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## **COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION**

### **КОМПЕТЕНТІСНИЙ РОЗВИТОК ДЕРЖАВНИХ СЛУЖБОВЦІВ У КОНТЕКСТІ ФОРМУВАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ**

*The socio-economic development of a country largely depends on the level of professional competencies of civil servants, who constitute the foundation of society's managerial potential. In modern conditions, they act not only as implementers of managerial decisions but also as an important organizational and motivational resource for modernization transformations in Ukraine. Their activities directly affect the effectiveness of state policy, the stability of socio-economic processes, and the quality of interaction between the state and society.*

*In the context of digitalization, public administration reform, and the need for post-war recovery, the demand for developing innovative professional competencies among civil servants is increasing. Professionalism includes not only knowledge and skills but also value-based and motivational characteristics of an individual, orientation toward public outcomes, and responsibility for the decisions made. Its most important manifestation is the professional identity of civil servants, which is formed through the acceptance of public service values.*

*Professional identity is not static; it is formed in the course of professional activity and is closely linked to the level of competency development. Therefore, without the systematic development of professional competencies, it is impossible to ensure the effective formation of the professional identity of civil servants, which directly influences the efficiency of their work.*

*The purpose of the article is to substantiate the relationship between the development of professional competencies of civil servants and the formation of their professional identity in the context of modernization of the public administration system.*

**Keywords:** *civil servants, professional competencies, professional identity, public administration, digitalization, reform, lifelong learning, human resources potential.*

*Соціально-економічний розвиток країни значною мірою залежить від рівня професійних компетентностей державних службовців, які становлять основу управлінського потенціалу суспільства. У сучасних умовах вони виступають не лише виконавцями управлінських рішень і контролюючою ланкою системи публічного управління, а й важливим організаційним та мотиваційним ресурсом модернізаційних перетворень в Україні. Їхня діяльність безпосередньо впливає на ефективність державної політики, стійкість соціально-економічних процесів і якість взаємодії держави з суспільством.*

*В умовах цифровізації, реформування публічного управління та необхідності повоєнного відновлення країни зростає потреба у формуванні в державних службовців інноваційних професійних компетентностей. Професіоналізм включає не лише знання й навички, а й ціннісно-мотиваційні характеристики особистості, орієнтацію на суспільний результат та відповідальність за прийняті рішення. Найважливішим його проявом є професійна ідентичність державних службовців, яка формується на основі прийняття цінностей державної служби.*

*Професійна ідентичність не є статичною та формується в процесі діяльності, тісно пов'язана з рівнем розвитку компетентностей. Тому*

*без системного розвитку професійних компетентностей неможливе якісне формування професійної ідентичності державних службовців, що безпосередньо впливає на ефективність їхньої діяльності.*

*Мета статті полягає в обґрунтуванні взаємозв'язку між розвитком професійних компетентностей державних службовців і формуванням їхньої професійної ідентичності в умовах модернізації системи публічного управління.*

**Ключові слова:** *державні службовці, професійні компетентності, професійна ідентичність, публічне управління, цифровізація, реформування, безперервна освіта, кадровий потенціал.*

**Problem Statement.** In the context of digitalization, public administration reform, and the post-war recovery of Ukraine, the role of civil servants' professional competencies as a foundation for the effective implementation of public policy is increasing. At the same time, the insufficient level of their development and the formal nature of professional training hinder the formation of professional identity, thereby reducing the effectiveness of managerial activity. In this regard, the study of the relationship between the development of professional competencies and the formation of professional identity of civil servants is highly relevant.

**Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.** The issue of ensuring effective training of civil servants and civil service reform has been the subject of research by such Ukrainian scholars as N. Alyushyna, T. Vasylevska, M. Holovan, H. Yermolaieva, N. Lasna, V. Kozakov, N. Korchak, O. Melnykov, O. Parkhomenko-Kutsevil, B. Panchenko, M. Rudakevych, I. Chaplai, etc.

**Research Objective.** The aim of the article is to study the relationship between the development of professional competencies of civil servants and the formation of their professional identity in the context of digitalization, public administration reform, and the post-war recovery of Ukraine, as well as to substantiate the role of competency development as a key factor in improving the effectiveness of the civil service.

**Main body of the paper.** In today's Ukrainian realities, civil servants play a key role in the socio-economic development of Ukraine as agents of

modernization policy. In this regard, the relevance of developing new professional competencies among civil servants is increasing, including the mastery of innovative methods and forms of work, providing their activities with a clear strategic orientation, and recognizing their special responsibility to the country and society in ensuring sustainable progressive development based on modernization and the widespread implementation of innovations. Under martial law and during the subsequent stage of national recovery, the civil service becomes not only a managerial instrument but also an important factor of national resilience, capable of ensuring the functioning of critical systems, maintaining social stability, and implementing recovery programs.

