

COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM AS A FACTOR IN STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF UKRAINE

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Abstract: Since HRM ensures the efficacy, efficiency, and flexibility of public institutions, it plays a vital role in forming public administration. Restructuring the public sector to be more transparent, meritocratic, and efficient has been largely dependent on HRM reforms in post-socialist European nations, to which Ukraine also belongs. However, political forces, institutional inertia, and other factors frequently impede these change processes, and these processes find their reflection, naturally, in the vision of public servants' competence. Based on the application of narrative review method, the article demonstrates key imbalances in competency-based approach in public administration organizations' HRM, within country-specific base. Particular attention, among other issues, is paid to performance management as a concept adopted in public administration system. It is emphasized that Ukrainian scholarly field does not contain deep and detailed studies concerning the ways to enhance competency-based approach in public management HRM, despite severe threats to national security in the wartime. The summarizing of reviewed literature findings allowed stating the need for systemic approach paradigm should be used to build new competencies, taking into account both internal and external influences, particularly the growing national security discourse.

Keywords: National Security; Personnel Management; Competences and Public Administration; Citizen Satisfaction; System Approach.

Through the optimization of human capital, the alignment of employee competencies with strategic objectives, and the promotion of innovation, HRM plays a critical role in improving organizational performance. Since governments must manage limited resources while balancing efficiency, accountability, and service quality, human resource management (HRM) is equally important in the public sector (Andrews & van de Walle, 2013; Biščak & Benčina, 2019). Professionalizing public administration and guaranteeing responsive governance require efficient HRM procedures, including hiring, training, and performance management (Profiroiu & Negoită, 2022; Vignieri, 2018; Castelo & Gomes, 2024). The competence approach, in turn, forms the basis of HRM in modern public administration. In order to increase public servants' performance and the overall efficacy of public

services, the competency approach in public management focuses on improving their knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors (Andriyiv et al., 2022; Bashtannyk et al., 2024). This strategy places a strong emphasis on matching organizational objectives with human resource management procedures, guaranteeing that public employees are prepared to handle the changing demands of their jobs and the needs of the general public. Employees in the public administration sector are losing their current competencies as simple and repetitive operations are automated and others become more intricate and interconnected.

Moreover, ever increasing and complicating threats to national security determine further modification of the public management employees' competence as a system. By putting policies into action, overseeing resources, and coordinating efforts to defend a country's interests against numerous threats, public administration plays a crucial part in national security (Arivazhagan et al., 2023; Byrkovych et al., 2023). This entails a variety of tasks, ranging from overseeing security forces and intelligence agencies to creating strategic documents and legislation. The efficient operation of the governmental machinery in preserving the stability and well-being of the country is guaranteed by public administration (Gupta et al., 2024; Borysenko et al., 2025). At every position within public administration bodies, comprehending existing threats and carrying out work activities bearing them in mind is critical. At the same time, while there is a huge array of scholarly works and reports concerning the issues of national security in public administration at a macrolevel, significantly less attention is paid to middle levels and "frontline". Meanwhile, namely competencies of employees at these levels ultimately determine efficiency of national public administration system and its resilience in the landscape of threats to national security (Kichurchak et al., 2024; Ferdman et al., 2025). It is especially relevant for countries being in the state of armed conflict, in particular, Ukraine. While, for example, in Syria public administration has solid history and traditions without pragmatic modifications, Ukraine has only 35 years of building new public administration system after gaining independence, and this fact makes achieving resilience of this system to war realities even more difficult. Thus, investigation of the trends, best practices, and problems solution patterns in competency-based approach to HRM in public administration acquires especially crucial value for Ukraine.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, public administration is a system that combines many organizations and functions in accordance with social norms and regulations (Latkovskyi, 2020). According to each nation's national values and objectives, public service tradition, and established political culture, public administration encompasses a wide range of activities (Jambrač, 2021). In the past, as society changed, so did the definition and comprehension of public administration. Public administration is no longer viewed as a "inviolable authority" in many nations; instead, it is now viewed as a partner and, ultimately, as "administration at the service of citizens". Flexibility, the stability of management systems, and the capacity to function well under pressure are all necessary for public administration to be responsive and adaptive in the twenty-first century (Jambrac, 2021).

