

STAFFING OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BODIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DIGITAL SOCIETY

^aDMYTRO KHARECHKO, ^bOLEKSANDRA NIEMA,
^cOLEKSANDRA KHU DOBA, ^dDIANA ZAYATS,
^eOLHA OLEFIRENKO, ^fVIRA BUDZYN

^aLviv National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnologies of Stepan Gzhytskyi, 50, Pekarska Str., 79010, Lviv, Ukraine

^{b-c}Lviv Polytechnic National University, 16/216, Sukhomlynskoho Str., 79491, Lviv-Briukhovychi, Ukraine

^fLviv State University of Physical Culture and Sport named after Ivan Boberskiy, 11, Tadeusha Kostyushka Str., 79000, Lviv, Ukraine

e-mail: ^adxsstudent@gmail.com, ^boleksandra.s.nema@lpnu.ua, ^cOleksandra.v.khuudoba@lpnu.ua, ^ddiana.d.zaiiats@lpnu.ua, ^eolyaolefirenko@ukr.net, ^fvirabudzyn@ukr.net

Abstract: The article demonstrates the essence of public administration staffing, indicates its role and necessity in modern realities. The priority tasks of personnel policy in the context of the digital transformation of society, and its continuous dynamics, are given. The issues of competence of civil servants of the digital era are considered. The problem of reducing the attractiveness of employment in the bodies of public management in the eyes of a new generation of labor market participants, as well as the challenge of quit rate increase, is analyzed. Within the paradigm of New Public Management, based on the latest trends in human resource management – Agile approach and Talent Marketplaces – the necessity of transforming employee value proposition in the public sector is outlined.

Keywords: public administration; new public management; staffing; HRM; Agile; talent marketplace.

1 Introduction

Obviously, the qualifications of personnel, state and municipal employees' understanding of their tasks, and their attitude to work are decisive factors in the effectiveness of public administration. Many highly qualified specialists work in state and municipal governments, with extensive experience in their fields, but they lack the knowledge that would provide new approaches and methods for solving modern problems, especially in the context of the development of a digital society.

The essence of HR policy, staffing in government bodies is to attract, retain, and rationally use highly qualified personnel in public service positions, create adequate conditions that allow specialists to regularly apply their skills, which will favorably affect the successful performance of their duties and ensure the effective functioning of public authorities [7].

The process of implementing the personnel policy should be aimed at using to the fullest extent the creative potential of employees, their extraordinary abilities, energy, skills to identify and eliminate problems. The application of this approach leads to an increase in the quality of work of civil servants and the effective implementation of the most important state programs in various spheres of society.

Staffing in public administration is understood as the activity of the state in the formation of requirements for civil servants, in their selection, training, retraining and rational use of available labor resources, taking into account the state and prospects for the development of the state apparatus, forecasts of quantitative, qualitative needs for personnel based on the principles of public service [23, 30].

The main areas of personnel policy in public authorities include:

- Formation of a strategy for the development of the civil service, taking into account trends and prospects for the evolution of society and the state;
- The establishment of strict requirements for admission to the civil service in order to provide authorities with reliable and professional specialists who are not only able to cope with their official duties, but also are capable of increasing

the authority of government bodies and the state as a whole;

- Organizing a system of advanced training for employees of public authorities, creating conditions for career and professional growth of employees, popularizing the paradigm of life-long learning;
- Improving the digital competencies of civil servants;
- Introduction of best business practices in the field of digital HRM, recruiting and corporate training - in particular, external and internal talent marketplaces.

Professionalism, moral and ethical attitudes of the individual, beliefs, etc. directly define how a civil servant will relate to the performance of his official duties, to what extent he will not be exposed to corruption risks. However, digital communications are no less important today for employees of public administration bodies. A modern civil servant responsible for the implementation of digital projects and the transfer of work processes to a digital environment should not so much rely on developers, but rather be able to understand in a team with his colleagues what people expect from new services and in general from public administration, and actively engage in changes for convenience and satisfaction of citizens, improving the quality of life. Now state and municipal employees must become part of a new management culture, without which the digital transformation of society can hardly be successful. Moreover, the question of the readiness of civil servants for continuous and rapid changes in the information and communication technology environment raises. Each new information system developed and launched in public administration requires increasingly more new knowledge within the framework of digital transformation, expanding the qualification requirements for an employee of state bodies, creating a certain multi-level advanced system of professional digital competencies of a civil servant [3]. In order for the evolution of public administration in the digital age to be effective and not belated, the civil servant must evolve along with technical innovation, which must be taken into account when developing and implementing staffing strategies and programs.

