

## NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AS A RESPONSE TO EXPECTATIONS OF THE SOCIETY TOWARDS THE CIVIL SERVICE

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### **Abstract**

*The high dynamics and complexity of the changes in the environment are making it necessary to implement continuous changes in different areas of the activity of modern organizations. Changes also occur in the functioning of the civil service and, according to the concept of New Public Management, they concern the implementation of management methods and techniques used in the private sector. An important factor determining the changes implemented are the expectations of the society. The article presents an implementation of the concept of New Public Management aimed at increasing social expectations as exemplified by the Strategy of Human Resources Management of the Civil Service and other internal documents.*

**Keywords:** *civil service, customer orientation, New Public Management, Human Resource Management*

### **1. Introduction**

Since the creation of public administration, the issue of its role, organization and the scope of authority and responsibilities have been widely discussed around the world. Throughout history, as a result of political changes, public administration has been subject to numerous transformations (Zawicki, 2011, p. 16). These changes in public administration are expressed e.g. by the concept of New Public Management (NPM) established at the turn of the 1990s, whose main idea is the implementation of business management methods and techniques used in the private sector to the activities in the public one (Hood, 1995, p. 97, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012).

Regardless of the changes being made, performing a menial role towards the society shall be the factor constituting the rise and functioning of the public administration (Zawicki, 2011, p. 16), which is what civil servants in particular have been appointed for.

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H. Izdebski indicates that the functioning of modern public administration is not possible without a bureaucratic system, which is part of the civil service (Izdebski, 2007). According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, the Civil Corps was established “in order to ensure a professional, diligent, impartial and politically neutral discharge of the State’s obligations” (Article 153 item 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997). The task of the civil service in Poland is to create a modern state, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its organs and to ensure the citizens’ satisfaction ([http://dsc.kprm.gov.pl/sites/default/files/sluzba\\_cywilnapodstawowe\\_informacje\\_v\\_6\\_06\\_2013.pdf](http://dsc.kprm.gov.pl/sites/default/files/sluzba_cywilnapodstawowe_informacje_v_6_06_2013.pdf), access: 3.5.2014). The functioning of the civil service in Poland is regulated by the Act on the Civil Service of 21 November 2008, under which the corps of civil servants is composed of employees under a contract of employment and civil servants employed by an appointment in the government (Article 3, Law on Civil Service, 2008).

The purpose of this article is to propose ways to implement the reform of New Public Management, with particular emphasis on the postulate of customer orientation in the Polish civil service in the area of human resources management. The implementation of this objective will be made through:

- Presentation, based on the literature, of the assumptions of New Public Management associated with the change in the expectations of society and the controversy surrounding its practice;
- Implementation, indication of NPM components implemented in the civil service by analyzing source materials: information from the website of the civil service and internal documents, i.e. *Strategia Zarządzania Zasobami Ludzkimi Służby Cywilnej*, *Zarządzanie w służbie cywilnej – poradnik praktyczny*, *Vademecum pracownika*, documents of the Department of the Civil Service of the Office of the Prime Minister etc. References to the assumptions of the New Public Management implemented in the civil service were also recognized in the Law on Civil Service of 21 November 2008 and the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

Given the theme of the conference, it was intensely sought to reveal aspects related to the implementation of one of the assumptions of the concept of New Public Management – the postulate of customer orientation. Therefore, it was assumed that the requirements of customer orientation were dominating in the concept of NPM, which lies at the source of their creation.

## **2. The increase in the expectations of the society as a basis of the concept of New Public Management**

The origin of the concept of New Public Management was the ineffectiveness of traditional, hierarchical and highly formalized Weberian administration and processes, which began to occur in the economies of Western countries in the second half of the twentieth century. This period was accompanied by a rapid development of the mass media, and phenomena such as the intensification of competition, the growth of political consciousness of citizens and universal access to information witnessed in the growth of expectations of the society towards the public administration. The result of these developments was the growing participation of citizens in the exercise of public power by creating social organizations and associations in Western Europe. In these countries, societies were also critical of the size of the public sector (Hausner, 2002, p. 48-62, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012) and the concept of state intervention by J.M. Keynes and related high levels of public spending, accompanied by an increase in employment in the public administration (Musialik, 2011, p. 496, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). In response to the impact of economic, social, political and technological factors, the implementation of the NMP reform was launched (Larbi, 1999).