The idea of the importance and role of employees has changed in tandem with the paradigm shift in public administration. Workers have been treated differently in the labor market since capitalism began, first as "labor", then as "human capital", "human resources", and finally as "human potential" (Ciuhu & Vasile, 2019). The idea of "potential" captures the complexity of people, who are more than just "order executors". Rather, they are complex entities with distinct needs and interests as well as psychological, spiritual, moral, and creative potentials (Kazantseva, 2022). According to Marčetić (2008), human potential in the context of public administration refers to the collective knowledge, skills, talents, behaviors, social qualities, psychological characteristics, and creative powers of personnel in public institutions who labor to serve the public interest. To guarantee that choices and actions are consistent, codified, and methodically managed through established norms and procedures, the administrative system is bureaucratized in the classic public sector paradigm (Brown, 2004). The rational-legal bureaucracy uses a number of important characteristics to handle personnel management (Maidaniuk et al., 2025). These include merit-based hiring, the use of organizational hierarchy to assign authority, established procedures to prevent wrongful termination, the division of labor according to particular functions, and, in general, the establishment of a professional civil service system (Schroeder, 1992). However, the unitary system faced difficulties due to the financial crisis and increasing government efforts to cut services in response to mounting criticism of "big government" (Shim, 2001). The demand for a new management style that allows for greater staff flexibility stems from the conversation about improving the responsiveness and efficiency of public administration.

When NPM introduced private sector management concepts into public administration, efficiency, performance-based management, and decentralization emerged as the top priorities (Stroińska, 2020). This modification was part of a broader strategy to raise the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of services (Brown, 2004). Some of the key components that NPM introduced are a result-oriented culture, performance management based on predefined goals, strategic planning, risk management, decentralization of power, decision rights, and cost recovery through user fees (Verbeeten & Speklé, 2015). The implementation of NPM principles has received support from international organizations like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO. A fresh approach to HRM has been introduced by public sector reforms motivated by the NPM theory, which incorporates the notion that human resources are essential to attaining performance outcomes consistent with

the strategic objectives of public enterprises (Pasichnyi et al., 2024; Mykolaichuk et al., 2025). Nevertheless, a number of unanticipated and intentional repercussions resulted from these improvements. On the plus side, many public institutions have seen a change toward more customer-oriented service delivery, greater efficiency, and accountability as a result of NPM. It pushes public institutions to take a more businesslike approach by emphasizing results and performance-based management. However, many regions have observed that public service performance has not improved considerably despite the implementation of private sector approaches. In certain instances, quality has even decreased (Mahmoud & Othman, 2021; Lapuente & van de Walle, 2020). Increased bureaucratization (Liff, 2014) and the fragmentation of public services as a result of decentralization (Van de Walle & Hammerschmid, 2011) are two further adverse effects that have surfaced. Furthermore, the focus on quantifiable results has occasionally weakened teamwork (Panasiuk et al., 2020). Traditional public sector ideals like equity and impartiality have diminished, and departments now vie for resources rather than pursuing common goals (Liff, 2014).

Research indicates that the outcomes of NPM changes in Central and Eastern Europe have been uneven. Cultural considerations and the legacy of authoritarian governments frequently make it difficult to carry out these reforms successfully, which results in patchy gains in governance and the fight against corruption. A survey of NPM literature in the area, for example, emphasizes the difficulties of inadequate implementation and a lack of administrative competence, which are made worse by political unpredictability and a fragmented reform vision (Dan, 2015; Drechsler & Randma-Liiv, 2014). The impact of NPM reforms in the European environment is heavily reliant on the institutional framework, resulting in different organizational outcomes and management approaches (Teisman & van Buuren, 2007). NPM has endured for almost thirty years in spite of its many drawbacks.