In accordance with the principles of the New Public Management, the development of market principles within the public sector is stimulated, and management technologies from private business are introduced. As a result of privatization and the delegation of a number of state powers to market structures, there is a reduction in the scale of state administration, the principle of paid public services is introduced, and most importantly, there is a revision of state obligations and the rejection of some of them, primarily related to social security.

The new economy requires the knowledge and experience of state and municipal employees in two areas: technical and managerial. It is necessary to shift efforts in personnel training towards the development of new managerial (leadership, team) thinking, conceptual understanding of the strategy, mission of the organization, and personnel management should be based less on administrative methods and increasingly focus on a conscious personnel policy based on a system of interests of both civil servant and public administration bodies [1, 2]. Therefore, the latest scientific knowledge and effective technologies in the field of human resource management, methods for the formation and management of the workforce, and the development of innovative technologies for working with personnel are needed. There is the need for new approaches to such functions as personnel planning, professional selection and evaluation of an employee, retention, the formation of a personnel reserve and career planning, guidance and training of personnel in the course of work, ethics and etiquette of business relations, and the formation of a healthy moral and psychological climate in the team.

The solution of these problems will improve the efficiency of staffing public administration bodies, the state and municipal

service, replenish government bodies and organizations with highly qualified specialists who are able to work effectively in a democratic, information society, as well as will allow forming a modern system of personnel management of the state and municipal service, corresponding to the conditions of the digital society [5, 6].

Thus, the relevance of the study of issues of staffing of public administration bodies today is due to the changing requirements for the professionalism and competence of civil servants, the introduction of new personnel technologies, professional standards, the need to develop new forms of motivation for civil servants in the context of digital transformation of both society and public administration itself.

2 Materials and Methods

The study is based on the fundamental provisions of general sociology, the sociology of management. The paper also uses the conceptual provisions and conclusions contained in the works of scientists on the problems of bureaucracy, political elites, the theory of power, public service, personnel policy, as well as digital transformation, the functioning of the digital economy and the "digital society".

The provisions of the theories of systemic and structural-functional analysis by T. Veblen, R. Merton, T. Parsons turned out to be useful – namely, concerning the creation and features of the functioning of social institutions and structures; M. Weber' provisions about public service as a rational bureaucracy, as well as ideas about the feasibility of a systematic approach in the study of social processes in various types of organizations were included in the methodological base.

Elements of case study method and provisions of Agile paradigm were applied.

3 Results and Discussion

The relevance of the research topic is due to the innovative processes taking place within the framework of administrative reforms in the system of the civil service, the main purpose of which is to increase the efficiency of public administration [8, 10]. Under these conditions, there is a growing need for personnel with professional knowledge and skills to effectively carry out public administration in a modernized socio-economic, political, legal, and information system. In the process of reforming the training, retraining, advanced training of public administration personnel, significant work has been done, which has a positive effect on increasing the level of public administration bodies employees' professionalism and competence, and their ability to solve official tasks.

At the same time, it must be recognized that, in this area of activity of public administration bodies, there are unrealized reserves for raising personnel activities to a higher quality level. Among the priorities, even in democratic countries with a well-developed system of public administration, one can note increasing the scientific validity of the ongoing personnel policy, creating a new system for working with personnel, professional development of civil service personnel, qualitative renewal of educational institutions and personnel services of public administration bodies, taking into account foreign, best world experience in the field of personnel management [11, 13]. There is a need to form conceptual principles for the regulation of personnel activities, the designing of social technologies for the development of HR activities in the areas of search, selection, education of personnel that correspond to the paradigm of social and state development, and the successful implementation of social transformations.

