

CURRENT CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE UNDER THE MARTIAL LAW IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. *This study explores the critical importance of enhancing professional competence among local self-government officials in Ukraine, particularly in the context of martial law and post-war recovery. It examines legislative frameworks, such as the Law of Ukraine "On Service in Local Self-Government Bodies," and highlights key policies and training programs aimed at developing managerial, analytical, and communication skills essential for effective governance. The analysis includes comparisons with practices in the EU and the USA, emphasizing the role of decentralization and citizen engagement in fostering resilient and inclusive local governance.*

A focus is placed on the Knowledge Management Portal as an innovative platform supporting continuous professional development for local officials through tailored training programs. The study underscores the necessity of well-trained personnel as agents of democratic transformation, leaders of community-centric initiatives, and drivers of regional reforms. By addressing challenges posed by war, internally displaced populations, and resource constraints, the research advocates for strategically empowered local governance structures to rebuild public trust, infrastructure, and socio-economic stability in affected communities.

Key Words: *local self-government, professional competence, legislative frameworks, decentralization, educational services, training programs, sustainable development.*

Introduction.

In the context of transformational challenges caused by the large-scale military aggression against Ukraine and the imposition of martial law, the issue of enhancing the professional competence of local self-government officials becomes increasingly

relevant. The extraordinary conditions under which territorial communities operate demand from management personnel not only flexibility in decision-making but also the ability to quickly adapt to constantly changing circumstances.

The implementation of delegated and independent powers by local self-government bodies in a crisis environment envisages an increased role of human capital within the system of public administration. In particular, professional training, as a component of continuous personnel development, becomes a key tool to ensure the institutional capacity of local self-government bodies. Managing the socio-economic, humanitarian, and security development of territories significantly depends on the preparedness and adaptability of management personnel. Building quality human resource potential is a necessary condition for the effective provision of administrative, social, and other services to the population under martial law.

Main part.

As stipulated in the Law of Ukraine "On Service in Local Self-Government Bodies," a local self-government official is a person who works in these bodies, has appropriate official powers to perform organizational, managerial, and consultative-advisory functions, and receives a salary from the local budget [1].

The enhancement of the professional competence of local self-government officials in Ukraine is regulated not only by the Law of Ukraine "On Service in Local Self-Government Bodies," which contains provisions regarding mandatory professional training for officials, but also by several other regulatory acts, such as:

- The Law of Ukraine "On Civil Service," which prescribes mandatory professional training for civil servants, also extending to local self-government officials [2];
- Resolution No. 106 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which defines the system of professional training for civil servants and local self-government officials [3];
- Order No. 42-25 of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service Affairs, which approves the standard general professional program for the advanced training of local self-government officials [4];

➤ The General Professional Training Program, which provides for training at least once every three years and covers key competencies necessary for the effective performance of official duties [5].

In order to develop local self-government in Ukraine, we need to analyze how the laws on local self-government differ in the EU, the USA, and Ukraine, because they reflect different governance structures and traditions.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government is the key document governing local democracy in Europe. Adopted in 1985 and ratified by 46 Council of Europe member states, it sets out principles ensuring local authorities have autonomy in decision-making, financial resources, and governance [6].

Additionally, the Council of Europe Reference Framework for Regional Democracy provides guidelines for regional governance, ensuring local entities have rights and responsibilities [7].

In the USA, local self-government is primarily regulated at the state level, meaning laws differ across states. However, key principles include:

- Home Rule: Many states grant cities and municipalities the ability to govern themselves without direct state interference.
- Dillon's Rule: In contrast, some states follow this principle, meaning local governments can only exercise powers explicitly granted by the state legislature.
- Federalism: The U.S. Constitution does not explicitly mention local governments, but states have broad authority to structure local governance.

Public servants' training plays a crucial role in strengthening local governance, ensuring effective service delivery, transparency, and citizen participation.

Training programs for public servants focus on:

1. Decentralization & Autonomy: Helping local officials understand their rights and responsibilities under frameworks like the European Charter of Local Self-Government [6].

2. Inclusive Public Services: Courses emphasize accountability, subsidiarity, and transparency, ensuring marginalized communities receive equitable services [8].

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The UN DESA Curriculum on Governance for SDGs equips public servants with tools to implement policies aligned with sustainable development [9].

