

TRANSFORMATION OF THE CIVIL SERVANT TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION UPGRADE SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCIES OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN LITHUANIAN STATE INSTITUTIONS

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Summary

The purpose of this article is to portray the process of Lithuania's civil servant training and qualification upgrade system formation in the period of time after the country's independence was regained and also to depict possible future developments of this system in light of ongoing globalisation and European integration. Comparisons of opportunities available to different participants of the system are used throughout the article. Also, an attempt was made to define the main dimensions of the results of the system's operation. Data on the values that dominate within Lithuania's public institutions and their dynamics as well as facts about the administrative competencies of civil servants in state institutions are presented in the article. A summation and conclusions are also provided.

1. Introduction

During the last decade of the previous century, the swirl of convergence sucked Lithuania as well as other countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the process of European and Transatlantic integration. Consequently, the small Baltic country has become a member of NATO and the European Union. Complicated and ambivalent transformational processes are going on in Lithuania. These processes determine the shape of society and the basis of social, political, economical, technological and cultural development of the country. Due to increasing globalization, Lithuania is transforming in the direction of a society which is open to the world.

In the last few years, Lithuania's political system has transformed into a political system of an independent state akin to the modern European states. Society has gained a wider understanding of humanistic and democratic values, public policy-making, its structure and the process of public administration. There are visible signs that citizens are increasingly involved in this process and that there is much understanding that such involvement amplifies the possibilities of solving their personal social, economic and cultural problems. The very understanding of public administration is changing. Public administration is now conceived by citizens as a public process which they can influence by means of public control and assessment of the activities of public institutions. The ongoing transfer of powers from central to regional authorities is also comprehended as an opportunity for citizens to participate in the decision-making process of administrative institutions.

Basically, the legal basis has been laid, which should help to democratise the activities of public institutions, that is, to direct their activities to solving the problems that social groups, communities or their members face and that this ought to be done in compliance with the established rules and procedures and not simply voluntary inclinations.

The above-mentioned transformations are taking place not only due to the external impact of global geopolitical changes that fundamentally changed the way Lithuania as a state is being governed. These transformations would not have been possible without serious adjustments in people's consciousness and their embracement of the democratic spirit and political culture of the XXI century. These are very important factors influencing the transformations of the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system. The system, in turn, should actively frame this transformation of consciousness and try to ignite positive values in civil servants.

2. The concept of the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system

In this context, the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system is understood as the sum of both academic and non-academic as well as administrative institutions, the activities whereof are conceived as an integral, well coordinated system aiming for continuous and thorough training and improvement of civil servants' practical skills. The main dimensions of the activities of this system are as follows: professional qualification of a civil servant, his/her competence, humanist values, democracy and public administration. A civil servant is defined in this system as a subject who has basic training in public administration and for whom opportunities to study and to gain new or upgrade present qualification are open and who has permanent opportunities to improve his/her professional skills and thereby achieve higher professional competence, that is, to develop the proper level of competence that would allow him/her to undertake more complicated official duties (Juralavičienė, 2003).

The main purpose of such a system is to prepare at the right time the due number of specialists for political institutions and public administration offices who would have the proper professional qualifications, would rely in their work primarily on values that create more opportunities to act for the benefit of society and who would be active creators of a positive organisational culture in their institutions.

3. The factors determining the development of the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system

Changes in the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system are definitely dependent on the factors mentioned in the introduction. This system, its quantitative and qualitative features are directly determined by the availability of human resources, which in turn is subject to the economic and social conditions of the country. Legalization of private property and introduction of the market system has fundamentally changed the working field of Lithuania's civil servants both in terms of its size and in the content of the servants' tasks. Increasing social differentiation and mounting social contrasts also make important corrections concerning value priorities of civil servants. European integration also creates new demands for the participants of the system. It is impossible to conceive how in the face of growing globalisation the national economy could be governed without well-qualified and trained civil servants who are able to deal with this task (Melnikas, 2003).

Thus, democratic transformations of politics, economics and society that finally resulted in Lithuania's independence are also the main reasons of such in-depth changes in the system of state administration, its functions and internal structures of public administration institutions. These transformations are primarily seen in how rapidly the previous nomenclature-like style of civil service and the qualification system related thereto has disintegrated and ceased to exist. New people are entering into political and administrative institutions of the state thereby pointing out the problems in connection with professional qualification, competence and dominant values. The entire sphere of these changes determines the development of human resources, which is very important not only in the general sense but is also particularly essential for the improvement of civil servant professionalism, their cultural and ethical understanding as well as values, because the quality with which society's problems are solved is highly dependent upon those who make political and administrative decisions.