The mechanism of public administration staffing includes principles, forms, methods, measures, and procedures for recruitment. Of course, this mechanism will function successfully and effectively only if all of the above elements interact synergistically.

The effectiveness of the activities of government bodies is determined primarily by two major factors:

- 1) The quality of civil service personnel, i.e., the level of their professionalism, competence, a set of social and moral qualities and value orientations;
- 2) The so-called management (control) technology, i.e., its organizational structure, applied methods, system of regulations, and other factors.

Increasing the efficiency of the implementation of subject-object factors of management leads to an increase in the efficiency of the entire system of public administration. At the same time, the quality of personnel, that is, staffing, and the technological and structural "landscape" of management are closely interconnected.

Merton conducted his analysis of bureaucracy using structural-functional analysis. He viewed bureaucracy as an ideal example of a formal organization characterized by the following characteristics: a hierarchy of positions with many obligations and privileges; competence and responsibility inherent in these positions (and not in the people occupying these positions); a system of rules that over time acquire dogmatic character; technical efficiency raised to the absolute; impersonality and professionalism [26]. Merton first suggested that the negative phenomena inherent in bureaucracy and noted by other authors (in particular, Weber and Parsons) are not a consequence of the personal qualities of officials, but are characteristic of the entire "political machine": "The official life of an state employee is planned for him taking into account his future career through such organizational means of promotion as seniority, pensions, rising wages, etc. All of these tools were designed to encourage disciplined behavior and compliance with official norms. An official is tacitly expected and really strives to adapt his thoughts, feelings and actions to the prospect of such a career. But these very means, which increase the possibility of conformity, also lead to an overemphasis on strict observance of prescriptions, which breeds timidity, conservatism, and technicalism. The shift in emphasis from ends to means is due to the enormous symbolic significance of rules and norms [19]. Another characteristic feature of the bureaucratic structure leads in general to the same result. All officials working together have a sense of common purpose. They have the same interests, especially since the competition has become relatively low due to the development of a system of promotion based on the principle of seniority. Intra-group aggression is thus minimized, and such an order of things is perceived as positively functional for the bureaucracy. However, the esprit de corps and the informal social organization that usually emerges in such situations often leads officials to defend their group interests rather than their clientele and elected top representatives" [26].

It is difficult to disagree with this opinion, and practice indeed often shows this.

The most characteristic feature of personnel policy in the public service in the United States, as in most developed Western countries, is the "merit system". Since the middle of the 20th century, America has been using a career advancement program for officials, which provides for the consideration of a wide range of candidates for vacant positions, taking into account the professional and business qualities, as well as the merits of the employee [24, 25]. This nationwide system is legislatively enshrined in the US code of laws, which establishes that such merits as, for example, the successful completion of certification, an increase in the level of professional training as part of the passage of training programs developed under the guidance of the Public Service Administration, the implementation of special government assignment, etc. In the public service in Japan, as in corporate management, a system of "lifetime employment" is used. The latter means that, once admitted to the civil service, a person acquires the right to work in the organization for his entire working life until retirement. At the same time, the position and the amount of remuneration of an employee are made dependent on the continuous length of

service [27-29]. Another characteristic feature of the Japanese public administration service is the absence of interdepartmental rotations of employees, with frequent (every 2-3 years) rotations of officials within their department. Promotion in Japan is based solely on the results of competitive examinations held annually and available to everyone. The competition for such exams is very high (25-40 people per seat). Persons who have successfully passed the exam are entered in a special list (personnel reserve), from which the relevant department makes the appointment [31-36]. However, the merit system does not fit the dynamic landscape of public administration today - a recent university graduate may have more of the skills needed to serve the digital society. In addition, the merit system is often fraught with the destruction of the unity of the team for the sake of promoting one's own personality, as well as injustice (since a person close to the boss can be promoted, and not the one who deserves it) [21].

