

# Professional competence of staff of state authorities: professional destruction and prevention methods

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**Abstract.** The article offers a brief analysis of the current state of the problem of studying the concept of professional competence of public administration personnel. The relationship of the concepts of professional competence and the concepts of professional deformation and destruction, their representation in Ukrainian and foreign scientific literature, as well as the availability of scientifically sound and practically justified recommendations and instructions for their prevention and overcoming is investigated.

## 1 Introduction

In the context of recent systemic reforms in Ukraine, which ensure the implementation of the basic constitutional principles of a legal, democratic, socially oriented state and the need for the fastest formation of civil society, one of the most pressing problems is the quality and professional competence of public administration personnel. The development of the state in the legal social direction cardinally changes the purpose of civil services. Their main essence in the modern Ukrainian state is the implementation of Ukraine's laws, ensuring the protection of the rights and interests of the citizens of Ukraine. As an element of the state organization of society and a social institution, civil services have a number of features. Firstly, it represents the sphere of professional activity. With all its content, forms and methods, the activities of public servants are aimed at ensuring the authority of state bodies. Secondly, as a unifying link between the state and civil society, the civil services are called upon to protect the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of parties in public relations. The constitutional provision that a person, their rights and freedoms are the most important value, acts as a determining core in the activities of public servants, regardless of their official title [1]. The principles of civil service are determined by the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine "On Public Service", other legislative and regulatory acts that are implemented in the process of practical professional activity of the public servants.

All of the above imposes relevant requirements on the professional competencies of civil servants, which, incidentally, have not yet become the subject of in-depth, systematic scientific humanitarian, social, psychological research in Ukraine. Some aspects of the problem are considered in the works of V. Averyanov K. Vashchenko, A. Vishnevsky R.

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Voitovich L. Gogina, S. Dubenko, Yu. Kovbasyuk, N. Nizhnik, R. Naumenko, A. Obolensky, A. Rachinsky, A. Skakun, V. Soroko, N. Seryogina, Yu. Surmina, S. Teleshun, L. Pashko, V. Tolkovanov, A. Khmelnsky, I. Shpekterenko and others. As most researchers emphasize, professional competencies in the public services of Ukraine constitute a significant scientific and practical problem today. A clear definition of the competencies of a public authority, such as a state organization, a public enterprise, and the competencies of public service positions, competency profiles of civil servants should be considered as an important component in the system of strategic directions of modernization of public service, and the introduction of a competency approach is one of the influential factors in increasing its effectiveness, growth the level of provision of public services to legal entities and individuals [2].

The purpose and task of this research is to study the problem of professional competence of civil servants, its relationship with the phenomena of professional deformation and destruction, and the presence of studies and recommendations for preventing and eliminating it in the humanitarian and socio-psychological scientific literature.

## **2 Professional deformation of personality as a factor in the professional competence of civil servant**

The competence of a civil servant is a set of requirements for those who occupy a specific position in a particular public authority, state institution, organization, taking into account the occupant's conformity of professional managerial abilities, personal psychological properties, managerial knowledge, skills and competencies in the post. The formation of competence is influenced by the very competence and personal moral and business qualities of the subject. If the latter are in conflict with the competence of a civil servant, then a conflict will certainly arise between society and the individual. The level of professional, special knowledge that corresponds to competence, the degree of development of the personality characteristics of the subject is a prerequisite for successful implementation [3].

In many scientific studies, such components of professional competence as special competence, social competence, personal competence, individual competence are most often distinguished. Today, almost all of them are already reflected in the dictionaries on public administration [4], as well as in the new version of the Law of Ukraine "On Public Service" [5].

As V. Pabat, Y. Zhovnirchik write, professional competency should be considered in the procedural aspect, since it is characterized through activity and is dynamic. The authors determine the components of the professional competence of civil servants. The first of them is emotional-regulatory. It determines the ability of a specialist to self-regulation, self-control, involves the possession of skills and management of the emotional sphere, various techniques for overcoming professional destruction. The behavioral-activity component is represented by psychological characteristics that reflect the orientation of the personality, their attitude towards activity and themselves, the development of strong-willed traits. The communicative component is defined as a system of knowledge, linguistic and non-lingual skills, communication skills. The socio-psychological component constitutes the ability of a public servant to effectively interact with colleagues both at the level of formal and informal relations. The special professional component is represented by characteristics such as professional knowledge, abilities, and skills related to the professional orientation of a person [11].

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At the same time, most of the Ukrainian and foreign socio-psychological studies available today [6, 7, 8] in the field of studying the performance of public servants show that representatives of the communication-related professions are among the most susceptible to negative professional phenomena, first of all, due to the influence of frequent professional communication and the need to establish effective interpersonal relationships. In this case, the instrument of professional activity is the personality itself, which, as a result of this activity, suffers the most. So, the selections in studies of professional destruction and deformation are traditionally composed of lawyers, teachers, civil servants, doctors, and the social nature of the deformation is emphasized. In this regard, an important element of the effectiveness of public service is the prevention of professional deformation of civil servants that occurs under the influence of a huge number of modern socio-economic, psychological and other conditions of their work. In addition, deformation processes are associated with a number of features of professional activity, in the framework of which high requirements are formed for the psychological qualities and mental functions of the individual. And it is precisely such requirements that we observe in all existing profiles of qualification competence for government officials.

