

## TAILORING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORMS TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS: A STUDY ON PUBLIC SERVANT PROFESSIONALIZATION

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### Article Info

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### Abstract

This study investigates the professionalisation of public servants in Ukraine in the context of public administration reforms and their individual training needs. System analysis is used as the primary method of investigation, and a content analysis of the report on the synthesis of public servants' individual training needs for the year 2020 is conducted. The study highlights the need to improve the professionalisation process, defines the direct interconnection of public servant professionalisation with many aspects of public-service and other relations in society, and proposes possible measures to improve the efficiency of professional development for civil servants and local government officials. The findings have practical significance and can be used to improve the system of public servants' professionalisation

### Introduction

The modern state requires a strong public service to implement its policies and serve its citizens effectively. In Ukraine, the reform of the civil service is a critical component of the country's democratization and social orientation efforts. The government has made significant efforts to create a professional, neutral, and efficient civil service that meets European standards. To achieve this goal, the country has implemented a comprehensive reform program that emphasizes the professionalization of civil servants.

Professionalization is a complex process that involves the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to perform a particular job. In the context of the civil service, professionalization aims to create a highly skilled and competent workforce that can meet the evolving needs of the government and society. The professionalization of the civil service is a vital element in building a modern, effective, and efficient public administration system that serves the public interest.

The professionalization of the civil service is an ongoing process that requires a comprehensive approach to training, development, and career progression. It involves continuous learning and development to enhance the competencies and skills of civil servants. The importance of professionalization in the civil service cannot be overstated, as it is critical to the successful implementation of public administration reforms and the realization of the government's strategic objectives.

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In Ukraine, the need for professionalization is particularly urgent due to the country's ongoing public administration reforms. The government has identified the importance of improving the system of professional training for civil servants to achieve a high level of professional competence and advanced training. The reform program aims to create a professional, neutral, and efficient civil service that meets European standards and can support the country's social, economic, and political development.

Despite the government's efforts to professionalize the civil service, the topic still requires further study, particularly with regards to individual needs of civil servants. The individual needs of civil servants are an essential criterion for the successful implementation of the reform program. The government must take into account the individual professional training needs of civil servants to ensure that the workforce is adequately trained and equipped to perform its duties.

This study aims to investigate the professionalization of public servants in Ukraine in the context of public administration reforms and their individual training needs. The study uses system analysis as the primary method of investigation and conducts a content analysis of the report on the synthesis of public servants' individual training needs for the year 2020. The study highlights the need to improve the professionalization process, defines the direct interconnection of public servant professionalization with many aspects of public-service and other relations in society, and proposes possible measures to improve the efficiency of professional development for civil servants and local government officials.

The findings of this study have practical significance and can be used to improve the system of public servants' professionalization. The study's results can form the basis for further research and can also be used in the practice of public service institutions when improving or developing a new system of public servants' professionalization. The study's insights can contribute to the successful implementation of public administration reforms in Ukraine and support the country's European integration efforts.

### **Materials and Methods**

Analysis and synthesis as general scientific methods of cognition consist primarily of a scientific analysis of an object, an imaginary division into elements to study each of them. Analysing an element involves simultaneously understanding its interrelations and interactions, which constitutes the content of synthesis. The scientific synthesis results in a holistic view of the analysed process, its content, the interaction of its parts (elements), its essence, and the laws of its development. It is therefore appropriate to use these methods when examining the public, social, and economic actions of a country. The inductive and deductive methods of cognition, or induction and deduction, represent two opposing and at the same time complementary methods of scientific investigation. The inductive method describes the path of cognition from the fixation and analysis of experimental (empirical) data to their systematisation, generalisation, and general conclusions drawn on this basis. Induction involves drawing conclusions about certain objects or processes through a system from the singular, specific to the more general. The basis for the operation of this method of cognition is empirical data (Tanirbergenova et al. 2021, p. 242-258). The validity of inductive generalisations can be tested by applying the deductive research method, the essence of which consists in deducing certain consequences from any general statements considered to be true, some of which can be verified empirically.

When studying the professionalisation of public servants in the context of public administration reforms, it is also necessary to use system analysis, which consists in considering a particular phenomenon as a specific system of interrelated elements that together constitute the formative components of this system. This approach manifests itself as an appropriate way of scientific thinking, consisting primarily in fixing the main elements of the phenomenon or process under study and analysing their interactions (Auanassova et al. 2018, p. 129-136, p. 129-

136). Viewing the object under study as a system involves assuming its relative independence from other objects and its selfsufficiency in terms of its functioning as a whole according to its intrinsic laws.