The statistics speaks for itself. "From January 2020—just prior to the pandemic—to January 2022, government lost more than 600,000 workers—more than manufacturing, wholesale trade, and construction combined" [18]. The Texas state auditor reported a 38% turnover rate for Texas state employees under 30. In a 2021 survey of state and local government agencies, 38% said their retirement-eligible employees are accelerating retirement plans—the highest percentage since the survey began in 2009 [18]. Government has long struggled to hire and retain talented young workers, as the "silver tsunami" of preretirement employees reaches retirement age. As the values of the younger cohorts shift, this challenge could grow worse unless government updates its approach to hiring and retention. The need for update is clearly evident from the Figure 1 below.

What the private sector offers workers vs. what the public sector offers

Value	Private sector	Public sector
 Flexibility	Very high	Varies, improving with telework
 Work that works for me	• High pay, high risk • Portable 401(k)/pension	• Low pay, high stability and predictability • Defined benefits but requires decades
 Entrepreneurial spirit	• Medium-high • Opportunity for rapid growth	• Often low • Slow, predictable growth
 Well-being	Medium and improving	Medium low and improving
 Purpose and impact	Varies but increasing rapidly	Varies but often high

Figure 1. Comparison of public and private sector offer for employees [11]

The oldest members of Gen Z are now 25, and the youngest are just 10 years old. This cohort will be the target hires for the next decade or more, and their interests are very different from those of baby boomers and Generation X, who now occupy most senior roles in government. Government has to struggle to attract young workers. "This is a growing problem for government whose workforce already skews older and is looking to increase its share of young, tech-savvy, skilled professionals" [18]. It is losing the very workers and skills it needs most. Deloitte experts say that "Workers are now seeking jobs that work for them". This often implies not only better compensation, but rather better work-life balance, and environment enabling a sense of belonging. New employees have little tolerance for a toxic work culture - unethical behavior, lack of respect for workers, or inadequate DEI efforts. Latest studies demonstrate that a toxic culture is 10.4 times more likely to contribute to attrition than inadequate compensation [17]. At the same time, "Workers increasingly want a job that makes a difference. When asked about the most important or very important things personally when choosing a job, 54% of respondents said making a meaningful contribution to society, while 53% wanted a job that focuses on helping others" [46]. Although this statistics is based on the U.S. data, it is also representative for EU countries, and especially for Eastern Europe.

In this context, it is advisable to mention again New Public Management and, accordingly, the application of the best and advanced corporate governance practices, developed in the business sector, in public administration. One of such practices is the Agile paradigm. However, the maturity of the application of flexible management technologies in the public sector is often at a low level today and is not systemic [61]. In this regard, of particular interest is the study of the experience of countries in which Agile has become a widespread approach in public authorities.

Flexible project management approaches (that is, based on Agile paradigm) have been actively used in the UK public authorities since 2011 after the adoption by the Government Digitalization Service of a resolution obliging the authorities to use Agile when developing or purchasing ICT products [4]. The main prerequisite for such an innovation was the need to reduce risks and costs when implementing projects in the face of changing requirements of the country's leadership and the external environment [12]. The speed of change in the modern world has increased to such extent that an effective digital transformation of public administration is not possible without modernizing the management system and restructuring organizational systems.

The introduction of Agile in the UK took place gradually; the first stage in terms of organizational changes was the implementation of activities aimed at creating a new flexible project culture of civil servants and participants in digitalization projects, as well as increasing their level of professional knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to work within Agile methodology [62, 65]. The development of project teams is a continuous process that is still ongoing, in particular due to bureaucratic barriers that have not yet been fully overcome, but it was managed to reduce their impact on project activities as part of digital transformation.

To organize work, in the UK, the Digital Public Services Standard (Service Standard) has been introduced, the seventh paragraph of which obliges participants in digitalization projects to use Agile and iterative client-centric methods of work. Activities under this paragraph are carried out in accordance with the approved principles of state flexible development. The introduction of Agile into government bodies is implemented using a specially created Agile delivery community structure, which faces the following tasks [16]:

- Dissemination of information on the methodology for applying flexible management approaches in the work of government bodies;
- Creation of a platform where Agile cases are covered and experience is exchanged;
- Formation of a discussion platform for discussing and improving the practice of applying flexible approaches in the implementation of government projects.

