

FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF A PUBLIC SERVANT

ІНШОМОВНА КОМУНІКАТИВНА КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ У ПРОФЕСІЙНІЙ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ДЕРЖАВНОГО СЛУЖБОВЦЯ

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The article is devoted to the study of issues related to communicative competence in the activities of civil servants. The scientific and theoretical approaches to the definition of "competence" and its types are analyzed. It has been established that an important condition for entering the civil service and its further passage at all stages is the appropriate level of professional competence of a civil servant. The level of professional competence of each civil servant determines the effectiveness of the civil service as a whole. Communication competence is highlighted as an important component of professional competence. It is understood as a multifaceted attribute, inherently tied to the specific conditions of its application, and presupposes that an individual already possesses the necessary competencies for a given position. Given the need for civil servants to be involved in international relations and to be constantly present in the international information space, communication skills and a sufficient level of knowledge of a foreign language of professional use become crucial in this matter and influence the formation and development of foreign language communication competence. In order to reveal the essence of this competence, its main components are emphasized and each of them is explained. It is proved that the formation and development of foreign language communicative competence occurs simultaneously with the professional training of civil servants. It is noted that self-education and self-development have an equally significant impact on learning, which makes it possible to independently plan, adjust, coordinate their learning and independently influence the formation of foreign language communicative competence as part of their professional competence.

Key words: civil servant, professional competence, competence-based approach, communication, foreign language.

Статтю присвячено дослідженню питань, пов'язаних із комунікативною компетентністю в діяльності державних службовців. Проаналізовано наукові та теоретичні підходи до визначення поняття компетентність та її видів. Встановлено, що від рівня професійної компетентності кожного державного службовця залежить ефективність функціонування державної служби загалом. Комунікативна компетенція висвітлена як вагова складова професійної компетентності. Враховуючи необхідність залучення державного службовця до міжнародних відносин, постійного перебування у міжнародному інформаційному просторі, комунікативні навички стають вирішальними у даному питанні та впливають на формування та розвиток іншомовної комунікативної компетенції. Відзначено, що формування та розвиток іншомовної комунікативної компетенції відбувається одночасно з проходженням професійного навчання державних службовців. Обґрунтовано необхідність постійного розвитку комунікативних навичок державних службовців з метою підвищення ефективності та результативності їх професійної діяльності. Наголошено, що основним напрямом розвитку комунікативної компетентності державних службовців є комунікативна освіта. Також зазначається, що самоосвіта та саморозвиток мають не менш вагомий вплив на навчання, що надає можливість самостійно планувати, коригувати, координувати своє навчання та самостійно впливати на формування іншомовної комунікативної компетенції як складової своєї професійної компетентності. Зазначено, що іншомовна комунікативна компетенція посідає важливе місце в професійній компетентності сучасного державного службовця та сприяє застосуванню отриманих під час професійного навчання знань та вмінь у професійній діяльності, використовуючи спеціальні лінгвістичні засоби.

Ключові слова: державний службовець, професійна компетентність, компетентнісний підхід, комунікація, іноземна мова.

Problem statement. Constant changes in state-building and management processes in the context of orientation towards the European vector of development require a fundamentally new attitude to the civil service and civil servants who must respond effectively, transparently and in a timely manner to such changes, and, possessing high professional qualities, implement them. Today, the issue of discussing the effectiveness of the civil service in Ukraine is popular in society, as the success of socio-economic and socio-political changes in the country largely depends on the productive work of civil servants.

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Civil Service," the right to civil service is realized taking into account the requirements for the level of professional competence. Thus, this law introduces a competency-based approach to the process of entering civil service, the performance of civil service, and civil service positions.

This management approach is characterized by a differentiated remuneration system based on indicators of efficiency and effectiveness of official activities, as well as a high level of professionalism and accountability, which is manifested in the objective

measurement of the performance results of civil servants.

Competence is a multifaceted category that is part of the specific conditions of its implementation and implies that a person already possesses the competencies relevant to the position. Therefore, a competent person in a particular field should have the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable them to act effectively and fully and comprehensively characterize them as a professional.

The quality performance of functions by civil servants defines their professional competence. At the heart of the concept of professional competence, we consider a competent employee to be someone who not only possesses the necessary knowledge and is a professional but also knows how to act adequately in relevant situations, applying this knowledge, and takes responsibility for their activities.

Given that knowledge of a foreign language is specified among the professional knowledge requirements for a civil servant, this study considers it appropriate to examine the place of foreign language communicative competence in the professional competence of a civil servant.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The present day sets high demands on civil servants, requiring a responsible attitude and professional mastery for the quality performance of official tasks. Various aspects of the problem of professional competence of civil servants have been the subject of scientific works by such scholars as Zh. Virna, A. Mudry, L. Hohina, M. Hodyna, O. Dolhyi, O. Khrushch, O. Lindyuk, T. Nedashkivska, and Ya. Radysh. The scholars A. Terentyeva, P. Volianskyi, and M. Dolhyi define the qualification requirements for professional competence not only as the educational and educational-qualification level and length of service, but also work experience, and the possession of special knowledge, abilities, and skills necessary for the effective performance of official duties. The competency-based approach is explored in the work of Ukrainian scholars H. Haiovych and K. Shykhnenko, where particular attention is drawn to communicative competence. The theoretical foundations of the content of communicative competence of civil servants are outlined in the research of H. Pocheptsov, K. Vashchenko, and T. Honcharova. Scholars V. Volyk, A. Omelchuk, T. Fedoriv, S. Yatsenko, and others considered specific issues regarding the improvement of communicative competence of civil servants. It should be noted that the issue of the role of communicative competence in the activities of civil servants remains understudied and determines the relevance of the chosen topic.