Contrary to early plans, it became evident over time that changes were required as the state machinery continued to grow along with the expanding duties of public administration. The need for new doctrines in the theory of public administration was highlighted by this tendency, which was especially noticeable in EU member states and candidate nations (Avedyan et al., 2023; Berezniak et al., 2025). There was a big change at the start of the twenty-first century. In order to restore the political legitimacy of sovereign nations, the EU implemented a new governance model that placed a higher priority on democratic administration. This strategy seeks to improve coherence and efficacy, facilitating effective governance and bolstering European nations' institutional capabilities (Koprić, 2009; referenced in Jambrač, 2021). The EU supports its own idea of public administration called "Good Governance" since it recognizes the difficulties presented by political and economic transitions in developing democracies (Manliev, 2021). NPM was founded on a neoliberal framework that sought to establish a "lean state," whereas Good Governance adopts a radically different strategy. Its policies and practices prioritize citizens by placing them at the center and highlighting the democratic characteristics of society (Budurina-Goreacii & Cebotari, 2021). By encouraging openness in operations, collaborative decision-making, professionalization of administration, the rule of law, and merit-based hiring, good governance puts quality over quantity (Ortina et al., 2023; Nekhai et al., 2024). Additionally, it enhances the function of civic society. Establishing an administration that is receptive to the demands of the public and the economy is its ultimate goal. Through programs like the 2001 White Paper on European Governance, the EU has been instrumental in establishing the concepts of good governance. According to this statement, the guiding principles for reforms in public administration are transparency, involvement, accountability, efficacy, and coherence (Anđelković, 2023). These ideas have had a big impact on how public administration has been modernized in EU candidate nations, making sure that changes adhere to the rule of law and democratic governance norms.

It is clear that professionalization and depoliticization are the common objectives of all current public administration philosophies, regardless of the prevailing philosophy in the field. The creation of an effective HRM system for public administration is necessary to meet these objectives. Adoption of contemporary HRM approaches and procedures is intrinsically linked to the professionalization of public administration (Daniel, 2023; Reina & Scarozza, 2021). A growing corpus of research showing the beneficial effects of HRM practices on organizational performance in public administration (Gogalis, 2021; Kotková Stříteská & Sein, 2021) demonstrates the significance of this topic. A strategic approach to human resource management is necessary to guarantee the success of reforms in public administration (Pavlovskiy et al., 2024; Cherniaev et al., 2024). Modernizing basic HR operations and bolstering institutional capacities for efficient HR management in the public sector are two important components of this. Recruitment and selection, training, career development, performance review, and incentive programs are some of these tasks. According to Zolak Poljašević (2024), each of these components helps to maximize worker performance and improve overall organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the pursuit of competence and competencies in public service begins with the apparent and unambiguous premise that competence is a desirable attribute.

Mid-level managers are crucial in determining if and how digital technology is employed on a daily basis in modern public administration. However, little is known about the skills of mid-level managers who must increasingly oversee the use of digital technology. We distill essential mid-level managerial competencies into thinking about modern bureaucracy, especially in the context of digital transformation, in an effort to address the knowledge gap. In his study, Kurtiev (2023) identifies important weaknesses in the present competency

development system in Ukraine and suggests strategies to improve local government officials' professional growth. As the author correctly notes, the wartime age has seen a sharp acceleration of digital change, which has radically altered the terrain of local government operations (Petrukha et al., 2015; Pyatnychuk et al., 2024). Officials have been forced to quickly build their skills in cybersecurity, remote work management, and digital service delivery. Maintaining governmental operations during airstrikes and other emergencies has been made possible in large part by this digital shift. According to data, communities led by individuals with digital competency have demonstrated noticeably higher levels of resilience and improved public service continuity during times of disaster. In the setting of conflict, communication skills have become crucial. Public safety messaging, multi-stakeholder cooperation, and crisis communication have become critical skills for local government representatives. One of the most important success factors for local administration nowadays is the ability to keep up good communication with the public amid emergencies (Ravlinko et al., 2023; Saik et al., 2023). While making sure that their communities receive accurate and timely information, officials must strike a balance between security concerns and transparency. But rather than analyzing current issues, the author merely enumerated broad suggestions for enhancements without providing the required specifics. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Ukrainian authors' writings that address the difficulties of HRM in public administration within the framework of national security share this trait.