One of the important steps of the UK Government on the way to effective GovAgile is the creation of the Digital Services Manual ("Service manual") [40], which covers various elements of service development: from design, technology, and team to user support when using services, improving software products. According to the Manual, Agile is the main approach to project management.

An example of a successful application of a flexible approach in the UK Government is the government portal gov.uk, on the basis of which public services are provided. Within the framework of the Agile methodology, the main tool for project implementation is Scrum. Over the 3 years of the project to develop and improve the portal, by 2015, gov.uk replaced the sites of 1882 government organizations. Today, it is an integral part of the national digital infrastructure, and development is carried out by working out feedback from both users and organizations providing public services [40]. Changes are also being made using Agile.

In the United States, already by 2017, 80% of government projects in the field of information technology were implemented using iterative and flexible methodologies [54]. Today, this figure is significantly higher. An important influence on the development of Agile in the US public sector is provided by the U.S. Digital Service, which is an expert platform for studying the practice of providing digital services, new approaches and ways to implement them in the activities of governments and government organizations [37-39]. The mission of the Service includes the transition from traditional management to the use of flexible iterative methods for the provision of digital services and the implementation of IT projects. It is important to note that this transition is accompanied by the creation of a methodological base, one of the elements of which is the Digital Services Playbook. The document contains 13 key principles for the implementation of projects, supplemented by checklists and questionnaires, the use of which can increase the efficiency of a government agency or organization [54, 63]. One of the principles of the methodology is the use of Agile and iterative tools in the development of digital services in order to create a product that meets the needs of the state and society. The checklist under this principle includes the creation of a prototype, its refinement, special forms of team work, quality management, and other features typical of Agile. U.S. Digital Service pays special attention to the introduction of flexible approaches in procurement activities. In this regard, a platform for the exchange of experience TechFARHub has been formed, practical recommendations of the TechFar Technical Handbook have been developed, and the DITAP educational program is being implemented [41, 42]. An integrated approach to improving the development and provision of digital public management services through the introduction of flexible and iterative project management methods allows for systemic changes and the most effective implementation of the tasks set.

Agile approach implies organizing flexible teams and rotating team roles, thus overcoming the limitations of bureaucracy described by Veblen, Merton, Parsons, and Weber. However, its implementation requires appropriate staffing and a culture of learning and knowledge sharing [44, 45]. Agile helps to save resources when making management decisions and to predict the performance of activities. At the same time, a large number of regulatory requirements can complicate the application of cross-functional team interaction.

Agile methods provide opportunities that go beyond traditional approaches, that is, their application allows for quick, inexpensive, and at the same time successful achieving of results in complex projects with vaguely defined requirements. Agile methods require unconventional measures. This is a unique paradigm that is not easily understood by traditional means [16]. Agile consists in the transformation and change of the paradigm of thinking from command-directive towards professional-autonomous (Agile-minding) [43]. The most popular and most structured of the Agile family of technologies is the Scrum framework, which is the basis for implementing Agile thinking that helps teams move and learn faster, that increases the speed, quality, and innovation of work. Scrum is often used in conjunction with other Agile frameworks.

The use of Agile methods allows speeding up the time of the project fulfillment, ensuring more consistent work of the levels of the organizational structure, increasing team motivation, reducing the cost of services and improving the order of work with clients.

According to McKinsey, specific Agile principles that can be applied at different levels of government, are as follows (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Specific Agile principles that can be applied at different levels of government [18]