3.1 Changes in education and science institutions

After Lithuania regained its independence, the need for reforms and the situation of the civil service fostered education and science institutions (as participants in the process of the civil servant training and qualification upgrade) to extend their curricula. First of all, universities created academic programs of public administration (bachelor's degree and later master's degree studies were offered). Kaunas University of Technology is in this sense exceptional as it opened a master's degree program of public administration in 1994. In 2001, the Minister of Education and Science validated the public administration programs of seven universities. The purpose of these programs was to train specialists who would be able to fulfil their tasks at all levels of civil service.

The programs used in the U.S. and member states of the European Union were consulted in the preparation of these programs. Application of Western European and American experience in Lithuania is complicated because the very system of state administration is not fully consolidated, no optimal model of decentralisation of power has been found or realised yet and a large proportion of the activities of the public sector is not entirely oriented to satisfaction of society's needs. Therefore it is not easy to estimate how many and what kind of civil servants we will need in the future. Moreover, it is very difficult to model the combination of the curricula that would best fit today's needs. The possibility to effectively apply the study programs of foreign universities in Lithuania is further obstructed by the fact that those programs normally were developed over decades, taking into consideration unique aspects of the state's administration, its educational features and peculiarities of the civil service structure. A study of the development of Lithuania's public administration study programs has been conducted, showing the methodological, historical and substantive variety of its development (Domarkas, 2002).

It may seem that to "import" the specific experience of other countries into one's "own" specific and unique conditions is not rational (Raipa, 2003), but Lithuania's universities have developed their curricula taking into account not only the experience of foreign universities but also their own unique experience. The master's study programs that were developed in different universities are relatively similar.

The differences in subjects and in the scope of programs in different universities are determined by the various needs of general and specific knowledge, by the policies of universities and by available teaching resources. The scope of the master's degree program in public administration is 80 academic

credits, 20 credits whereof are given for the master's degree thesis. The general length of studies, including the research paper, is around 600-800 hours. The existence of accredited study programs, systematic assessment of the students' knowledge, successful defense of the master's degree thesis and acquirement of professional qualification provides a basis for the hope that civil service will acquire staff with the required skills and knowledge of public administration. The above-mentioned differences in curricula of different universities are positive in the context of Lithuania's civil service, because it creates a basis for competition in supplementing and improving study programs of public administration and in attracting young people to choose to study this field.

The biggest suppliers of civil servants to institutions of regional, county and central authorities are the Faculty of Social Sciences at Kaunas University of Technology, the Public Administration Faculty at Mykolas Romeris University, the Institute of International Law and Political Science at Vytautas Magnus University and the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University. The involvement of other universities is much more moderate. Some universities provide opportunities for their graduates to continue their master's degree studies in public administration while residing elsewhere in Lithuania. For example, Kaunas University of Technology organizes such study groups in various counties, and Mykolas Romeris University has organized non-consecutive studies where a student can in a short period of time collect the number of academic credits that would allow him/her to seek a master's degree in public administration. So, in a rather short period of time Lithuania has managed to organize the training of specialists of various fields of public administration. In addition, universities have managed to find enough resources to offer the opportunity for civil servants to upgrade their qualification. Those opportunities are further developed.

3.2 Changes in non-academic training institutions

Another group within the system of civil servant training and qualification upgrade consists of specialised training centres established by the government or various ministries. Establishment of such specialised centres started in 1992 when the shortage of professionals in various levels of state administration was the most obvious and when academic institutions were still not ready to offer their graduates degrees in public administration. In 1992, the Custom's Training Centre was established as well as the public institution American English School. In 1993, Kaunas University of Technology established the Centre for Self-government Training, which initiated courses for upgrade of qualification for employees of institutions of public administration. In 1994 and in later years a number of such centres were established: a training centre of the Ministry of Finance, the Lithuanian Cultural Administrators' Training Centre, the Training Centre Dainava for Civil Servants and Local Administration, the Training and Research Centre of the Board of the State Social Insurance Fund. The Lithuanian Institute of Public Administration was established in 1999. All these non-academic institutions that provide training and qualification upgrade opportunities for civil servants are members of the Lithuanian Public Administration Training Association.