METHODS

A non-systematic literature review, often known as a narrative style literature review (Ferrari, 2015), is used in this paper (McDougall, 2015). This method's primary objectives are to pinpoint a gap in the literature, compile pertinent published research findings, and propose unexplored future research areas (Ferrari, 2015).

The applied narrative literature review approach, which is more prevalent in the fields of management and economics, can be regarded as legitimate as the goal of the current study is to advance the current theory by examining and summarizing the theoretical and empirical findings of earlier research projects. This review adheres to one of the commonly used standard patterns of a narrative literature review, as described by Green et al. (2006), in order to ensure the objectivity of the narrative literature review approach and the structural coherence with the earlier overview articles. Using pertinent keywords pertaining to competencies in both organizational and individual contexts, literature searches were carried out using the Google Scholar search engine and extracted from the Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR databases. The inclusion criteria refer to scholarly articles from a variety of scientific fields, including public administration, psychology, sociology, and economics, because competencies are an interdisciplinary notion.

The decision to include each identified manuscript in this review was decided consciously, collaboratively, and iteratively by the authors. Furthermore, from the retrieved papers' reference lists, more papers were found.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The efficiency advantages that come from replacing traditional bureaucratic public administration systems with market-oriented, results-driven public management systems have been the main focus of public sector reforms over the past 20 years. Reducing the state's involvement and using what's left to improve political direction, administrative discipline, and responsiveness to the needs of the populace has been the aim. Government attempts to manage transformation have differed among Western democracies due to a variety of factors, including starting points, national contexts and cultures, shifts in the political landscape, and the dedication of political leaders. However, the primary causes have remained the same: the fiscal strain brought on by shifts in the global economic system has necessitated a reduction in public expenditure, the deterioration of public policies and the subpar quality of public services has led to a decrease in public trust, and so forth. It has become commonplace to refer to the New Public Management as a collection of concepts and practices that prioritize competition among service providers, a new interaction between the state and market under the provision of collectively financed services, decentralization, citizen choice, and more responsive management, to name a few of the more prominent keywords, even though reforms were pursued with varying degrees of enthusiasm in different countries under different conditions and with different outcomes. The primary goal of these changes has been to achieve economic efficiency through the managerialization of the public sector (Prabawati et al., 2018).

One crucial component of public management reform is thought to be greater devolution of authority. It is implied that in order to improve public administration, managers must take on more accountability for the utilization of resources (Karlsson, 2019). As a result, hierarchical systems are giving way to flat, more decentralized organizations built on teams and matrix structures, with authority and responsibility being distributed (Ryzhakova et al., 2022; Serhieiev et al., 2025). These measures, for instance, have been aimed at reducing needless restrictions on resource management and granting organizations and managers more autonomy in operational decisions in the UK. However, in the UK, authority was consolidated and concentrated in tandem with devolution of authority and decentralization of decision-making to enhance control over strategic choices.

Another crucial component of public management reform is performance management, which seeks to advance greater economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in public administration by moving it beyond bureaucracy. These steps are intended to shift the focus of management and budgeting procedures from inputs to outcomes (Yermachenko et al., 2023; Sydorchuk et al., 2024). This means that in order to quantify the added value of any activity, outputs and results should be quantified and connected to the actual financial resources spent. The ways that different nations handle performance management are always changing. Some nations, like the Netherlands, started off focusing on outputs before switching to an outcomes-based strategy. To concentrate on results, some are modifying their budgeting processes (Voronina et al., 2024; Zayats et al., 2024). Delegating tasks within ministries and agencies is supported by the introduction of performance management system initiatives, which are based on the idea that managers must have greater latitude in using resources in order to produce results (Petrukha et al., 2023; Poliova et al., 2024). Performance indicators run the risk of becoming an extra layer of control in an already overburdened system and further limiting managerial freedom if performance targets are imposed onto a traditional system without assigning responsibility, as is actually the case in Ukraine today.