New Public Management reforms in various countries were carried out in a different manner. The first reforms were implemented in 1979 by the government of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain. The concept was later realized in Australia and New Zealand in the 1980s, and since the early 1990s – also in the United States (Dunsire, 1995, p. 17, as cited in: Supernat, 2004). The driving force behind the implementation of the concept of New Public Management in the United States was striving to improve the functioning of the public sector as a result of the public criticism towards the organization of public administration expressed in studies (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, as cited in: Supernat, 2004).

B. Kudrycka indicates that “substantially all Western European countries have implemented (for better or worse) the principles of New Public Management, [and thus] it seems imminent and unavoidable that these principles will be implemented in Poland” (Kudrycka, 2001, p. 405, as cited in: Supernat, 2004). References to the assumptions of the NPM concept can be found in the Polish government documents (National Development Plan 2007-2013, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). In Poland, in the spirit of the New Public Management e.g. local government reform was carried out in 1999 (Ochnio, 2012). Currently, the concept of New Public Management has an equally strong impact on the operation of the Polish civil service, as evidenced by the analysis carried out using internal documents of the Ministry of Defense.

### **3. Implementation of components of NPM as exemplified by the document Strategy of Human Resources Management of the Civil Service and other internal documents**

The empirical research performed in the Ministry of Defense in 2009 and an analysis of internal documents, including the Strategy of Human Resources Management of the Civil Service, showed that in the civil service of this institution, a broad spectrum of components of NPM was implemented. The methods of implementation of values characteristic of the concept of New Public Management in the civil service in the Polish Ministry of Defense in the political and organizational dimension can be considered as follows:

- The postulate of separation of politics and administration was included in the Law on Civil Service of 21 November 2008. Article 1 of the Act indicates that the Civil Service shall be established in order to “ensure a professional, fair, impartial and politically neutral discharge of the State” (Civil Service Act, 2008). The function of the Civil Service is to enable the proper functioning of the administrative apparatus of the state, regardless of the political situation and changes of governments (<http://dsc.kprm.gov.pl/system-sluzby-cywilnej>, access: 28.04.2014);
- Improving public services, the results of which should include actual changes in people’s lives, unlike the previously advocated “production of services” (Supernat, 2004) and to reduce their cost and optimize the use of human, material and financial resources (Hood, 1995, p. 496, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). The Polish civil realization of this demand took to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery through the development of desirable attitudes and behaviors of participants of the organization using the Strategy of Human Resource Management. One of the values of the civil service is “to be effective and creative, to provide a quality service and effectively use available resources” (*Zarządzanie w Służbie Cywilnej – poradnik praktyczny*, 2002, p. 3). The primary duties of a member of the civil service, beyond the respect for the Constitution and legal standards and care for the interests of the state include reasonable disposition of public funds, competent, independent, efficient and planned implementation of tasks (Węglowska, 2007, p. 108). This reflects the orientation of the effectiveness of actions taken. Improving the quality and efficiency of work processes to serve the human resource management, periodic assessment (Potyrało, 2007, p. 96) and training (e.g. adaptive training – the employee’s manual *Vademecum pracownika*, which allows for building model attitudes and standards in internal and external customer service – called “professional civil service”);

- The priority of the customer whose needs must be identified and addressed. The foundations of this approach were created in 1936 by the administration theorist Marshall Dimock, who saw that “consumer satisfaction is equally the task of public administration and business” (Lynn, 1996, p. 86, as cited in: Supernat, 2004). In the Polish civil service, this demand has found a wide application ranging from identifying customer needs, training office staff and customer satisfaction research. One of the measures is to announce to the public via the office’s website, what desirable employee features are, such as: competence, integrity and friendliness to the customer of the state office (<http://dsc.kprm.gov.pl/system-sluzby-cywilnej>, access: 28.04.2014). An interesting direction in responding to the needs of customers is the provision of public services electronically, through the so-called virtual administration, which in the Polish civil service includes the following stages: online information and one-way communication. The first of these stages involves the possibility of obtaining information about the office on its website, and the way interaction is to provide access to official forms on the website of the office. The next stages of electronic services include two-way interaction and transaction making (Zawicki, 2011, p 65);
- The focus on results has been used in the civil service in the area of personnel policy through the use of an integrated system of employee evaluation. To enable to use of this tool, evaluation criteria are determined, referring to expected results and affecting remunerations (Zawicki, 2011 p. 50, 65, 66). It should be pointed out that the remuneration system comprising of the base salary, a special bonus and a bonus for long term service (Article 90 item 1 of the Law on Civil Service) does not correspond to the assumptions of NPM assuming that the salary should depend on economic indicators (Ochnio, 2012);
- The limitation of the hierarchy is made by flattening organizational structures and reducing the management levels (Zawicki, 2011, p. 67). In the civil service it is associated with improved quality, efficiency and effectiveness of public services. It is indicated that the provision of a quality service for the government and society, along with reducing bureaucracy, is to contribute to the improvement of the Polish position in Europe and the world;
- The use of methods and techniques of strategic planning and management. An example is the formulation of mission: “Serving the citizens, we effectively perform the tasks of the state. We act professionally, fairly, impartially and politically neutrally,” and the vision of the civil service: “the Civil service enjoying social trust guarantees that the key actions for the functioning of the state