The circumstances of establishment of the Lithuanian Institute of Public Administration were exceptional. The institute was established by order of the government even before the Seimas legislated the Law of Civil Service which specified the tasks of the Institute. The incorporators of the Institute were the Lithuanian Academy of Law (now Mykolas Romeris University) and the Ministry of Administration Reforms and Self-Government (it was later liquidated and its functions were transferred to the Ministry of the Interior). Lithuania's domestic political situation as well as factors of international politics determined the establishment of the institute. Before the Institute was established, both in political as well as in academic milieu it was understood that the condition of Lithuania's civil service was not satisfactory; therefore, there were deliberations about establishment of an institution which would co-ordinate the process of civil servants' qualification upgrade. When the decision on the Institute's establishment was taken, it was taken into consideration that all European countries possess some institutions that implement government policies on training professional civil servants. Also, an important role in the establishment of the Institute was played by the report of the European Commission on Lithuania's administrative capacities and recommendations of the European Union experts on reforms of the public administration sector in Lithuania. In the report of the European Commission, Lithuania's administrative potential was criticised. Following the provided recommendations, the Lithuanian Institute of Public Administration was established according to the model of the German Federal Academy of Public Administration. The establishment of the institute was not an accidental event. It was a consequential step in Lithuania's administrative reform and it should be seen as a tool of this reform, that is, it should be considered in connection with the Law of Civil Service and adoption of the Law on Public Administration, decentralisation of the state's administration, change in the state's administrative institutions and reform of institutions the functions whereof were vital for implementation of the European Union's *acquis*. During its first five years of

operation, the Institute gained enough experience to win leader's position in informal education of civil servants.

In the beginning, the Institute as a public agency that provides training services benefited from the monopoly awarded to it by the Law of Civil Service. Hence, it could specify the content of the training programs for introductory training and consecutive (compulsory) qualification upgrade, prepare and administrate training programs, and organise testing of the knowledge acquired during the training courses. At that time, these monopoly rights made sense because knowledge about the constitutional order of the country, its administrative system and legal principles of administrative activities was lacking and very few were in disposition of knowledge about the process of public policy-making, participants involved in the decision-making, analysis of the process of public policy-making and its procedures. Development of linguistic and writing skills, manners of communication and co-operation was of crucial importance. Economic policy of the state and other issues that were the main objective of the introductory training were understood only very vaguely by that time. Therefore, the Institute as the creator of this program made use of this privilege for some time: under this program, it organised training courses for civil servants on its own.

Nowadays such compulsory training in Lithuanian institutions of informal educational is losing its relevance because the academic curricula for training civil servants is already assimilated in higher education institutions.

Similar tendencies could be observed in the development of other kinds of programs for training public servants – consecutive upgrade of qualification. Many members of the Association make use of the same academic programs and they are also used by private companies and other institutions that provide training services. The Institute, however, is still in disposition of the rights to train civil servants of the 18th to 20th ranking, that is, civil servants of the highest qualifications.

Statistical data necessitates rethinking whether the Institute's competitive advantage in the above-mentioned fields will continue for long. In addition, Lithuanian higher education institutions demonstrate their increasing potential and continually expand the number of programs on EU public administration, thereby systematically preparing specialists for EU institutions, establish institutes related to EU affairs, and so on. In many different courses essentially the same knowledge is transmitted in academic and non-academic training institutions. The difference, however, is that knowledge in universities is gained in a systematic way, its scope is precisely defined, a reliable system of knowledge testing is established and a degree is awarded, whereas in departmental centres of training, the knowledge is acquired in a non-systematic way and no degree is awarded. It seems that we can observe the natural tendency of more and more priority being given to university education. This is in line with the recommendations of social scientists on long-term priorities of social and economic development (Melnikas, 2002).

4. Advancement of public administration values in civil service

In the context of deepening democracy, civil servants must comply with increasingly stringent requirements, including not only high professional qualification and competence but also possession of human values, respect for democratic principles and values of public administration, which also affect the efficiency of tasks undertaken. As a consequence of such increasing demands on civil servants, the problem of the discrepancy between what the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system may offer and what it should be able to do becomes more and more obvious. The rapidly changing political, economic, social, technological and cultural environment in which subjects of public administration are embedded compels civil servants to develop and establish by democratic means material conditions, which would allow communities living in particular territories to retain their historically grounded unity of ethno-cultural, social and economic interests. This unity of interests is a fundamental condition to secure the possibility that a concrete community (including civil servants themselves as members of this community) becomes the basis of real and vital self-government and a guarantee of democracy in the XXI century. The Lithuanian civil servant training and qualification upgrade system is fairly developed and adequately funded yet it is not efficient enough to cope with the appetite for bureaucracy, which leads to the alienation of state and society. The lack of anti-bureaucracy measures and their implementation is the missing link in public administration reforms since regaining independence. The other shortcoming is that no attempt was made to improve value orientations of civil servants. For these reasons the civil servant training and qualification upgrade system does not satisfy the strategic demands of Lithuania's development, particularly in connection with the EU's public administration system, which creates new challenges.