In his monograph, Cubuc (2025) asserts that the caliber of civil servants' professional performance is a crucial determinant of the efficacy of the public administration system. The author highlights that in the era of digital transformation, public servants' digital skills are crucial to preserving and enhancing the effectiveness of public services (Zilinska et al., 2022). Civil servants now have more tools because of the advent of digital technology, thus their competency profiles need to be updated. To ensure that public servants have the skills necessary to meet the opportunities and difficulties of the digital revolution, training developers must provide upskilling and reskilling methods and programs. To make sure public officials are ready for the new digital era, more research into these techniques is necessary. However, the drawback of this research, evident actually in a plenty of publications in the field of competencies within contemporary public administration, is narrow-focused vision (Zhumbi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, excellent digital competencies without deep comprehension of national security threats, especially those of latent and hybrid nature, may even lead to increasing of vulnerability of public management body to these threats. Ukrainian context is bright illustration of this thesis – good digital skills is one of the key requirements for public administration servants today, but in war conditions this can lead to critical data leakages and enemy' success in cyberattacks, in particular due to broad authorization in organizational information systems, over-reliance on cloud services, etc.

Competency-based human resource management has proliferated in the selection, retention, and compensation processes since 2000. This strategy is becoming more and more popular for a number of reasons: In order to provide "ladders" for those who have had fewer educational opportunities but have still developed the necessary competencies, (i) the traditional supply-driven (knowledge-absorptive) educational system is being replaced with a more demand-driven (goal-oriented) one; (ii) adaptive training, work-based, and non-formal learning are being increased; and (iii) there is a greater orientation towards learned outcomes (regardless of the method of acquisition) rather than outcomes in terms of time spent in education. Even in the United States, a nation with a strong scientific foundation in public administration, preexisting ideas about the competencies of political appointees, the leadership echelons of the career service, the rest of the career service, the government as a whole, central agencies, individual agencies, and desperately needed future leaders not only imply superhuman abilities but also contain significantly divergent expectations (Sondergergaard, 2020). The chart below shows trend of citizen satisfaction with federal government services in the USA in the period of 2007-2014. While this was a period of active government reforms, they did not lead to real growth of citizens' satisfaction, and even decline took place in the period of 2012-2014.

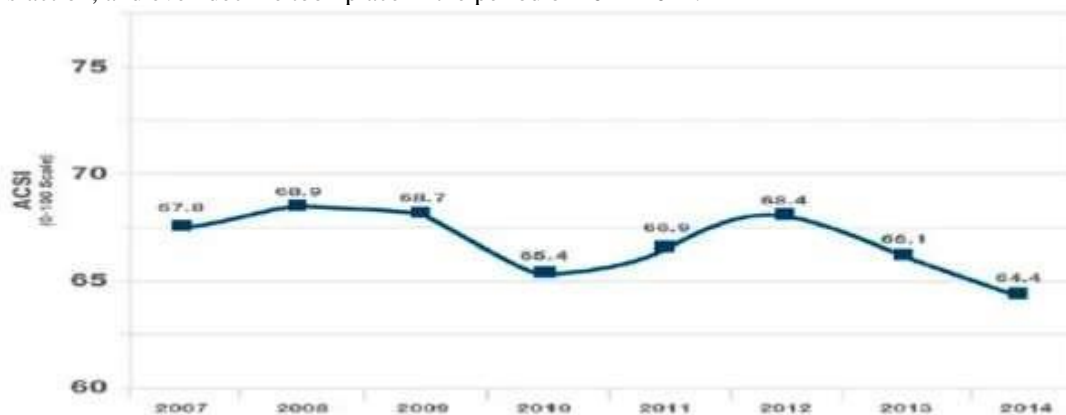


FIGURE 1 CITIZEN SATISFACTION WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES, USA (JAMES ET AL., 2017)

Meanwhile, because most competence-based strategies have previously been focused on conduct in crucial situations, present models are vulnerable to the risk of defining future organizational demands based on what

has worked in the past. For example, productive and less productive workers may have various features that are today unimportant but may become important in the future. Furthermore, by solely hiring individuals based on the qualities of previously productive workers, a company risks creating clones, reducing workforce diversity and limiting the potential for creativity and innovation (Sparrow and Bognanno, 1993). Competences are inherently dynamic, and all approaches for identifying or measuring competencies should have a forward-looking component.