Content analysis is a research method the subject of which is the content of textual arrays and products of communicative correspondence. The main areas of applying content analysis include: identifying the things that existed before the text and were reflected in it in a certain way (text as an indicator of certain aspects in the object of study – the surrounding reality, the author, or the recipient); determining what exists only in the text as such (various form characteristics – language, structure, message genre, rhythm and tone of language); identifying what will exist after the text, that is after the recipient perceives it (evaluation of various effects of action) (Zaborovskyy et al. 2020, p. 170-187). Within the framework of this study, the latter area was predominantly applied, namely in the aspect of summarising information from a particular source and using it as the basis for further conclusions and defining criteria of the phenomena under study. The content analysis was based on the report on the synthesis of public servants' individual training needs for 2020. Thus, the application of the above methods allows for a detailed and comprehensive study of the subject.

### **Results and Discussion**

The civil service in Ukraine is divided into civil service and local government service (Tatoyan and Kolomojets 2021, p. 140-145, p. 140-145). The need for professionalization of civil servants is determined by the following factors: a new level of economic and other social relations in society; the need to adapt the institution of civil service of Ukraine to the standards of the European Union; introduction of the principle of political neutrality of the service of civil servants, service of local governments and their officials (Kostruba and Hyliaka 2020, p. 189-203). The professionalization of the civil service is a set of interrelated and interdependent social institutions that ensure the formation, identification and development of the individual, contributing to its professional self-determination and the formation of professional experience (Obolensky and Soroko 2005, p. 20-27; Miethlich and Šlahor 2018). The professionalization of a civil servant is a process whose ultimate goal is his professional training. Such training has two aspects: an objective one, which implies the presence of professionally necessary knowledge, skills, personal qualities and characteristics, and a subjective one, which consists in the presence of an adequate set of appropriate incentives and motives.

Personal professionalization in a broad sense includes two interrelated components – psychological and social. The psychological component is a category of professional development that ensures the productive activity of an employee, shaping his professional consciousness, as well as the personal qualities and qualities necessary for him to perform his job duties. This component consists of professional motivation, personal characteristics. The social component forms the category of professional socialization and is associated with the formation of professional knowledge, abilities, skills, the assimilation of social and professional norms, and the formation of a personality as a subject of professional activity (Buribayev et al. 2015, p. 191-198). Considering professionalization as a process of professional training of an employee, it can be noted that it lies to a greater extent in the formation and further development of professionalism. The concept of “professionalism” reflects the level of work performance that meets social standards and objective requirements (Artemenko 2009). The high professionalism of civil servants, their correct moral and psychological orientation, and readiness to resist various influences is the key to constitutional legality, ensuring the rights and obligations of a person. Professionalization as a process of becoming a professional depends on the personal qualities, working conditions, motivation and interest of the employee, which is reflected in the authority of a person, primarily in his ability to share his experience with others, to make the right decisions in non-standard situations. There are 3 stages of professionalization (Ryskaliyev et al. 2019, p. 319-332; Kharytonov et al. 2021, p. 131-137):

1. Primary professionalisation – formation, the servant has sufficiently mastered the necessary standard skills and knowledge. The quality of work and efficiency is high and the employee has sufficient experience. Factors influencing further formation at this stage are the stabilisation of professional activity and the need for further achievements.
2. Secondary professionalisation – experience, the servant works effectively and at the same time can share his or her experience with the younger generation. A certain view of particular work aspects is formed and the employee can consciously make adjustments to his or her working activities as well as certain types of innovations in the work process. Factors influencing further development – continuous professional development, development of related activities; career advancement, self-fulfilment.
3. Competence – professional excellence, the employee seeks to train other professionals through workshops and seminars, he or she is an authority in a particular field, is engaged in the development of norms and values of the profession and builds tactics to develop activities. Factors for further development – self-realisation of creative and personal potential.

In order to become a subject of development, a civil servant must possess three necessary qualities: a personal interest in the development of the organization in which he works, and a deep internal motivation to participate in actions; have sufficient qualifications and relevant personal qualities to be able to engage in new activities; be responsible (Kostruba 2018, P. 1689-1695; Miethlich et al. 2022). In the context of the implementation of public administration reforms, the professionalization of civil servants as a process should be aimed at creating a platform in state authorities and local selfgovernment for a harmonious and gradual professional, personal and social dependency.