5. Administrative competencies of civil services

Public attention to the administrative competencies of civil servants in state institutions remains

unabated. These capacities have been and continue to be appraised both by the residents of Lithuania, particularly those who have encountered the authorities while solving their private issues, and by foreign experts or observers. Frequently we hear negative appraisals. Are these competencies really low? One cannot answer this in a straightforward way because the managerial competence is decided by many factors.

Changes arising out of the public administration reforms also affect civil servants. Whether they speed these reforms up or not depends not only on their value orientations but also on their administrative competencies. This dependence is understandable; however, one must bear in mind that after the reinstatement of Lithuanian independence, the human resources of the Lithuanian civil service were gradually adapted (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to new tasks without verifying their competencies, attitudes or values. Preparedness of the state to join the European Union administrative space was appraised on the basis of whether necessary laws and regulations had been adapted and whether appropriate management structures had been formed. Today we see that this is not sufficient to ensure efficient functioning of the institutions that have been created and whose activities have been provided the legal basis. Their activities are efficient to the extent the values of the officials (particularly of the senior managers) of these institutions are adequate for today's and the European geopolitical space's standards and to the extent their administrative competencies are developed.

Without claiming to provide a comprehensive determination of the administrative competence level for individual civil servants or their groups, we shall attempt to establish a general competence level that is typical for the entire administration system (since external assessments apply to the entire system) on the basis of the survey of the administrative competencies of heads of the public administration sector. Only the data illustrating planning and management decision taking competencies is used here.

5.1. Planning Competencies

For instance, let us analyse one of the key administration functions – activity planning. This function is frequently considered as the most important one. It would be difficult to contest such a belief: in all fairness, it is the planning that determines adequate selection of the organisation's activity directions, concentration of material, financial and human resources, and their purposeful utilisation for the achievement of the established goals. On the other hand, the planning practice disciplines employees and musters them for implementation of the organisation's mission. How is the organisation's mission perceived today in the state institutions?

5.1.1. Perception of the Organisation's Mission

The absolute majority of the aforementioned survey's respondents (approximately 60 per cent) defined the mission in a way that only partially corresponded to the purpose and content of the public administration organisation's activities, approximately 12 per cent of respondents described the organisation's purpose and activity content in a rather loose way, while almost a quarter (23.4 per cent) provided formulations that did not correspond to the purpose and content of the public administration organisation's activities at all. What determines such a perception of one's own organisation's mission? Traditionally, causes are sought in the level of education attained. Certainly, this factor significantly influences the managerial competence of the employees. The data analysis confirms this dependence and allows determining a tendency: the definition of the mission by the employees with vocational education is rated 3.81 points, by those with single-stage higher education (single-stage higher education – education supplied at the Lithuanian universities prior to the educational reform of the 1990s, when higher education was subdivided into several stages – bachelor's studies, master's studies and doctoral studies. In this instance, single-stage higher education is approximately equivalent to bachelor's studies) – 5.04 points, by those with a Bachelor's degree – 5.06 points, and by those with a Master's degree – 5.12 points (the highest score is 10, i.e. the understanding of the mission fully corresponds to the purpose and content of the public administration organisation). Education attained is not the only factor determining the managerial competencies of the senior managers. Length of work experience in the organisation is likely another significant factor because the employee gains gradual understanding of the purpose of his activities through establishing non-formal relations with his organisation. However, in terms of the mission's perception, the grading according to this criterion is distributed as follows: employees working up to one year – 5.41 points; those working up to five years – 5.46 points; those working up to 10 years – 4.34 points; and those working more than 10 years – 4.94 points. Therefore, the length of work experience cannot compensate inadequate managerial education.

5.1.2. Attitudes Towards Planning Styles

One of the survey's goals was to assess attitudes towards different planning styles by various level managers. What is the dominant style? Conservative or democratic? The data indicates a stronger orientation towards the conservative planning style – only 17.1 per cent of all respondents thought that all employees ought to be involved in formation of the organisation's long-term goals, although full confidence

in the heads of the organisations was not expressed either (fewer than one-third of the respondents would entrust formation of these goals to top managers). The predominant opinion is that the organisation's long-term goals ought to be formulated by a team established for this purpose (the opinion expressed by almost 52 per cent). The analysis of the data in terms of the employees' position in the management hierarchy reveals clear differences among the responses from representatives of the highest, mid-level and lowest management levels: the highest level managers do not approve of participation of all the organisation's employees in the formulation of the long-term goals, while mid-level (approximately 10 per cent) and the lowest level (approximately 20 per cent) managers do approve of such participation.