are made” ([www.niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/.../sluzba\\_cywilna\\_w\\_polsce\\_0.pdf](http://www.niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/.../sluzba_cywilna_w_polsce_0.pdf), access: 5.05.2014);

- Directing in a managerial way: the powers of the Directors-General in offices are inherent in the assumptions of the concept of New Public Management, covering coordination of the work of offices, delegating tasks to employees and exercising care over their relevant training (Pryciak, 2011, pp. 102, 105-108). Providing competent leadership and effective management, along with an appropriate delegation of tasks at all levels of the civil service belong to its fundamental values (Zarządzanie w Służbie Cywilnej - Poradnik praktyczny, 2002, p. 3). The independence of qualification procedures and a high level of civil servants competences are also the aim of the National School of Public Administration (Ochnio, 2012);
- The flexible personnel management, including the use of organizational solutions used in the private sector, includes:
- The abandonment of the career system (promotions awarded by decision of the leaders, conditioned by seniority and special achievements) to a positional system (establishing the employment relationship on the basis of competitions announced for a position) (Hausner, 2002, p. 50, 51, 67, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). The principles of recruitment to the civil service in Poland are “openness and competitiveness” (Article 6, Law on Civil Service, 2008). Openness refers to universality, transparency and equality in applying for employment in the civil service, along with the need to ensure proper recruitment procedures (such as an obligation to publish a notice of the call and its result, prepare a protocol and the selection of such a candidate who is the best guarantee for successful execution of their future tasks). The competitiveness of recruitment is expected to provide uniform principles, methods, tools, evaluation criteria, and immutability of the requirements specified in a vacancy notice. In addition, recruitment to the civil service should be characterized by independent persons engaged in recruitment, along with objectivity and the promptness of the action taken. Efficient, objective and fair recruitment process in the civil service is to enable the proper performance of the tasks of the state outlined by the constitutional vision of the civil service and to contribute to the creation of a positive image of the civil service, thus fostering a bond between citizens and the state, based on trust in the rightness of the actions of the state (<http://dsc.kprm.gov.pl/nabor-do-sluzby-cywilnej>, access: 29.04.2014);
- Dropping the consideration of formal powers in favor of increasing the importance of experience, along with hard and soft competences (Kwiatkowski, 2011, p. 51). This is confirmed by the use of the Assessment Center method in the recruitment for strategic positions

in the civil service, which is to assess the level of competence accepted as necessary for a particular job. The development of practical skills is realized by carrying out central training aimed at producing team skills and disseminate the highest, uniform labor standards (Strategia Zarządzania Zasobami Ludzkimi Służby Cywilnej. Służba cywilna profesjonalisci w służbie obywatelom, 2006, p. 6). Implementation of the idea of empowerment, conducive to teamwork and allowing employees of public administration to take on initiative and express creativity in order to better meet the needs of consumers and achieve better results (Supnat, 2004).

- Assessing activity in the civil service in particular is aimed to ensure the adequacy of employee qualifications for the positions occupied through the use of the Thomas International Method, which consists of the Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) and the job profile analysis (Professiogram/Psychogram). Also a computer system (SZOCK) is used which allows one to check the level of competence development of employees. Competency assessment is based on a “competency test” and a “self-test” (Potyrało, 2007, p. 99);
- Promoting ethical behavior through the creation of standards defining ethical behavior of civil servants, codes of ethics and codes of conduct (Ordinance No. 70 of the Prime Minister of 6 October 2011 on the guidelines for compliance with the rules of the civil service and on the ethical principles of the civil service); providing training in this area and ensuring proper working conditions, influencing the attitudes of civil servants;
- Changes in organizational culture. The organizational culture of the public administration should be characterized by flexibility, reducing hierarchies, innovation, problem solving and entrepreneurship, and, therefore, by solutions that are appropriate for adhocracy, which is the opposite of bureaucracy (Waterman, 1992; Handy, 1996, as cited in: Supnat, 2004). It is pointed out that, as in other countries, the civil service culture is a bureaucratic and legislative culture, which must be changed to keep pace with the rest of Europe (Strategia Zarządzania Zasobami Ludzkimi Służby Cywilnej. Służba cywilna profesjonalisci w służbie obywatelom, 2006, p. 6).

