

# COMPETENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN POLAND

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**Abstract:** *The aim of the article is to present the overview of the project “Processes, Goals, Competencies – Integrated Office Management” that introduced competence based management in public administration in Poland. The main goal of the project was to support offices of public administration in Poland in introducing new methods of management. The project had few stages which are described in the article. In the final part of the article the Author discusses future challenges of the project.*

**Keywords:** COMPETENCE BASED MANAGEMENT, HUMAN CAPITAL, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

## 1. Introduction

The concept of competence-based management was introduced in the 90. of the XXth Century by C.K. Prahalad and G.Hamel<sup>1</sup> [6] as a result of emerge of the new type organization – so called learning/intelligent organization. The modern competence based management can be defined as a way of personnel policy conducting where the main goal is to ensure the adequate competence resources for the company – the competencies that are necessary to fulfill strategic goals of an organization [3]. Competency approach is getting more popular as it is perceived as more flexible in comparison with traditional human resources management concept. The increasing popularity of competence based management is observed not only within enterprises’ managers but also within managers of non-commercial organizations.

The aim of the article is to present the concept of competence-based management as an approach that can be used not only in enterprise but also in non-commercial organization. To achieve the goal of the study, the Author analysed a selection of literature on the subject. Moreover in order to illustrate the theoretical review with the case study approach the Author describes the project “Processes, Goals, Competencies – Integrated Office Management”<sup>2</sup> that was carried out in years 2014 and 2015 in the public administration in Poland.

## 2. Competency Model in HRM

The competency approach uses so called competency model which lists all competencies (together with definitions) that are crucial for the strategy and organizational goals [12]. To create good competence model one has to introduce multi-stage process that consists of:

1. Identification of key competences of an organization.
2. Identification of employees’ competencies that are needed with respect to key competences of an organization.
3. Definition of employees’ competencies together with so called behavioral description of job.
4. Creation of competency profiles.
5. Creation of coherent competency model.

The starting point in creation of the competency model is an identification of strategic fields of competitive advantage of an organization. These are so called organizational competences which describe the specific enterprise’s opportunities, by identifying its strengths in the area of knowledge and experience. In turn

organizational core competences determine the structure of competencies that are required from employees. On the other hand one has to remember that core competences of organization are the result of employees’ knowledge, attitudes and skills. So it could be said that there is mutual relationships between organizational and employees’ competencies.

There are different definitions of the term “competency” in the literature. For example employees’ competence can be understood as: a characteristic of a person [1], the combination of knowledge[5], skills and qualities, mix of attitudes and personal attributes possessed by effective employee [2]. Due to the lack of one common definition of employee’s competencies’ components in the literature, there is a necessity to present the opinion of the Author of this article. For the purpose of the paper one can understand employee’s competencies as: *Employees’ disposal that refer to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable employee to fulfill professional duties on required level. The use and the development of competencies in the work process led to accomplishment of the organizational goals that are formulated in the strategy* [11]. It is worth to mention that competencies are the category that can be measured [9]. So that in the process of competence management one should remember about analysis of the levels of competence fulfillment by particular employee.

The next important step is to define all competencies that are used in the model. Definitions should be detailed enough to prevent ambiguity of interpretation. Definition consists of the name of competence and its short description together with examples of behavior that is typical for the competence (behavioral description of job) [10].

When using competence model one can describe appropriate job standards in organization by creation of so called competence profiles. They tend to show required level of knowledge, skills and attitudes on particular job position and are used to assess real competencies of employees. In turn this is the way to get high quality of human capital in enterprise as competence model helps to verify the level of employees’ and/or managers’ competencies. The result of assessment is then the basis for development plan of each employee/manager in organization. Hereby investment in human capital is more effective as it meets real needs of personnel.

The final stage of competency model creation is introducing it into all spheres of Human Resources Management in organization.

## 3. Competency management in public administration in Poland

Government administration influences the quality of citizens’ life [4]. In Poland its main role is to guarantee professional and politically neutral execution of objectives of the State. This can be ensured only by competent and professional staff. In accordance one of the main goal presented in the document “Efficient state

<sup>1</sup> When one talks about organizational competencies one refers to the concept of „core competences” by C.K. Prahalad and G. Hamel. Core competences of the organization are its specific abilities (strengths) that enables the organization to provide the clients with added value.

<sup>2</sup> The project was introduced by Civil Service Department of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and was supported by EU Social Funds.

strategy 2020"<sup>3</sup> [8] is enhancing quality of public administration provided by effective and functional institutions which are going to be managed modernly<sup>4</sup>. To fulfill the goal the project "Processes, Goals, Competencies – Integrated Office Management"<sup>5</sup> was carried out in Poland in years 2014 and 2015. The aim of the project was to support offices of public administration in Poland in introducing new methods of management. Action that was taken within the project referred to [7]:

1. Process management (identification, mapping, optimization of key processes in the office and analysis of resources allocation),
2. Management by goals (working out the goal system that is coherent and integrated with management control in the office),
3. Competence based management (creation or updating of competence model in the office).

