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Professional Development of Civil Servants in the UK and Germany

Recent decades have witnessed a general trend in the majority of EU member states towards fundamental improvement of the existing systems of *professional development* of civil servants in order to adjust them to the challenges of the globalized world, fiscal constraints and growing public expectations.

Professional development of civil servants is often understood as a package of measures comprising pre-entry and post-entry (in-service) training of public servants. It is often associated with such notions as job-related education and training, upgrading qualifications, career advance, enhancement of competencies, HR capacity development, performance appraisal, etc [Anselmi et al., 2013]. Indeed, these notions are closely linked to professional development but they are hardly synonyms.

Contemporary views on professional development proceed from the premise that it is shaped not only by education and training but also by practice (gained experience), as well as by effective HR management including thorough planning of career advance and forecasting of training needs.

In other words, professional development is a system of measures extended in time and geared to enhance professionalism of civil servants above all in terms of higher performance, accountability and ethical standards. It should provide for continuing process of upgrading skills, knowledge and values of civil service cadres based on the integrity of training, career advance and HR management [Kotchegura, 2008. P.122].

The selection of countries for this overview is not accidental. Britain and Germany are often presented as examples of two completely different models of public management systems [Hood, Lodge, 2004]. The former represents the so-called *Anglo-Saxon* tradition, the latter – *European-Continental*. Naturally, the distinctions between these models extend to the adopted practices of training and re-training (upgrading qualifications) civil servants, as well as to the pace, scope and contents of modernization efforts in this area. Therefore, it would be interesting to trace recent changes, if any, in the systems of pre- and in-service training in these two countries.

The British government has been known for long (at least since the times of Margaret Thatcher) for its numerous initiatives to reform the country's civil service. In fact, non-stop "experimentation" in the public management sector has become a "visiting card" of the UK bureaucracy. The latest wave of reform efforts dates back to 2012 when the coalition government prepared and presented The Civil Service Reform Plan. The main objective of the Plan was to make the civil service apparatus smaller, more efficient, more skilled, more open and less bureaucratic.

Fundamental improvement of *training and development* of civil servants was declared one of the priorities of the Reform Plan. The major goal consisted in raising the quality of in-service training and filling the critical skills gaps in the civil service, and no less important, ensuring implementation of Whitehall's commitment to cut £90 mln from the civil service training budget.

A comprehensive set of measures was formulated in this respect and made part of the official document Meeting the Challenge of Change: a Capabilities Plan for the Civil Service. The Capabilities Plan contains a strategy for building individuals' skills and competencies. The strategy is based on predominantly new approaches in the use of training-related structures, management processes and technologies.

The Capabilities Plan did not constitute a complete departure from the previous programme Professional Skills for Government (launched in 2003). Moreover, it inherited a number of the latter's key elements, in particular, The Civil Service Competency Framework. Still many experts in the field assessed recent changes as a "seismic shakeup". Indeed, the plan introduced such "unconventional" measures as the closure of the National School of Government, which for many years had been a focal point of professionalization for many mid-career and top

ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ ГОССЛУЖАЩИХ В ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ И ГЕРМАНИИ

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Аннотация: В статье рассматривается британской и немецкой опыт формирования современной системы профессионального развития государственных служащих. Дается определение понятию «профессиональное развитие», оцениваются последние разработки обеих стран в этой сфере, выделяются особенности подходов к изменению стратегии подготовки государственных служащих в этих странах и определяются различия и сходства в новых инициативах, направленных на повышение профессионального развития кадров государственной службы.

Ключевые слова: профессиональное развитие, Германия, Великобритания, государственные служащие, обучение, общественное управление, модернизация.

level civil servants; the transfer of some functions of the National School of Government to the Defense Academy (!); contracting a private company to manage the whole process of professional development in the entire civil service (except senior civil service); the introduction of an e-learning platform as the principal base for the whole system of training and development of civil servants.

The essence of the changes can be summarized as follows. Six years ago government departments exercised full control of their own training budgets and the National School of Government (NSG) was a key provider of in-service training. Today, following the dissolution of the NSG, the situation is markedly different. Departments still have their own training budgets (though much smaller). However, they must procure most of their training through a new central agency Civil Service Learning (CSL), which is run by a private company. Furthermore, classroom-based teaching accounts for no more than 5% of the overall duration of training. The bulk of training hours comprises e-learning, secondments, coaching, internships, networking, self-managed study, team building events, etc [Brecknell, 2013].

In brief, the Capabilities Plan rests on a new strategy which comprises a number of key features, namely:

It provides e-learning, online resources and classroom courses to back up professional development and career advance of civil servants.

It focuses on e-learning as the principal instrument of professional development.

More than 90% of civil service training is to be outsourced to external providers, including small and medium-sized enterprises.

Formal requirements for the duration of training provide for at least 5 days a year for every civil servant to upgrade skills according to individual and institutional needs.

All civil servants can register on the CSL portal and see the courses applicable to their level or the level they aspire to.