#### **4. Controversies concerning the postulate of customer orientation**

The concept of New Public Management and the practice of its implementation raise concerns and reservations among many researchers. The biggest objection of the experts in this field is raised by the demand of the public administration to be determined by the needs of consumers. The researchers suggest that citizens in the society cannot be equated with consumers, since

their participation in politics is not only to maximize individual interests, but also to solve common problems (Supernat, 2004). The use of market-based solutions to meet the needs of the society in which the market is not a perfect mechanism for allocation of resources, results in the limited possibilities of application of managerial approaches in the public sector (Jeżowski, 2002, pp. 14-15, as cited in: Krynicka 2006). Doubts also arise in terms of whether administration should be more accountable to the customers or to the entire public, and whether, as in business, they should diversify the customers according to their importance or treat them equally? These doubts make it necessary to refine the idea of customer orientation and define the limits of consumer proactive public administration (Supernat, 2004).

The reservations of critics of the New Public Management also apply to the postulate of using, by the public administration, of management methods and techniques normally used in business. This could lead to the recognition of certain expectations of citizens (preserving a historical site or landscape) as ineffective, uneconomical or impractical (Box, 1999, p. 55, as cited in: Supernat, 2004). There arises a risk of other values than effectiveness and efficiency being dominated or omitted by public authorities, and rising of behavior contrary to the ideal and values of the public service. In this context, it becomes important to isolate elements of the public sector and public service that should not be viewed and managed from a market perspective (Supernat, 2004).

According to B.G. Peters, the concept of New Public Management does not provide citizens with an equal access to public services. This is due to the varying quality of public services arising as a result of decentralization of public service delivery (Peters, 2001, pp. 305, 330-331, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). There is also a contradiction between the postulate of homogeneity of public services and risk diversification for the decentralization of their provision (Supernat, 2004).

In the practice of public management, in addition a difficulty of ensuring the accountability of public officials in terms of decentralization and deregulation may occur, due to the fact that resource management efficiency can lead to a failure to set targets, which becomes a manifestation of irresponsibility (Supernat, 2004).

## **5. Conclusion**

The concept of New Public Management was founded as a response to the failure of the public sector and trends and phenomena taking place in the economies of Western countries, including the increase of importance of the political awareness of citizens (Hausner, 2002, p. 55, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). As a result of these developments, the expectations of the public

towards the state administration have increased (Musialik, 2011, p. 496, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012), which resulted in making the reforms seen today to be characteristic of the concept of NPM.

The assumptions of the concept of New Public Management raise concerns among many researchers. They are associated, among others, with the legitimacy of implementation of standards used in the private sector in the public one, and with the possibilities of public administration operating based on the postulate of customer orientation. Despite these doubts, the concept of New Public Management has been reflected in a series of reforms being implemented in the Polish public administration as well. Today, many assumptions of the New Public Management can be seen in the functioning of the civil service in the country.

The Strategy of Human Resources Management of the Civil Service includes the following strategic priorities: “conscious leadership; the effectiveness and efficiency of operation; continuous improvement of the image of the civil service; motivating and rewarding employees according to transparent rules; recruiting and retaining the best employees; planned training and development; coping with change; effective internal communication.” The priority of conscious leadership means that the involvement of leaders is considered to be decisive to ensure the highest quality of service at all levels of management, particularly at the highest one. The efficient delivery of services to the public and the state requires an optimal use of resources through the use of modern technology, methods of work and proper planning. Improving the image of the civil service is done, among others, through regular communication with the public, showing respect and providing a high quality of service, which all affect public confidence in the State. The key to ensure proper customer service is to improve the process of recruitment and selection, providing opportunities for development, a transparent system of promotion, fair evaluation and remuneration (Human Resource Management Strategy for the Civil Service, 2006, pp. 7-27). All of these priorities closely fit the assumptions of the concept of NPM, with its particularly pronounced demand for customer orientation.

The literature highlights the lack of clear results of the implementation of the New Public Management in Western European countries (Supernat, 2005). The researchers suggest that the implementation of the NMP components in the countries of Central-Eastern Europe should be tailored to the specific circumstances, due to the continuous development of the civil society and the rapid implementation of the processes of democratization after 1989. (Peters, p. 332, as cited in: Ochnio, 2012). The direction for further research could include determining a degree of compatibility between the assumptions of NPM and the Polish national culture.

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