The current legislation of Ukraine establishes one of the requirements for civil servants – the constant acquisition of new knowledge and skills in the field of civil service and professional development. Every year, the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service (NACS) studies the individual needs of civil servants, on the basis of which further training programs are developed. The report on the generalization of individual needs for the professional training of civil servants for 2020 (2020) is structured by civil service categories – “A”, “B” and “C”. The main aspects of summarizing the individual training needs of civil servants can be defined as: professional competencies determined by employees for advancement in the next year, types and areas of professional training. Studying the results of summarizing the individual needs for the professional training of civil servants of category “A”, it was possible to identify the following aspects of their professional development, which must be taken into account when increasing the professionalization of the civil service:

1. At the beginning of 2020, 132 of the 206 posts in the A-category civil service were in fact in the civil service, while 74 posts remained vacant. Category “A” represents the highest civil service corps, the first, highest-level managers whose decisions in the public service are of primary importance to be fulfilled. A vacancy rate of 36% of the total number of “head” posts could be an indicator, on the one hand, of a lack of sufficiently qualified servants for the post in question and, on the other hand, of a lack of control and reduced efficiency in the provision of professional services in which the manager is absent.
2. NACS summarised 63 copies of individual programmes for category “A” public servants sent by public authorities. This figure actually represents almost 50% of the employed public servants in this category. In other words, according to public authorities, half of the top officials do not need to be trained and upgrade their educational and qualification level, which is not a positive factor for the professionalisation of public servants and the development of the public service institution as a whole.

3. The professional competences requiring improvement for category “A” public servants were as follows: change management – 38 servants; professional knowledge – 25; performance management and human resource development – 22; leadership – 18; communication and cooperation – 13; effective decision-making – 11; working with information – 10; public finance management – 4; achieving results – 2; others (strategic management and planning, public management and administration, innovation management, innovation technology, innovation thinking skills, modern information technology) – 8. In the context of reforms, changes towards activating, modifying and improving the existing system, strategic management and planning, as well as the mastery of innovation in the respective field, are important professional competences for top managers, although these areas of development are not given the necessary attention by public servants. There is also a low indicator for competence in “public financial management”, which is also a priority for implementing reforms, as it has a direct relationship and mutual influence with the economic condition of the country as a whole.

4. The general short-term professional development programmes have been prioritised as the most important type of professional training for A-category public servants. This type of professional development is the shortest in time and contains the shortest version of the necessary knowledge, so it should be implemented comprehensively, primarily in conjunction with self-education. This choice of public servants may be conditioned by a lack of proper motivation. Additional training for public servants is an important stage in their professionalisation. The system of higher professional education provides future servants with the initial theoretical knowledge necessary at any stage of professional service, but which cannot fully correspond to the realities of the modern stage of the Ukrainian state’s development. The conditions of reforming the public administration system imply new knowledge, skills and abilities of the public servant, which are based on an appropriate level of culture, professional and personal qualities and will stimulate the adaptation of the public service institution to the current realities.

5. The main areas of training in general short-term programmes for A-category public servants have been chosen as “change management” (32 people, 50.1%), “leadership” (23 people, 36.5%) and “personnel management in public service” (18 people, 28.6%). The acquisition of qualifications in the areas mentioned is a positive trend among servants. However, the current category “A” leaders are preparing for changes in the conditions of the reform. Such a conclusion can be drawn from the fact that change management involves the transition from the current state to the desired future state in a particular team, state body, etc. and is rather internal in nature, while the practical implementation of the strategy and innovation skills will be both internal and external in nature, will go beyond a single entity and will affect the nature and level of competence of the provision of professional services (Summary Report... 2020).

An analysis of the results from a synthesis of the individual training needs of civil servants in categories “B” and “C” revealed the following areas for their professional development, requiring detailed study and improvement:

1. For the year 2020, information on the individual training needs of 87049 civil servants in categories “B” and “C” was compiled by the NACS. This figure represents only 43.5% of the 192876 persons actually in service. At the same time, 11 public authorities did not provide relevant information on the professional training needs of public servants occupying positions in the “B” and “C” categories of public service. Category “B” is formed by deputy heads of state bodies, territorial bodies, structural subdivisions; category “C” – other positions not included in categories “A” and “B”. It is therefore necessary to oblige the heads of state agencies to establish controls on the planning of training for public servants and to provide the relevant information to the NACS.

2. According to the NACS, in 2020, 1120 public servants were awarded Master’s degrees in Public Administration and Management: 631 civil servants of state structures with jurisdiction over the whole territory



of Ukraine; 489 public servants of local state administrations. The NACS conducts a study of the public servants' individual needs without regard to their age categories. However, it can be noted that it is mainly young professionals who are studying for Bachelor, Specialist and Master Qualifications. Such a number of young servants in public positions may be conditioned by the fact that either the personnel service of state structures pursues a policy of attracting young professionals to public service, or young people in Ukraine have developed an opinion that public service ensures security and stability (Lavrov et al. 2020). Both of these are positive ways of shaping the professionalisation among public servants and should be continued by constantly improving methods, techniques, measures, etc. for the development of the aspects in question.

3. The priority area of education for civil servants occupying “B” and “B” category positions is also training in general short-term programmes. It should be noted, however, that public servants in categories “B” and “C” have a higher percentage of individual training needs in general professional (certificate) programmes as opposed to those in category “A”. Thus, 33.2% of category “C” public servants and 26.4% of category “B” public servants plan to meet individual needs through training in general professional (certificate) programmes, whereas for category “A” officials the maximum percentage of such needs is only 4.7%. On this basis, it can be concluded that servants in categories “B” and “C” are more interested in improving their educational and qualification level and acquiring new knowledge, skills and competences (Report on generalization... 2020).