The aim of this study is to research the scientific and theoretical approaches to determine the role of foreign language communicative competence in the activities of civil servants.

Presentation of the main material. The effective functioning of the public administration system depends not only on its organizational structure and external factors, but also on the personal characteristics of specialists and the specifics of their professional activities. Modern conditions and constant changes occurring at the state level require a civil servant, in addition to a high degree of professionalism, to have a constant readiness to accumulate and update their knowledge and skills.

A crucial aspect of organizing official activities is the competency-based approach. The main argument in favor of introducing the competency-based approach is its practical orientation. A competent specialist not only possesses a certain level of knowledge, abilities, and skills but is also capable of implementing them in their professional activities. Furthermore, the introduction of a competency-based model opens up opportunities to verify the effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of official duties [1, c. 186].

The competency-based approach involves development in two interconnected dimensions: personal and professional. Particular attention is focused on the personal and psychological qualities of a person, which includes broadening one's worldview, overcoming stereotypes, re-evaluating values, and developing and improving such behavioral competencies as negotiation, conflict avoidance or resolution, openness, a focus on quality and results, and an understanding of values.

Communicability is an important component of any active sphere of activity. The result of an inability to communicate is misunderstanding and confusion, which leads to losses in both material and spiritual terms. If we take into account the competency-based approach, a person with the aforementioned gaps in communication will be perceived as incompetent in a particular matter. In view of this, communicative competence should occupy an important place in the list of knowledge and skills that are part of the professional competence of specialists in the field under study. Therefore, among the main requirements that should be placed today on specialists, and above all on heads of the civil service, is a developed ability to communicate effectively.

Communicative competence undoubtedly implies that a civil servant possesses a special component in their professional activity – information – which at the same time acts as a means of state supervision and

the provision of administrative services. In the current conditions of the development of the information society, information has become the initial and final product of labor – it is collected, processed, and disseminated; it has already become a commodity that is bought and sold, and the information system built on its basis is the backbone of modern society [2, c. 21].

The process of owning, disposing of, distributing, storing and exchanging information involves many participants, which carries certain risks and opportunities, and not only the content of the information itself but also the methods of its transmission are important, which actualizes the communication component of this process. The level of proficiency in communication tools, the ability to persuade, accurately formulate thoughts, conduct negotiations, give public speeches, and, no less importantly, the knowledge of foreign languages are also becoming increasingly important. The level of effectiveness of the communicative process is determined by the level of development of the foreign language communicative competence of the civil servant.

Thus, a modern civil servant is a highly qualified professional who is able to solve strategic issues of professional activity, establishing mutual understanding and interaction with the public, a specific social group, and individuals, i.e., has a culture of communication activity.

In public administration, a sufficient number of studies have been carried out on professional competence, its formation and development in the process of professional activity of a civil servant. The Law of Ukraine “On Civil Service” defines professional competence as the ability of a person to apply special knowledge, skills and abilities within the limits of the powers assigned to his or her position, to demonstrate appropriate moral and business qualities for the proper performance of the tasks and duties, training, professional and personal development.

Competence is an integrative concept with its own structure, the components of which function as a single whole. A civil servant can become competent in their professional activities by possessing certain competencies, implementing them in practice, and gaining experience [3, c. 234].

Professional competence is a necessary system of professional competencies: managerial, economic, political science, ethical, socio-psychological knowledge and skills of a civil servant, including their ability to think creatively, willingness to take risks and assume responsibility, ability to anticipate the results of their activities and critically evaluate their consequences, and readiness for self-education. The abil-

ity to apply and adapt one’s knowledge and skills to changing working conditions is also important. In other words, professional competence is the sum of accumulated experience and acquired knowledge that enables a person to quickly solve assigned tasks in their professional field.

In this study, we will focus in more detail on the characteristics of the essential and substantive features of communicative and integral competencies, and their role in the activities of civil servants. In order to successfully achieve a specific goal, a modern civil servant representing the scientific, political, economic and business elite of Ukraine must establish international business contacts in the current conditions of dynamic changes and crisis situations, so a high level of foreign language proficiency is extremely important.

The basic competencies that are necessary today for any specialist are: communication in the native language; communication in foreign languages; knowledge of mathematics and general knowledge in the field of science and technology; language skills in working with digital media; learning for the sake of acquiring knowledge; social and civic skills; initiative and practicality; awareness and self-expression in the field of culture [4, c. 92].