4. Ethical Governance & Professionalism: Programs promote civility, ethical decision-making, and interagency cooperation, fostering trust between citizens and government [10].

There are some specific training programs for public servants in the EU and USA, among them are the following:

✓ Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy – This EU Commission initiative offers training for local, regional, and national public administrations on citizen engagement and deliberative democracy. It includes basic, advanced, and train-the-trainer levels [11].

✓ Advanced Digital Skills Training for Civil Servants – A European Commission program aimed at improving digital governance. It provides training for 30,000 civil servants in digital skills and 2,500 in leadership and talent management [12].

✓ Government Leadership & Strategy Courses – Offered in various U.S. cities, these programs focus on public administration, governance strategy, and policy management. They range from 3-day workshops to multi-month programs [13].

✓ Executive Program in Public Sector Governance – A specialized 1-4 week course designed for senior officials to enhance their decision-making and governance skills [14].

Professional training and advanced education for local self-government officials, as well as local council deputies, should be viewed as an integral part of personnel work and a tool of personnel policy [15].

Professional training, retraining, and qualification improvement for local government officials, according to O. Krutiy (Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Kyiv, NADU, 2011), is a process aimed at ensuring the acquisition and enhancement of managerial, financial-economic, social, legal knowledge, and organizational skills. It also involves continuous updates of professional knowledge and skills, the

acquisition of a new specialty or qualification based on previously acquired education and practical work experience [16].

The primary goal under current conditions is to adequately staff public administration, enhance the efficiency of local government bodies, and support their work during martial law.

Today, the market for educational services for local government bodies is widely represented, primarily through the Knowledge Management Portal of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service [17].

This digital platform acts as an integration environment for effective interaction among educational process participants—providers of educational services, local government bodies as training clients, and direct participants of qualification improvement programs. The portal provides users access to updated electronic resources, such as an electronic library, standard and individualized qualification improvement programs, as well as tools for searching educational products by job categories, professional focus, and content. Additionally, it features online registration functionality for educational service providers and participants, promoting transparency, flexibility, and targeted educational offerings in the field of public administration.

Currently, the portal hosts the comprehensive professional (certified) program "Effective Service in Local Government Bodies" (approved by NACS—Order of NACS dated August 29, 2024, No. 129-24). The general goal of this program is to develop the professional competencies of participants in professional training, broadening opportunities for effective task execution and job responsibilities in local government bodies regarding the implementation of state policy on local government service in the context of societal development and innovations during wartime and post-war recovery [18].¹⁹

Local government bodies, when drafting and approving their respective local budgets, have the right to allocate at least 2% of the payroll fund towards improving the qualifications of local government officials [19].

Thus, there is an educational offering and legally established financial means to utilize it. As highlighted by G. Dzhehur and A. Still, in many regions of Ukraine, the conditions of martial law have introduced new participants into the process of local socio-economic development, such as internally displaced persons and relocated businesses, forming new interaction types and enabling the establishment of an effective entrepreneurial infrastructure considering security factors [20]. This undoubtedly poses new challenges for officials of local government bodies.

Building a professionally capable workforce within local government bodies is a crucial factor in ensuring effective fulfillment of their powers and functions during decentralization, martial law, and post-war recovery. Local government officials, members of councils, village, settlement, and city heads act as direct agents of change within territorial communities, and the level of their professional training and managerial competence determines the quality of managerial decisions, the state of social stability, the dynamics of economic growth, and the level of citizens' trust in the authorities.

Summary and conclusions.

In this context, the issue of professional training and improving the qualifications of local government personnel becomes of particular importance, as it directly impacts sustainable local and regional development, improvement in the quality of public services, and the establishment of capable local governance under crisis conditions. The current need of the municipal system is to prepare a new generation of specialists capable not only of effective administration but also of serving as initiators of democratic transformations, leaders of local changes, and drivers of reforms. They should play a key role in stabilizing and normalizing life in de-occupied territories, where there is an exceptionally high demand for qualified managerial support in rebuilding infrastructure, social services, and public trust.

At the same time, it is no longer sufficient for a modern local government official to possess professional knowledge in economic, social, and legal fields and be able to apply them in practice. They are required to have a broad range of managerial, strategic, analytical, and communication competencies essential for efficient management of

human and financial resources, implementation of project-based approaches, engagement with the community, and response to crisis situations in conditions of limited resources and heightened risks.

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