According to Castello and Gomez (2024), as a key instrument for successful administrative reform implementation, performance measurement and management systems (PMMS) seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public resources, assisting governments in meeting their promises of democratic responsibility and improved service delivery. However, little is known about the true repercussions of employing PMMS (Yetano et al., 2021), and complaints of their ineffectiveness have grown (Dhillon, 2022). examined the association between administrative reform implementation and public organization performance, focusing on the mediation role of PMMS (see Figure 2).

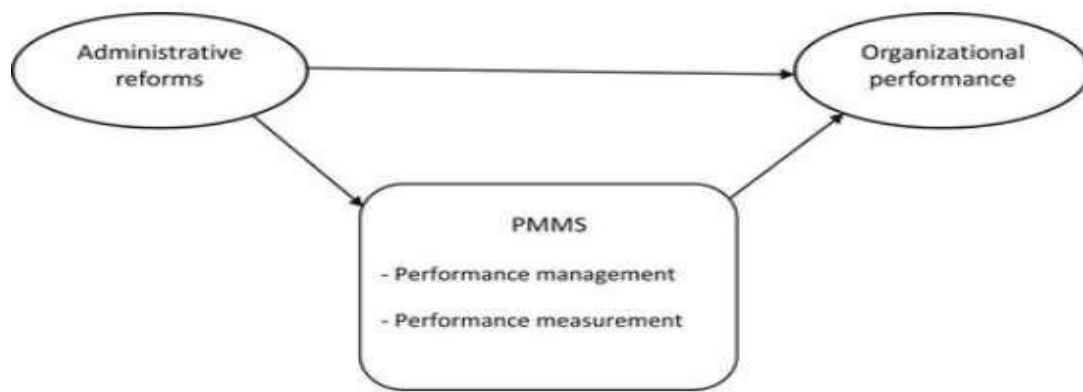


FIGURE 2 Conceptual framework of public administration efficiency measurement (Castello & Gomez, 2024) Despite extensive research, the NPM and post-NPM paradigms remain inadequately characterized as explanations for changes in public administration (Laffin, 2019). Perhaps for these reasons, new reform initiatives have evolved in recent years, aimed at increasing the transparency of public bodies to society. One of these movements promotes network governance, with the goal of developing successful interactions between key players that foster a culture of mutual respect and the sharing of knowledge in order to serve the public good (Kim, 2021). Another reform movement promotes government transparency and has played a significant role in administrative reforms over the last decade, prompting many countries to implement initiatives involving information availability, transparency, participation, collaboration, and information technology (Gil-Garcia et al., 2020). This movement seeks to transform public institutions by fostering transparency and pushing others to follow suit (Ingrams, 2020).

According to contemporary literature, public organizations, unlike in the past, appear to be constantly changing through administrative reforms aimed at improving resource utilization and meeting citizen wants. However, not all of these changes result in successful transformation that increases organizational performance, particularly from a holistic standpoint (Reiter & Klenk, 2019).

Meanwhile, performance measurement and performance management have comparable definitions. However, performance assessment and management in public organizations, like in businesses, should be regarded as two independent and interconnected processes that are integrated into a system. The difference between PMMS in corporate and public organizations may be limited to how these two processes interact.

Public organizations' success should be evaluated holistically, taking into account characteristics other than output and financial efficiency. The primary goal of performance management should be to create performance measuring methods that dynamically ensure organizational performance improvement while also developing relevant employee competencies.

CONCLUSION

By extending this analysis to the dimensions of innovation, quality, reputation, security, and so on, the study's findings allow researchers and practitioners to examine organizational performance and appropriate HRM competencies within public administration organizations from a comprehensive perspective, eschewing the minimalist approaches of efficient use of resources.

NPM techniques have significantly altered the composition, roles, and procedures of public administration and management. However, government managers are finding it extremely difficult to manage using outdated abilities while new techniques are being adopted. New situations in practically every job need the creation of

new abilities or the redefining of preexisting ones. It is now more important than ever to institutionalize new training programs that give government administrators technical, managerial, and leadership skills. The warning is that unless other structural issues like compensation, promotion, and the use of former trainees are also addressed, developing new competences won't always solve all the issues. A systemic paradigm should be used to build new competencies, taking into account both internal and external influences, particularly the growing national security discourse.

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