How do the educational qualifications affect attitudes towards planning style? The tendencies are perfectly clear: the lower the level of education attained, the higher the inclination to delegate planning issues to top managers (56.3 per cent). The only exception is managers with single-stage higher education. These persons (comprising 26.9 per cent of respondents) who had attained their higher education prior to the educational reform are less inclined to delegate the organisation's activity planning function to top managers. These are the respondents who most approve of a special team formulating the long-term goals of activities (56.6 per cent). The attitudes of those with a Bachelor's or Master's degree to the same issue are 48 and 46 per cent respectively. Meanwhile, 36 per cent of those with a Bachelor's degree and 33.3 per cent of those with a Master's degree would delegate formation of the long-term activity goals to the top management. This study does not attempt to analyse advantages or disadvantages of the old and new educational systems.

The fact is that the new generation of civil servants, which has higher level and more modern education, is more inclined to concentrate the planning function in the hands of the upper echelon managers. This statement is confirmed by the analysis of the attitudes towards the planning styles in different age groups. For instance, the most ambitious and "non-democratic" are the managers aged 31 to 40 – only 9.5 per cent of these think that ordinary employees should participate in the formation of the organisation's long-term goals (the attitudes of the older managers about the participation of the ordinary employees vary between 15 and 25 per cent, depending on the age group).

5.1.3. Understanding the Planning Logics

One could not imagine the planning function without technological, procedural issues and the logics. How are these perceived by an employee of the modern public administration institution? The planning operations normally start with the assessment of the organisation's situation: material, financial, human resources, complexity of the goals raised and capacities to implement them are examined. Usually, this step is referred to as the self-analysis. 28.5 per cent of all level managers agreed (and justified their position) with the recommendation to initiate the activity planning process from the self-analysis; almost as high a proportion of the respondents (27.9 per cent) were not capable of defining the self-analysis as a part of the activity planning process, while 40.2 per cent agreed with the necessity to start planning from the self-analysis but could not explain why. Clear differences in the understanding of the planning logics are revealed when comparing responses by different level managers: all top managers unanimously agreed that activity planning begins with the self-analysis but not all could justify this (62.5 per cent); the responses by mid-level and the lowest level managers did not differ significantly; however, according to the survey, their understanding of the planning process was much lower relative to the upper echelon managers. The responses by the respondents appear to be paradoxical in terms of their education level: particularly high incompetence was shown by the bachelors and the masters (22 and 29.6 per cent of managers taking part in the survey, respectively, could not adequately define the self-analysis) as well as by those with higher non-university and vocational education (28.3 and 37.5 per cent, respectively). This phenomenon would be difficult to explain without special research; therefore, we limit ourselves to stating the fact.

5.1.4. Knowledge of the Organisation's Strategic Position Assessment Procedures

In the opinion of the researchers, knowledge of the procedures used in the periodic assessment of the organisation's strategic position is an important indicator of managerial literacy. Are the respondents aware of the procedures for determining the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, or of the procedures used to assess potential capacities of the organisation? A quarter of the respondents indicated appropriate procedures and almost the same number indicated inappropriate procedures or noted that they did not understand the question. More than one-third of the respondents did not indicate procedures at all because they did not know any, and others (16.2 per cent) did not respond to the question at all. What is the dependence between managers' level of education and their awareness of the formal procedures of the planning process? The data indicate that managers with a Master's degree (31.5 per cent) and managers with single-stage higher education (22.8 per cent) are the most knowledgeable about such procedures. For the employees with a Bachelor's degree and with vocational education the respective percentages are 18.0 and 18.8. The awareness of the procedures is more than enough outweighed by non-awareness, where

managers with a Bachelor's degree stand out in particular: 46 per cent of them didn't specify any procedures because they didn't know them. In general, those who have no knowledge of the procedures comprise a large proportion in each of the educational attainment groups. Many respondents didn't respond to the question at all (normally, the percentage of those failing to respond at all varies between three and five per cent). Does that imply that strategic positions are not being periodically assessed and revised in the organisations? Is this done only by very few managers and the majority doesn't know about it (as well as about the procedures)? Is this a sign of managerial incompetence in the public administration institutions?

6. Management Decision Taking Competencies

The survey attempted to analyse the process of management decision taking – from the identification of the problem to the criteria for selection of alternatives. Individual–group decisions and supply of information to guide managers' activities are set apart in the survey. The guiding provision was that managerial decision taking is a reaction to a problem because the manager reinforces his status only through his capability to take effective management decisions. And if each civil servant can potentially occupy the manager's position, then the only way to become an effective manager is through learning to take managerial decisions.