168 government administration offices took part in the project, 25 of them implemented competence based management and 11 other offices decided to improve their competence models. The project had few stages. At the beginning representatives of particular public institutions took part in seminars to get familiar with goals and schedule of the project. Then professional consultants conducted the audit of management methods and techniques in each of office that took part in the project. That was the basis for the implementation of new concept of management in particular offices. To do so consultants together with selected representatives of employees created project teams aimed at implementing modern management methods in office including competency management approach.

Competence based management was described as systematic action that leads to creation of competence standards which cause a rise of human capital and efficiency of an organization. The significance of competence based management in public administration offices was expressed by following goals:

1. A rise of effectiveness, promptness and conformity of the law task carried out by public administration thanks to well defined and possessed competencies,
2. A support of human resources management by using particular techniques/instruments of competence based management,
3. Describing and implementing of mutual connection and interaction between systems of competence based management and management by goals in accordance and with process of requirement, assessment and development of employees.

To raise the quality of human resources management in public administration consultants supposed to prepare or update competence model which supports managers in adapting employees' competencies to needs of particular office. For the purpose of the project different instruments of competence based management were worked out, for example: the formula of the competence audit, competence based interview, professional career path.

In the table 1. the Author presents action that was taken within different type of public administration offices in the module of competence based management.

<sup>3</sup> The strategy is one of the nine integrated strategies that is introduced to rise the efficiency of public institutions by cooperation with citizens. The strategy was established by the government in 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Goal 5: Enhancing the potential of public administration as regards development of law and policies and providing high quality service and strengthening partnership mechanism.

<sup>5</sup> The project was introduced by Civil Service Department of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and was supported by EU Social Funds.

Table 1. Action that was taken within different type of public administration offices

The type of the office	The type of action
Central Offices	Adaptation of standard competency model <sup>6</sup> to the specific needs of particular offices by identification key behaviors for different job positions and describing them in competency language.
Voivodship Offices	Creation of: competency models basing on standard competency model, the formula of competency audit, the rules for knowledge transfer, the formula of development talk.
Regional Offices of Measure	Implementation of competency model that aimed: more coherent expectation in reference of the same job positions, specify the expected behavior of employees, creation of evaluation scale for particular competencies, enabling the verification of competencies in the whole organization.
Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection	Creation of: competency model, competency audit, knowledge transfer. Implementation of mutual connection and interaction between systems of competence based management and process management, ecomanagement and audit.
Statistical Offices	Creation of: competency models basing on standard competency model, the formula of competency audit, the rules for knowledge transfer, the formula of development talk.
Inspection for Environmental Protection (provincial level)	Disseminating of competency model and audit of competence in the process of employees' assessment. Use of competency model in creation of individual plans for professional development.
Veterinary Inspection (provincial level)	Creation of competency model, strategy of requirement, policy of career paths, techniques of requirement interview, rules of giving feedback, rules of team management, competency audit and knowledge transfer.

Source: Own elaboration based on: [7].

#### 4. Conclusion

The project Processes, Goals, Competencies – Integrated Office Management" is now finished. In Author's opinion application of competency approach in public administration was a good idea as it leads to new quality of management in offices. Nevertheless there are some fields of risks for the success of the project.

It is worth to stress that one of the main challenge was to prepare solutions of management problems in accordance with law regulations in offices. The rules of functioning of Civil Service in Poland are being defined in Act of 21 November 2008 on Civil Service. Additionally the most important guidelines of human capital management in public government administration are being identified in document "Ordinance no 3 of the Head of the Civil Service concerning the standards of human resources management in the civil service". For this reasons it must be remembered that not all of instruments of competency management could be applied in offices.

<sup>6</sup> Standard competency model was created for the purpose of the project "Processes, Goals, Competencies – Integrated Office Management" as a starting point for introducing competence based management in offices.

Another challenge was to convince managers and employees to implement competence approach into human resources management and use it for the purpose of: an audit of employees' competencies during both requirement and periodic assessment of an employee, a description of job positions in an office, a development of employees. People usually do not like changes. When introducing competency management in offices employees and managers need to change the way they think about human capital management. This causes stress and fear of dismissal and in turn aversion to the project.

For this reason it is a question whether competency models are going to be used in practice what is important for a rise of effectiveness of human resources management. In this context there is a necessity for further monitoring of effects of project and to support offices' staff in making changes.

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