All staff should be seeking and taking opportunities to learn 'on the job'.

Currently CSL offers over 100 e-learning products and more than 130 courses and development programmes available online. The list of courses covers the range of core skills, such as customer service, finance, IT, people and business management, analysis and policy development, drafting briefings and submissions, setting strategy and direction, giving priority to citizens, leading change, HR management, etc [1].

Serious changes in the way the whole system of professional development of civil service cadres is functioning have aroused a lot of controversy. There are both active supporters and no less active opponents to the innovations. The report of the Public Administration Select Committee of the House of Commons warns that the CSL focus is "too narrow and one-dimensional" [2].

The committee also finds evidence that while Civil Service Learning has brought reductions in training budgets and provided civil servants with wider access to "generic training", it may be putting too much emphasis on "lighter and narrower" online learning. "For many skills, particularly those requiring interpersonal skills, the introduction of a strong, and potentially misplaced, dependence on e-learning is no substitute for the face-to-face residential learning and mentoring they replaced," the report says [Aston, 2014].

The opinions of civil servants are also diverging. The research carried out by the Civil Service World (CSW) suggests that the decline in training quality and availability has largely stabilised since the launch of CSL. When asked "What is your impression of the new CSL system, and how does it compare to the previous system of accessing training?", the respondents were split roughly equally. Alongside 15 per cent who expressed no opinion, just over a third (34 per cent) thought the new system worse than its predecessor; 29 per cent said it was better, and 22 per cent thought its quality remained unchanged.

The polarisation of opinions is particularly evident in the assessment of e-learning programmes. The survey conducted by the Civil Service World indicates:

When asked about formats of learning, respondents rated classroom learning as the most valuable form of training. In fact, its popularity has grown in the last three years, with 52 per cent rating it as the most valuable compared to 37 per cent in 2010. E-learning remains overwhelmingly unpopular: just six per cent now think it is the most valuable form of training, while 29 per cent said it is the least valuable (in 2010, those figures were five per cent and 30 per cent). This may come as a blow to the team at CSL: shifting more training to the e-learning format is a key plank of CSL's plans, but it's obvious that perceptions of the format haven't improved. [Aston, 2014]

A number of prominent British experts in the field reckon that e-learning may be helpful for upgrading skills in rather simplistic areas of professional activities but its usefulness in more sophisticated fields, for instance in leadership training, is rather limited.

In reviewing the German case it is necessary to bear in mind that Germany is widely regarded as a country which has been quite cautious in implementing public sector reforms. The overall system of pre-service and in-service training of civil servants in Germany "is quite old-fashioned and traditional; the influence of innovations on education and training has been pretty modest over a long period" [Reichard, Röber, 2010. P.3].

The following peculiarities of training and development of civil servants in Germany can be singled out.

First, the German system of professional development of

1 Adetunji J. Civil service training strategy cuts 'massive duplication' //http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/blog/2012/jun/29/central-government-civil-service

2 Foster M. MPs call for action to boost Whitehall skills and make it easier to retain top staff // http://www.civilserviceworld.com/articles/news/mps-call-action-boost-whitehall-skills-and-make-it-easier-retain-top-staff

civil servants is oriented towards predominant investment into pre-entry education, particularly of those civil servants who occupy low and mid-career positions. Prior to official appointment for life German civil servants (*Beamte)* are required to go through a comprehensive two-year traineeship (probation). The traineeship usually includes internships in different administrative units at the central and regional levels of government, and on-the-job and classroom training as well. It is therefore informally acknowledged that improvement of skills and knowledge after official appointment to a civil servant position is mainly the responsibility of a civil servant himself.

Second, the system of education and development is to a large degree decentralized. There is no single authority responsible for nationwide HR management of civil service cadres. Each ministry at the federal level, each state (*Länder*), and each local authority organizes and coordinates training and development of civil servants.

Third, the German system of public management keeps being dominated by lawyers and jurists. Hence pre-service and in-service training have a strong juridical bias. The general assumption is that lawyers have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to do any job in the civil service. The monopoly of "legalism" in the German state administration still dominates, though certain changes have been taking place recently.

Fourth, opportunities of upgrading skills for senior executives (administrative class) are notably wider than those available for other categories of civil servants. The same can be said about staff members who get prepared for the transfer to a higher category of civil servants (for example from the executive to the administrative class). Training of "high flyers" and "climbers to the next class" is usually provided by well-known educational institutions, for example by the Federal academy of Public Administration (BAkoV) or Speyer University.

Normally the federal and regional (*Länder*) governments recruit junior staff members as civil servant candidates and train them in their own special educational institutions - colleges of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen für öffentliche Verwaltung*). These candidates have a double status as a student and a civil servant and receive a monthly salary. As a rule, personnel departments are reluctant to recruit candidates coming from other institutions of higher learning. There is deeply rooted distrust in ministries in external universities and the quality of their graduates. Overall, "The whole training concept is very rigid, opportunities to acquire knowledge through self-study are rare" [Reichard, Röber, 2010. P.14].