6.1. Identification of the Problem

The answers supplied by the respondents confirm their awareness that the first step in the managerial decision taking process is the identification of the problem (only nine per cent of the surveyed managers were far from understanding this practically and theoretically verified provision). The competence score on this issue is rather high – 6.44 points (the highest score is 10, i.e. the identification of the problem fully corresponds to the classical understanding of the managerial decision taking process). The percentage of managers avoiding the answer to this question was rather insignificant (4.8 per cent). However, it must be noted that in terms of understanding the baseline position of managerial decision taking (identification of the problem), top managers rank slightly below mid-level managers. The percentage of top managers not understanding the essence of managerial decision taking is more than two times higher than the percentage of mid-level managers. However, this is a sign of the prevalent perverse practice rather than theoretical unpreparedness. The same assessment may be applied to the lowest level managers; however, their authority as well as responsibility level is lower while their personal potential capacities are also slightly different than those of top and mid-level managers.

The analysis of the survey's data revealed that there is no clear boundary between the so-called "old school" representatives (those who attained education prior to the educational reform) and the "new school" representatives. The highest managerial decision taking competence was shown by managers with a Master's degree (a competence score of 6.75). This group was very closely followed by managers who had attained single-stage higher education prior to the educational reform (their score was 6.50). However, the latter scored lower than the former in terms of the comprehensiveness of the answers to the questions provided.

In terms of the work experience groups, managers' scores attained here contrast with those attained in the assessment of the planning function. Managers who have been working in the organisation up to five years had the highest score (their competence score was 7.10). All of the representatives of this group answered the question. The lowest score in terms of the problem identification competence was attained by managers with five to 10 years of work experience.

As the attitudes towards the baseline position of managerial decision taking may also reflect certain personal qualities of the respondents, the researchers analysed the data by taking into account managers' age and gender. For instance, an assumption was postulated that younger managers might be psychologically more oriented towards a more rapid achievement of the result rather than towards the identification of the problem. This hypothesis proved to be false: the youngest managers also were the ones who understood the question the best: their competence score was 6.79, while the competence score of the oldest respondents (60 years old and older) was 6.03.

A difference is also visible when comparing the competencies of male and female managers: the male managers scored 6.84, and the female managers 6.07. The percentage of the female managers failing to respond to the questions which sought to clarify the problem identification issues is several times higher than that of the male managers.

6.2. Comprehension of Managerial Decision Content

The content of managerial decisions and their constructiveness is determined by the selection of the organisation's strategic landmarks. The survey distinguished the following long-term managerial decision landmarks: execution of the organisation's mission, financial calculations, harmonisation of group interests, and the so-called "daily topicalities". Clearly, the nature of activities of the public administration

organisation or its structural division itself forces the establishment of long-term managerial decision landmarks. The survey established that the majority of the respondents (68.5 per cent) named the organisation's mission as the long-term managerial decision landmark. In all fairness, long-term managerial decisions in the public sector simply cannot have any other priority landmark. However, the precondition of the organisation's successful activities – the mission – must be clearly defined and flawlessly formulated. It also must be “professed” and strictly followed by all of the organisation's members (one should recall that only one out of ten surveyed managers adequately defined their organisation's mission).

Long-term managerial decisions must undoubtedly take into account financial resources that will be necessary to implement strategic goals. This particularly important aspect was indicated as a necessary element of managerial decision taking content by 12.3 per cent of respondents.

Concern for group interests was named as an important long-term managerial decision landmark by 7.8 per cent of the surveyed managers. Therefore, the situation with the harmonisation of group interests in the public sector is problematic, which may lead to conflicts between the authorities and the public.

One-tenth of the surveyed managers name so-called “daily topicalities”, i.e. the daily routine activities, as a landmark of long-term managerial decisions, while almost one-fifth of the respondents name landmarks that are not relevant to long-term managerial decisions.

Top managers are oriented only towards the organisation's mission execution (87.5 per cent) and financial calculations (12.5 per cent). Mid-level and the lowest level managers hold the organisation's mission execution, the financial calculations, the harmonisation of group interests, and “daily topicalities” as the content of long-term managerial decisions. The relevance of the execution of the organisation's mission as a landmark of long-term managerial decisions is the same for both mid-level and the lowest level managers.

Adequate landmarks for long-term managerial decisions were selected by 86.4 per cent of respondents with the shortest work experience. The most prone to mistakes were managers with work experience of less than 10 years. The analysis of the data in terms of the respondents' age indicates that the youngest managers are the most competent.