Therefore, the competence related to communication in foreign languages is given special attention. The ability to communicate in a foreign language within one’s field of specialization and to maintain communication in a foreign language, taking into account the specifics of the foreign language culture, is an integral component of a competent specialist in their field. From the point of view of the competence approach, in relation to the civil service, the main goal of mastering and using a foreign language in professional activities is to form foreign language communicative competence as a component of the professional competence of a civil servant, which ensures the ability to apply relevant knowledge and skills in professional communication.

The formation of foreign language communicative competence as a component of the professional competence of a civil servant allows a person to interact in a professionally oriented situation of communication with specialists from other countries, to be ready for intercultural professional dialogue in a multicultural space in the context of international mobility and integration.

Speech competence includes such types of competencies as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking competence is the ability to perceive speech by ear with subsequent reproduction, discussion, and interpretation of what is heard. Speaking ensures oral

communication in a foreign language. When communicating in their native language, a communicator thinks only about what to say and in what sequence. When speaking a foreign language, one has to activate their grammatical, lexical, and phonetic skills so that the communication process is correct, that is, meaningful, clear, and dynamic. Listening competence lies in the ability to perceive by ear any information that sounds both from the speaker's mouth and from any technical source. Reading competence is the ability to read any printed text. Writing competence is the ability to express thoughts in writing within a specific topic [5, с. 112].

Discursive competence is the ability to construct coherent, cohesive, and logical statements of various functional styles in oral and written speech.

Strategic competence is the ability to use verbal and nonverbal communicative strategies appropriate to the communication situation for the purpose of effective intercultural professionally-oriented communication.

Socio-cultural competence is characterized as the ability of interlocutors to adequately perceive, understand and evaluate the achievements of culture and science of other nations in the process of intercultural professionally-oriented communication.

Social competence is the ability of an individual to choose an adequate means of communication depending on the conditions and goals of a particular communication situation, to build statements in accordance with the communicative intent of the participants in communication.

Linguo-professional competence is the ability to perceive and reproduce texts in a specific area of special subject activity, the clichés of language for special purposes, the ability to operate with foreign language general scientific and special vocabulary, to analyze, critically rethink, and present textual material of professionally-oriented issues.

Socio-political competence is the ability to navigate the linguistic and multicultural space, taking into account the norms of civil and legal behavior.

Intercultural communicative competence is also included in the structure of foreign language communicative competence, which we understand as the ability to interact with native speakers of another culture, taking into account national values, norms, and perceptions, to create a positive mood for interlocutors in communication, to choose communicatively appropriate means of verbal and nonverbal behavior, without losing one's national self-identification in the process.

Intercultural communicative competence should be considered a necessary component of foreign lan-

guage communicative competence and professional competence in order to ensure effective socio-cultural and professional cooperation of civil servants at the international level.

Today, civil servants are constantly in the public eye, participate in international forums, conferences, platforms, and work with a large number of program documents and projects at the state and international levels. Therefore, it is entirely understandable that in the context of European integration processes, a certain level of foreign language proficiency is required of them. The language training of civil servants who have a daily need to communicate with foreign colleagues in order to exchange professional experience, discuss issues of state and local importance, and increase the efficiency of the management apparatus, involves the formation of foreign language communicative competence as an important component of their professional competence.

Serving in the civil service is a rather lengthy and responsible process, consisting of successive stages, the purpose of which is to train highly professional specialists who, in their positions, must understand its importance and aim to increase the efficiency of public administration. The sequence of stages in the civil service involves the gradual development of the professional qualities of a particular employee, increasing their level of awareness and culture. However, achieving a high level of effectiveness in the performance of their official duties by such a person is also possible provided that the process of their service, the formation of their professional level, is organized in such a way that involves continuous learning, accumulation, and updating of knowledge, which primarily actualizes the issue of professional competence of a specialist in the field of public administration.

During the training and professional development of civil servants, the improvement and development of professional English language skills simultaneously takes place. Therefore, foreign language communicative competence occupies one of the main places among the mandatory competencies of the professional competence of a modern civil servant.

The foreign language communicative competence of a civil servant implies the formation of knowledge, abilities, and skills that ensure the possibility of successfully using a foreign language both in professional activities during real communication for the purpose of exchanging experience and discussing issues of state and local importance, and during self-education and personal self-development. A civil servant is a representative of the state, on whose

behalf they perform their official duties, therefore their language culture is an important component of their professional competence.

Conclusions. The future of our country and the strengthening of public trust in the authorities depend on the effective work, dedication, and professional competence of the civil servant. The dynamic nature of societal development implies that the professional activity of any specialist throughout their career requires continuous education and constant enhancement of professional competence. This directly applies to the modern civil servant as well. The introduction of the competency-based

approach is aimed at shifting from the traditional executive role of civil servants to fostering their independence and responsibility. A distinctive feature of the competency-based approach is its focus on actual performance outcomes, behavior, and actions.

A modern civil servant must be a professional not only in the field of management but also in foreign language proficiency, as they often need to communicate with international colleagues, participate in international forums, conferences, platforms, and projects, as well as work with a large number of programmatic documents.

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