Cuts in the state budgets and growing demand for higher professional standards of civil servants have far-reaching implications for education and training even in a country such as Germany with its "incremental" attitude towards public sector reforms. The necessity for changing the existing outdated approaches to the organization of professional development of civil servants is emphasized today more frequently at different levels of the German federal and regional government.

For example, there is a lot of skepticism and doubts expressed with regard to the actual appropriateness of the traditional legalistic orientation of the German civil service when the primary focus of the modern state administration is on raising effectiveness and efficiency of its work and ensuring delivery of high quality services to citizens [Reichard, Röber, 2012]. Similarly, the issue of continuing training is becoming more prominent since the advantages of regular and systematic training of staff at different stages of professional development are becoming more and more evident.

The latest initiatives to modernize the civil service system and, among other things, existing practices of recruitment, career and professional development, were largely triggered by the so-called federalism reform launched in 2006. As a result, the authority to take key decisions in these areas was almost entirely transferred to the level of the states (*Länder*). The *Länder* governments are now sufficiently independent in deciding on civil servants' career issues, including salaries, pensions and professional development.

Some of the regional governments adopted a pro-active attitude towards reforms of their administrations. For example, the state of Schleswig-Holstein supported measures which place a stronger focus on competency management and lifelong learning in HR management of civil service cadres.

To give another example, one can refer to the spreading practice of making the contents of educational programmes for civil servants more interdisciplinary, managerial, policy and specific skills oriented. Such programmes, for example part-time MPA from the German postgraduate university of administrative sciences (DUV) in Speyer or MBA from Hamburg Polytechnic University, are usually offered to the candidates for nomination to civil servants of higher class.

Other trends include much wider use of workplace learning, coaching and secondment in the professional development of civil servants. As it was already mentioned above, these changes are often incremental and fragmented, but in any case they constitute a definite advance in the overall conservative system of the German public administration.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the British and the German governments are still in the process of identifying an appropriate model of professional development of civil servants which would fit the peculiarities of the existing systems of public administration in their countries and would stand up to the challenges of highly competent and effective management in the era of austerity, volatility, unclear perspectives and increasingly competitive environment.

However, in spite of significant differences in the directions, pace and scope of changes there exist a number of universal elements that reformers in both countries consider worth incorporating into the future models of professional development of civil servants. These are as follows:

- linkage of professional development to key competencies and career advance,
- focus on continuing lifelong professional development of a civil servant,
- wider use of e-learning and on-the-job training,

- greater attention paid to coaching and secondments,
- priority given to upgrading skills and development of senior civil servants.

The coming years will provide evidence to what extent these plans were successful in achieving and maintaining a high level of professionalism of British and German civil servants.

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Summary: The article reviews British and German experience in shaping a modern system of professional development of civil servants. It provides a definition of the concept "professional development", traces recent developments in the field in both countries, singles out peculiarities of specific approaches to the modernization of the strategy for training civil servants in these countries and identifies differences and commonalities in the new initiatives aimed at improving professional development of civil service cadres.
Keywords: professional development, Germany, the UK, civil servants, training, public management, modernization.

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ЧТО ЧИТАТЬ



Современная Германия. Экономика и политика / Под ред. В.Б. Белова. М.: Издательство Весь Мир, 2015. 720 с.

Книга комплексно освещает экономические и социальные проблемы развития современной ФРГ. Немецкая хозяйственная и партийно-политическая модель за последние пятнадцать лет претерпела ряд значительных изменений, в первую очередь, в рамках масштабных реформ, начатых в 2003 году. Во многом это позволило относительно быстро преодолеть последствия мирового финансового кризиса 2008–2010 годов. Несмотря на определенные успехи, в Германии сохраняется необходимость дальнейшего реформирования различных социально-экономических сфер.

В предлагаемой вниманию читателей коллективной монографии подробно рассматриваются различные аспекты экономики и политики современной ФРГ – одного из основных партнеров России в Евросоюзе и лидера западноевропейских интеграционных процессов. Нынешняя Германия привлекает к себе внимание заинтересованного читателя с точки зрения возможности найти ответы на актуальные вопросы о перспективах трансформации рыночной модели, изменениях в партийно-политических механизмах, реакции правящих партий на внутренние и внешние вызовы и поиске немецким государством своего места в постоянно меняющемся глобализирующемся мире.



Воевода Е.В. Великобритания: история и культура. Учебное пособие на английском языке. М.: Издательство Аспект Пресс, 2015. 224 с.

Учебное пособие по страноведению Великобритании адресовано студентам гуманитарных факультетов, обучающимся по программе бакалавриата и изучающим английский язык как основной иностранный. Пособие призвано расширить и углубить знания студентов в области истории и культуры страны изучаемого языка, освещая историко-экономические и политические события, происшедшие на Британских островах, зарождение и развитие английского языка и особенности английской культуры: литературы, музыки, архитектуры, живописи.