Interest in the problem of professional destruction of personality and activity has increased in recent years (B. Agavel, P. Beznosov, V. Bodrova S. Druzhilov, E. Zeer A. Markova, L. Mitina N. Pryazhnikov, E. I. Rogov, etc.) An analysis of scientific and theoretical sources shows that the problems of professional deformation and destruction are reflected in the works of foreign and Ukrainian scientists (Yu. Alexandrov, S. Beznosov, M. Burish, G. Dion, S. Jackson, E. See, N. Levitsky, M. Leiter, S. Maksimenko, K. Maslach, E. Maher, N. Melnik, V. Orel, M. Smulson, T. Formanyuk, H. Freidenberger, U. Shufeli, etc.).

However, a single, precise definition of "professional deformation" still does not exist in the scientific literature, and it is, rather, still being formulated. In some Ukrainian normative acts [9, 10], professional deformation is defined as a phenomenon characterized by changes in personality traits (perception stereotypes, value orientations, character, ways of communication and behavior, etc.), changes in the severity of professionally important qualities of a specialist which occur under the influence of the subject-matter, conditions, duration of the activity and the individual psychological characteristics of the subject. Professional deformations negatively affect the quality of the activity performed. For example, in the dissertation research by M. Setsinskaya, the concept of "professional deformation of civil servants" is interpreted as a set of negative changes in the socio-psychological structure of the personality of a civil servant that occur under the influence of the subject-matter, conditions, duration of the professional activity and individual psychological characteristics of the individual and lead to reassessment of their own capabilities, leading to non-optimal and even erroneous actions. Professional deformation is manifested in negative changes in behavioral stereotypes, professional habits, communication style, skills, as a result of which the successful implementation of professional activity is complicated [6].

A manifestation of the negative influence of the civil servant profession on their personality is the presence of various professional deformations or professional destruction (these terms are usually used interchangeably). One of the varieties of professional deformation is the phenomenon of mental burnout. Some authors believe that it is advisable to consider the phenomenon of professional burnout in the context of a professional crisis, psychological exclusion, loss of meaning, as the causes and consequences of professional and personal deformation. According to S. Arefniyi, the main psychological determinants of the development of professionally determined destructions are conflicts of professional self-determination, crises of professional formation, professional maladaptation. The author

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believes that the components of those determinants are unrealistic goals, false meanings of work, professional and interpersonal conflicts, lack of holistic professional consciousness, deformation of the personality, termination of professional development, violation of social and professional self-actualization, mismatch of professional reality [12].

Based on a generalization of studies on violations of professional development of an individual [13], the following trends of professional destruction can be distinguished: lagging or slowing down of professional development compared to age and social norms; the disintegration of professional development, the decay of professional consciousness and, as a result, unrealistic goals, false meanings of work, professional conflicts; low professional mobility, inability to adapt to new working conditions; lack of coherence of separate links in professional development, when one sphere seems to run ahead and the other lags behind (for example, there is motivation for professional growth, but the lack of holistic professional consciousness hinders it), weakening of previously existing professional qualities and abilities, professional thinking; the appearance of previously absent negative qualities, deviations from social and individual norms of professional development, changing the profile of a person; the appearance of personality deformations (for example, emotional exhaustion and burnout, as well as depletion of a professional position), the cessation of professional development through occupational diseases or disability.

One of the most respected researchers of the problem of professional deformation E. Seer offers the following classification [14].

General professional deformations are deformations typical for workers in this profession. For law enforcement officials, this will be an "antisocial perception" syndrome - everyone is perceived as a potential offender.

Special professional deformations. These are the deformations that arise in the process of specialization. In legal and human rights professions, this will look like suspicion of an investigator, aggressiveness of an operative officer; professional trickery of a lawyer; condemnation of a prosecutor.

Professional-typological deformations are deformations caused by the superposition of individual psychological characteristics of an employee on the professional activities. As a result, there is a distortion of the motives behind the activity, a restructuring of value orientations, for example, pessimism, skepticism towards innovations, indifference, or vice versa, a complex of excellence, ambition, "official intervention", dominance, vanity.

Individual deformations. These are the deformations when individual professionally important qualities develop extremely, which leads to the emergence of super-qualities or accentuations (labor fanaticism, hypertrophied professional enthusiasm, etc.) [14].

In foreign and Ukrainian literature, one can most often find recommendations of a general nature regarding methods for eliminating negative external and internal factors affecting professional deformation (including public servants). A convincing scientific position in terms of identifying and eliminating such factors can be found in Ukrainian literature, in particular in the writings of M. Sitsinskaya [6]. The author believes that public servants, whose level of support from managers and colleagues is high, are less prone to professional deformation, they are less likely to experience depersonalization and reduction of personal achievements. The more emotionally stable civil servants are, the higher their professional performance indicators are. One of the main conditions for preventing professional deformation is the presence of a high level of psychological readiness of a manager for its prevention among subordinates, relevant knowledge, skills, as well as a sense of high responsibility for them. Civil servants, in turn, should positively influence the surrounding mental phenomena, processes, conditions, own behavior and activities to

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maintain personal mental and, consequently, physical health. In our opinion, the most effective in this case is the proposal for the introduction of a mandatory qualified psychological assistance in the form of psychological service in government bodies. In the process of preventing the professional deformation of civil servants, the main function of a practical psychologist is the ability to provide the civil servant with the necessary psychological information, stimulate their personal reserves to work with psychological problems, and select and train competent specialists capable of leading activities.

### 3 Conclusions

The problem of the availability of basic research in the field of studying the relevant, productive competencies of civil servants is still of high interest to this day. Clearly formulated and extremely clear profiles of professional competence of employees of state authorities will make it possible to develop scientifically sound and practically justified recommendations on prophylaxis, prompt recognition and prevention of professional deformations and destruction that meet modern requirements.

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