Based on the conducted analysis of the report on the synthesis of the current individual training needs of public servants in categories “A”, “B”, “C”, possible key measures to improve the professional development of public servants can be identified. Among them, the following can be proposed:

1. To expand the list of areas of professional development for public servants in general short-term programmes to more specialised topics for training. The orientation directions developed by NAPC, the topics of professional development are common for all servants in categories “A”, “B” and “C” and focus mainly on developing one aspect of professional-personal qualities. It is suggested that an additional list of topics be developed for specific areas of practice for ministries, other central authorities and public bodies. For instance, officials in Ukrainian state administrations and the State Tax Service of Ukraine could enhance their professional development by learning from each other's legislation on issues related to their work in the same area, such as the registration of natural persons – entrepreneurs and legal entities.

2. Implement a policy of studying and encouraging the motivation of civil servants for professional development. It is necessary to assess the motivational base of civil servants and employees of local governments in order to identify areas for optimizing the content and organizing advanced training in government bodies.

3. To develop a professiogram (job analysis) – a document containing a system of attributes characterising the specifics of civil servants' work, a list of civil service categories and the requirements for it. The professiogram should be based on normative qualification requirements and meet high moral and psychological standards (Buribayev et al. 2020, p. 143-155; Kim et al. 2022, p. 151-167).

4. To improve the organisation of internships. The results of the NAPC synthesis of individual training needs among category “A” public servants showed that only 1% of 63 top managers seek to gain new practical experience in this area. At the same time, public servants in categories “B” and “C” are not offered this type of professional development at all. Internships in other organisations enable an employee to compare the work of his or her authority with that of colleagues. Immersion in a new environment helps to take a fresh look at the problems of one's state structure and to bring in the achievements of others.

At the present stage, the system of professional development of public servants is dominated by a supportive type of education, focused on training specialists for frequent actions in specific situations, which has a formalised,

pragmatic character (Abdrasulov and Gubaidullin 2019, p. 1370-1374; Auanassova et al. 2021, p. 1-8). However, under the conditions of reforming the public administration system, public servants are required to have systemic thinking skills, which actualises the need for an innovative, developmental, professional and personal character of the professional development process. The main features of this type of education include: interdisciplinary organisation of educational content and the innovative nature of methods and forms of learning, which contribute to the formation of public civil servants' need for self-education – a set of skills and abilities that stimulate professional development.

In the context of European integration, Ukraine is implementing public administration reforms, the success of which depends on one of the most important institutions of nation building – the public service. It is through this institution that public authorities and local self-government bodies ensure the implementation of the rights and freedoms of Ukrainian citizens. Efficient operation of public authorities is only possible with adequate staffing of the public administration system with professional specialists who are able to adapt to current changes, who strive for continuous professional development and who are interested in the proper operation of the public entity in which they work. In this aspect, it is important to support the aspirations of public servants for professional, personal, and career development, which is why it becomes relevant to work on the professionalisation of public servants. The professionalisation of the public servant has an impact on the social, political, economic and other aspects of public administration. Such influences are reflected in the development of public opinion about the performance of public servants and their ability to fulfil their tasks, the understanding and awareness of public servants of their responsibility in the performance of their duties, training of key personnel capable of ensuring public policy in the field of protecting human and civil rights and freedoms at the appropriate level, reconsideration of attitudes towards the results of their performance, where accomplishments should be supported by a system of incentives, influence on the reform of the management structure.

## **Conclusions**

1. Key problems in the system of public servants' professionalisation that need to be addressed are identified as follows: for category "A" public servants – leaving 36% of the total number of positions vacant; identifying only half of the public servants from the total number of employees as being in need of development; diminishing the role of development in the areas of strategic management and planning, mastering innovations in the relevant area, public finance management; prioritising training in general short-term programmes in professional development; the focus on managing change mainly within the respective public authority; for category "B" and "C" public servants – not providing information by public authorities on the professional training needs of servants in the NACS; prioritising training in general short-term programmes in professional development.
2. Based on the results of the analysis, possible measures to improve the effectiveness of public servants' professional development were suggested, including: expanding the list of areas of public servants' professional development on general short-term programmes to more specialised topics; conducting a policy of studying and stimulating public servants' motivation for professional development; developing a professiogram; improving the organisation of internships.
3. Thus, professionalisation of the public service, reassessment of the professional activities of civil servants and local government officials, improvement of the quality of public service personnel development and increase in the scientific substantiation of the professionalisation of administrative work will have a positive impact on the results of public administration as a whole.

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