In our opinion, one of the most important conditions for implementing modernization policy and renewal is continuous professional education of civil servants. According to many researchers, the sphere of continuous professional education is currently becoming institutionally established and is transforming into a systemic component of Ukrainian education that performs essential social functions. This is due to the fact that modern civil service requires constant renewal of knowledge, especially in the fields of digitalization, project management, international cooperation, strategic planning, crisis management, and communication with the public [7, p.89].

We believe that continuous professional education of civil servants is a systematically organized learning process throughout their entire professional activity, enabling each employee to acquire, update, and expand the knowledge necessary for the successful performance of their duties by choosing an educational trajectory that most fully meets their needs, reflects the educational demands of society, and ensures the progressive development of socio-professional identity. This definition emphasizes the essence of continuous professional education as a mechanism for developing the professional identity of civil servants. It is important to emphasize that continuous education should not be formal but result-oriented, focusing on the development of practical managerial competencies that can be applied in real conditions of civil service.

The study of the functioning of continuous professional education for civil servants, as well as the prospects for its development, is based on the

methodological ideas of the competency-based approach in education. This approach is characterized by a transition from an educational paradigm based on the transmission of knowledge to the creation of conditions for forming a set of competencies necessary for professional development and for the effective implementation of tasks of both current and strategic significance. In the context of rapid social changes, the competency-based approach becomes especially relevant, as it enables the formation of the ability of civil servants to quickly adapt to changes in legislation, management models, economic conditions, and security challenges [3, p. 612].

The most important feature of professionalism is socio-professional identity, which represents a complete identification of an individual with the professional community, acceptance of its value-role attitudes and rules of behavior, as well as the acquisition and retransmission of knowledge, skills, and abilities within the chosen social environment. Thus, professional identity is a mechanism of "integration" into the profession, resulting in the formation of professionalism. Therefore, the development of professionalism of a civil servant requires constant qualitative renewal of professional competencies, which should be ensured by continuous professional education [6, p. 54]. At the same time, in the context of transformation of civil service, the formation of stable ethical attitudes, such as serving society, integrity, responsibility, and an anti-corruption culture, becomes particularly important.

The essence of continuous professional education lies in the permanent process of human development throughout their active life. The basis of educational continuity is the constant development of an individual's knowledge, abilities, and skills, as well as providing each person with the opportunity to build an individual educational program. The system of continuous professional education represents an integrated structure of tools, pathways, and methods for developing the personality and activity of a civil servant through educational institutions and self-education. In modern conditions, a significant role is assigned to self-education, since civil servants are forced to independently monitor changes in the legal framework, new management methodologies, digitalization practices, and innovative approaches to the provision of public services [5, p.28].

It should be noted that continuous professional education must be systemic in nature and integrated into the state policy. An important element is the creation of conditions under which training is perceived not as a formal obligation but as a necessary component of professional growth and career advancement. In this regard, it is advisable to introduce a system of motivational mechanisms, including career incentives, certification of competencies, assessment of professional development, and the formation of individual professional development plans.

An analysis of the data from the conducted sociological study shows that the majority of civil servants (54%) emphasized the necessity of continuous professional education. It is important to note the lack of correlation between the need for active involvement in the system of continuous professional education (for example, attending advanced training courses) and the terms regulated by legislation (once every three years). The survey results indicate that the need for professional development was identified even among employees (67%) who had already undergone training during the last three years [9, p. 53]. This suggests that modern conditions require a much more intensive and flexible approach to professional development based on the principle of constant renewal of knowledge.

Civil servants of the Kyiv region justify their need for continuous professional education by the desire to be qualified and competent specialists in their professional field. The majority of surveyed civil servants (59%) confirmed the need for ongoing professional education in order to perform their official duties. The results of the author's study confirm previously obtained data from sociological surveys. Thus, as motives encouraging civil servants to undergo additional training, 55.6% of respondents named the need for new knowledge; 45.0% believe that training helps them work more effectively, rationally, and efficiently; 17.9% view training as an opportunity to move to a more interesting job; 23.1% consider training a way to move to a higher-paid job; 23.9% believe that training helps them obtain a higher position. This confirms that additional professional education is perceived by civil servants as a way to change their professional and official status.