6.3. Comprehension of Internal Limitations to Managerial Decisions

Internal limitations to managerial decision taking are most frequently related to the competence of the organisation's personnel and the material and financial resources. These are most frequently encountered in administrative practice quantitative and/or qualitative issues, which erect barriers to the most rational and/or optimal decision. Internal limitations which managers are most frequently forced to take into account in the decision taking process were fully and clearly identified by 33.9 per cent of respondents. However, 41.7 per cent of respondents could not clearly define the internal limitations and 17.7 per cent did not provide any answers (the total competence score was 4.21).

When we analyse the data according to the individual management hierarchy groups, we notice that the lower the respondent is on the management hierarchy ladder, the lower his competence level: the top management group scored 7.75 points, the mid-level management group 5.69 points, and the lowest management level group 3.31 points. All top managers responded to the questions concerning internal limitations, while 23.4 per cent of the lowest level managers did not respond at all. In terms of the competence to adequately list the internal limitations to managerial decision taking, the clearly lowest score belongs to managers with the least (up to one year) work experience (a competence score of 2.55). There are no significant divergences in other groups distinguished according to work experience (those working up to 10 years scored 4.18; those working up to five years scored 4.40, and those working more than 10 years scored 4.67).

In terms of the educational qualifications of managers, the data analysis shows that the competence score of managers with a Bachelor's degree is 2.6, with vocational education 3.69, with single-stage higher education 4.14, and with a Master's degree 5.17. The differences in the scores are significant and witness to the managerial education gaps in the Bachelor's studies.

6.4. Comprehension of External Limitations to Management Decisions

The questions about external limitations in managerial decision taking provided in the survey are as clear as the questions about internal limitations. However, the obtained results indicate that the comprehension of internal limitations is better relative to external ones. External limitations here refer to adapted legislation, standards applicable in the European Union, consumption and ethics issues related to the society at large and to individual social segments, as well as other relevant issues. These questions were answered in a comprehensive and clear manner by 26.1 per cent of respondents, while 43.8 per cent of respondents could not accurately name external limitations imposed on managerial decision taking, and as many as 23.1 per cent failed to provide answers.

When formulating the problem, the manager must appraise to what extent it is solvable due to

objectively existing internal and external limitations. The data indicates that managers (even those with little managerial experience) are more at ease in the internal environment, where there is less uncertainty and the information flows are more familiar. The external environment, particularly where it refers to the dimensions of the European Union's public administration space, is less comprehensible to them.

The survey data analysis indicates that top managers are more aware of external limitations to managerial decisions. Their competence score is 8.88, whereas mid-level managers scored 4.05, and the lowest level managers 2.96. It must be noted that according to this parameter (and a number of others) the situation is the least satisfactory at mid-level management. Normally, the mid-level management chain is considered to be the backbone of the organisation, and the backbone must be strong. The survey data, however, indicate that this is not so.

6.5. Application of Criteria to the Assessment of Alternatives

In all instances when the manager of the public sector takes decisions he is forced to determine the criteria that will provide the basis for the assessment of possible alternatives to the decision (provided that this is not a typical decision with the criteria established *a priori*). The criteria are frequently diverse and depend on the content and the addressee of a concrete decision. If the manager does not have clear criteria for the assessment of the decision projects (alternatives), decision taking becomes complicated and the danger arises that a non-rational and non-optimal decision will be taken. In other words, management may turn out to be ineffective or cause damage to those social groups whose problem is being solved.

The respondents were asked what criteria they use for assessment of the alternatives when taking a decision. The criteria were clearly and comprehensively defined by 12.9 per cent of managers. One out of ten managers provided insufficiently clear and comprehensive definitions of the criteria, while 45 per cent of respondents did not know the criteria, could not understand the purpose of their application, or could not correctly identify them. Those failing to provide the answer altogether totalled 31.5 per cent.

The author refrains from appraisal of the data in this part of the survey because the problem of application of the criteria to the assessment of decision alternatives in the Lithuanian public sector is very acute and in need of a resolution. Therefore, a subjective appraisal of the situation would not be correct with respect to the persons engaged in the resolution of this problem.

6.6. Assessment of the Supply of Information to Support the Manager's Activities

The effectiveness of the manager's activities and the quality of the decisions taken by him are determined by the information fed to him and by his ability to utilise it. This concerns external and internal information flows, meeting the information needs, quality of the information, and information analysis programmes.

