations when potential changes at both national and international levels are considered. Critical

discussion in this study brings to the assumption that the modes of governance may change more rapidly than research studies or curriculum renewals indicate, however, the conceptualisation of governance through tentative elements in decision-making processes may help different organizational settings avoid unrealistic visions and show conditions, contexts, limits, or failures in the rationalisation of teaching governance. COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the importance of resilience, which has been greatly neglected as a part of teaching curriculums. A review of the academic literature, in combination with the conducted research, makes it possible to identify a series of elements of good governance that seem to guarantee a better adaptation to changes and greater resilience. These include a multi-perspective view of governance, in accordance with the existing curriculums, but with much stronger emphasis on resilience topics.

Future research could be developed in various lines that could address both issues related to the implementation of new subjects in the curricula, as well as the effects on the training of graduates. From the point of view of implementation, it would be important, on the one hand, to assess the problems that may arise from the redefinition of some studies in order to reorient them more explicitly towards the frameworks defined by the concepts of governance and resilience, and the incorporation of these topics as specific courses within undergraduate and graduate programs. From the point of view of the results, it would also be urgent to estimate to what extent this type of content that is intended to be incorporated truly serves to equip graduates with better skills and tools to face the problems of the organizations in which they are going to develop as professionals.

This study has several limitations. The quality of conclusions is dependent upon the analysed curriculums which were collected from authors' home institutions. Some curriculums contained more information than others. The number of analysed curriculums per country differs, so some countries included curriculums that were just more strongly related to governance than others.

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