In addition, analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the personnel group most in need of professional development falls within the age range of 40–49 years, which is considered the age of highest working capacity. In our opinion, this fact should be taken into account when forming a request for advanced training of civil servants: it is necessary to stimulate the process of professional development of this age group while avoiding any discrimination against other age groups. At the same time, it should be considered that young specialists also need support and training, especially in terms of forming a managerial culture, professional ethics, and sustainable skills of interaction with citizens [10, p.293].

In order to identify the specific features of the organization and functioning of the regional system of continuous professional education for civil servants in the Kyiv region, an expert survey was conducted in 2023. The experts included managers and specialists of HR departments of state authorities in the Kyiv region. The experts were offered a questionnaire aimed at assessing the regional system of continuous professional education for civil servants, as well as the level of development of their professional competencies (conversion of respondents' answers into an arithmetic mean score ranging from 0 to 10 points, where 0 is the minimum and 10 is the maximum value). Such studies are of particular practical value because they make it possible to identify real problems in the functioning of the training system at the regional level and determine directions for its improvement.

The experts emphasized the need to develop an integrated system of continuous professional education for civil servants in the region (9.8 points), ensuring the improvement of professional competencies and personal qualities of civil servants in the Kyiv region. The level of the existing system of continuous professional education for civil servants in the region was assessed by experts at 6.9 points. Overall, a noticeable trend of development of the continuous professional education system has been observed over the past five years. According to experts, the existing training system generally meets the needs of regional authorities. The quality of personnel training within the existing system was assessed at 5.8 points. The level of theoretical and practical training of civil servants within the current regional training system was assessed at 6.2 points.

Respondents indicated the need to increase the number of practical classes in order to subsequently apply theoretical knowledge in practice [8, p.147].

The average score for the criterion "Level of personal skills formation among civil servants" was 4.8 points. At the same time, experts emphasized the need for purposeful development of interpersonal interaction skills among civil servants, as well as readiness for continuous personal self-development. These conclusions indicate that the training system should expand modules related to the development of soft skills: managerial communication, leadership, teamwork, stress resistance, mediation practices, and public speaking skills. In crisis conditions, these competencies become crucial, as they allow for effective organization of teams and interaction with the population.

Thus, according to the research results, the vast majority of respondents confirmed the need for continuous development of professional competencies of civil servants, which is possible only under the condition of effective functioning of the continuous education system. Experts identified a number of problems related to the regional system of continuous professional education. In particular, 70% of experts supported the consistent development of an advanced (anticipatory) education model, while characterizing the existing regional system of continuous professional education for civil servants as non-responsive, with a delayed reaction to ongoing changes in society. Under conditions of rapid changes associated with reforms, digitalization, and the need for national recovery, this problem becomes critical [2, p.75].

For high-quality modernization of distance learning, it is necessary to improve the educational and methodological support of the learning process (electronic textbooks, video lectures, simulators, reference and analytical materials, webinars, etc.). It is also advisable to introduce interactive training formats more actively: case methods, business games, modeling of crisis situations, and project-based tasks that allow civil servants to develop decision-making skills in complex conditions.

The teaching staff of the regional system of continuous professional education also requires improvement. It is necessary to train highly qualified personnel and ensure their regular development. Currently, there is a certain gap between the civil servants who undergo training and the teachers of

continuous professional education programs: course content is excessively theoretical, and there is a deficit of practical knowledge. A solution to this situation would include not only advanced training of teachers in state centers but also providing opportunities for internships in civil service in order to immerse them in real practice and subsequently adapt theoretical knowledge to practical needs [1, p.39].

In addition, the content of continuous professional education programs for civil servants in the region should promote the development of professional growth skills based on motivation for independent development of professional competencies. Equally important is the inclusion of thematic modules related to modern challenges: management of recovery projects, international standards of public administration, strategic planning of regional development, management of critical infrastructure security, development of a digital state, and implementation of innovations.

Civil servants must recognize the necessity of continuous education for performing their professional activities and developing professionalism. Therefore, continuous professional education should be integrated into the system of evaluating the effectiveness of civil service and career advancement. Under such an approach, professional development becomes a mandatory element of a career trajectory rather than an episodic activity.

Thus, modernization of the regional system of continuous professional education will contribute to the development of civil servants' competencies and the formation of their professional identity for the purpose of professionalizing modern civil service. In the context of crisis transformations and the need for Ukraine's recovery, an effective system of continuous professional education can become an important tool for strengthening the institutional resilience of the state, improving the quality of managerial decisions, and ensuring long-term socio-economic development.

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