The supply of information to support the manager's activities, its strengths and weaknesses were clearly and comprehensively defined by 15.3 per cent of respondents. Almost one-third of managers surveyed have an understanding about the information issues in the organisation. However, more than half of the respondents were not capable of defining the supply of the information to support the manager's activities, or listing its strengths and weaknesses. Even top managers ended up in last place in terms of the assessment of the supply of information to support the manager's activities: their competence score is 3.25 (mid-level managers scored 3.97 and the lowest level managers 3.39). Not a single top manager surveyed provided an adequate assessment of the supply of information to support his activities. The reasons behind this situation are difficult to explain without a special study.

6.7. Subject of Managerial Decision Taking

The specifics of the managerial activities are defined by the fact that he spends a significant amount of time (depending on his position in the management hierarchy ladder) acting jointly with others. At times, as much as 80 per cent of his time is spent in meetings. Group decisions undoubtedly facilitate the marshalling of forces (through exchange of information and dissemination of new knowledge in the organisation) and bring the decision taken psychologically closer to the manager, which assures its smoother implementation. However, group decisions are also bound to programme group conflicts. Finally, the complexity of the problem at stake determines the decision making method: either group-based or individual. A manager with administrative experience knows which instances validate individual decision taking. A manager's growing administrative experience reinforces his belief that routine and repetitive decisions ought to be taken individually.

One-fifth of all managers surveyed clearly and comprehensively defined in which cases the decisions ought to be taken individually, and the same number failed to provide answers. The competence score across all management levels is 4.43. Understandably, the assessment of the situations where decisions ought to be taken only individually also derives from what is referred to as management philosophy, which can also have the notion of democratic management as its base orientation. It is precisely such orientation of

managers that is revealed in the survey's results. Therefore, the competence score of top managers is the lowest (2.75), while the competence score of the lowest level managers is the highest (4.60). A higher position on the ladder of the management hierarchy at the very least forces demonstration of a democratic position.

The empirical proof to the statement stipulated above is found in the analysis of the data according to the length of managers' work experience: the competence score of the respondents having the longest work experience (more than 10 years) is the lowest – 3.77. Those working their first year scored 4.64, those working up to ten years scored 4.99, and those working up to five years scored 5.06. Therefore, a civil servant eventually turns into what is expected of him from the higher officials and the society, which the former must serve. The only problem is that the values and the interests of the authorities and the society differ, although the authorities take pains to declare their unity. Therefore, such permanently occurring contradictions tend to “burn” those managers who strive for high standards.

The data analysis of this part of the survey in terms of the educational qualifications confirms the previously reached conclusions.

7. Conclusions

In the years following the restitution of independence, Lithuanian civil service has experienced several transformations. One of these transformations was the destruction of the old nomenclature system and annihilation of the reproductive system of civil service.

State administration reform was based on modern democratic thinking and demanded training in a very short period of time the number of civil servants who would acknowledge democratic values, would be able to implement administration reforms, shape new institutions of public administration and manage their personnel.

Institutions of higher education also introduced important changes in their social sciences curricula and launched academic programs on public administration, organising studies not only for students gaining a higher education diploma but also providing suitable conditions for public servants to obtain the necessary knowledge.

Civil service perceives the input of new employees who hold master's degrees in public administration. Civil servants who work in public administration institutions make use of their right specified in the Law of Civil Service and take training or qualification upgrade courses in universities and institutions that provide informal training.

Growing knowledge about the policy-making process in Lithuania, changes in political consciousness, new trends of political culture and the increasing importance of democratic values among different social groups are the main reasons why more in-depth analysis of the condition of the Lithuanian public administration system is necessary; this should be seen in relation to the development of scientific research.

The national public administration system ought to be appraised critically because:

- few managers are capable of identifying the organisation's mission;
- a significant proportion of top managers surveyed could not reflect upon the purpose and the content of public administration in the formulations provided;
- few managers think that all of the employees can take part in the formulation of the organisation's long-term goals;
- managers' competence concerning utilisation of the strategic analysis elements is inadequate;
- one out of five managers indicated inadequate landmarks for long-term managerial decisions taken in the organisation;
 - almost one-half of the respondents do not understand what internal limitations to managerial decision taking are;
 - managers provide confused assessments of external limitations in managerial decision taking;
 - the understanding of managers about application of the criteria for assessment of the decision alternatives is insufficient;
- not a single top manager provided an adequate assessment of the system of supply of information to support their managerial activities;
- the majority of managers understand the content of managerial decisions too narrowly;
- mid-level managers occupy a managerial position in public administration organisations that is realistically too low compared to what is advisable;
- there is a divide between the old and new educational systems: the representatives of the new educational system – the holders of a Bachelor's degree – clearly do not comply with the requirements applied to the manager of the modern administration system.

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