Moreover, one should note that “there is a growing trend in businesses toward the marketplace model for talent from the directed model of management” [14]. Already today, many companies are not limited to the search for only external candidates. Having determined the skills, experience and qualifications, the search for a suitable candidate is also carried out within the company, which allows filling the vacancy faster. Today, recruiting skills are highly valued in business, because it is important to approach the issue of finding a new employee from a strategic point of view. To optimize the recruitment process, companies are trying to automate tactical selection and planning activities [47-50]. The need for an internal talent marketplace is becoming clear as it becomes more difficult to find external candidates. Increasingly, companies are trying to implement internal platforms that allow managers to find an employee to work on a project, and enable employee finding a mentor or a new project. Thus, new opportunities open up for people within the company: ambitious employees rise up the career ladder, and projects are staffed by the best employees [9, 64]. According to Bersin, talent marketplaces will almost consistently outperform the directed model of management because talent marketplaces can adapt and act more quickly. Most governments have occupational classifications that describe the employees’ knowledge, skills and abilities. But marketplaces go beyond. “In President Obama’s second term, the Office of Personnel Management created a talent marketplace where federal employees could contribute their talents and skills to government-wide projects. Modeled after Google’s 20 Percent Time Program, Open Opportunities lists part-time opportunities and short-term details. Open Opportunities allow federal agencies to quickly find talent to fulfill the short-term needs of the agencies when the regular federal hiring process would take too long and be too burdensome” [14].

Technically, this may look like a digital platform where employees post their resumes with a complete list of competencies. And then the project manager or artificial intelligence selects a team for the tasks. Such a talent ‘fair’ enhances the role of corporate training and the creation of individual development trajectories [17, 20].

The platform GovCloud is called “the future of government work” [22]. It uses the model of cloud computing to create a pool of government workers who would be dispatched to, “Small, mission-focused agencies,” as needed to help in carrying out the agencies’ missions. The impetus for switching to GovCloud is that government work is becoming more creative, collaborative and complex. However, government work is structured for the clerical work of the 1950s. As a result, agencies are slow to adapt to changing requirements and needs of citizens.

GovCloud helps federal agencies become quicker to adapt to changing circumstances. Deloitte defines GovCloud as a “New model for government based on team collaboration, whereby workforce resources can be surged to provide services to government agencies on-demand” [15].

Thus, the obsolescence and lack of demand for many forms of daily operational activities, the optimization of routine processes due to the digitalization of procedures, services, and the

emergence of new value motives in the activities of a civil servant lead to the need to find new methods and means of optimal organization of labor in the emerging digital environment [51-53]. Conceptual changes in professional activity are an inevitable and time-consuming process that is recognized and re-evaluated by constantly searching for a compromise between the interests and priorities of the state, the state administration on the one hand, and public administration employees - on the other.

The introduction of new regulations, rules of interaction in the digital environment, optimization and automation of the activities of public civil servants should be accompanied by the formation of motivation to accept and implement them [55-58]. The mutual influence of these processes in the context of digital transformation stimulates a change in the culture of the public administration system. As a result, employees must share new values and attitudes in order to adequately perceive the manifestations of digital culture and interpret them in their own way, and eventually become its bearers. Namely the values that are understood and accepted by each participant in the digital transformation can smooth out resistance in a difficult period of organizational changes in the public administration system.

In the competency model, digital culture is a key block that characterizes the changes which have occurred as a result of the development of personal and professional competencies of digital transformation participants, and staffing must fully comply with these new realities, both to overcome the trend of declining public service attractiveness for younger generations, and to ensure sufficient efficiency of public services in the digital society [59-60]. Many younger employees value flexibility, purpose, well-being, and without meeting these needs, public administration bodies would soon face with labor shortage and further increase of quit rate. Thus, the government 'employee value proposition' is crucially needed to be reconsidered.

In 2015, Transport for London (TFL), the UK capital's largest transport agency, replaced the traditional cascading approach with Agile project management in order to upgrade its digital systems, and received positive results after the two-way sprint based on the Scrum method. Changing the organizational culture to encourage Sprint (Agile) way of working should begin with focusing attention on consumers - citizens who will use the projects being developed [4]. By listening to citizens' needs and working closely together to gather feedback, not only will transparency be increased, but more successful programs will be implemented. Using Agile as a framework for project management will help governments become more innovative by putting citizens' priorities first.

An Agile mindset is an attitude, as well as an innovative approach to problem solving, that can drive public administration reforms in the age of digitalization. At the same time, a flexible way of thinking is needed both at the public management level itself and at the staff level.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AE