

Volume 22, Issue 1
June 2024

ISSN 1731-8297, e-ISSN 6969-9696
<http://czasopisma.uni.opole.pl/index.php/osap>

ORIGINAL ARTICLE
received 2024-01-14
accepted 2024-03-03
published online 2024-07-17



Fundamentals of the civil service – quality of staff

Podstawy służby cywilnej – jakość kadr

WOJCIECH FEDERCZYK

Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie
ORCID: 0000-0003-1242-9552, w.federczyk@uksw.edu.pl

Citation: Federczyk, Wojciech. 2024. Fundamentals of the civil service – quality of staff. *Opolskie Studia Administracyjno-Prawne* 22(1): 9–19. DOI: 10.25167/osap.5378

Abstract: The year 2022 marked the 100th anniversary of the first Polish Civil Service Act. An uneasy history meant that for half of that period the concept did not function in practice. It was only after 1989 that the building of a modern public administration, also based on the idea of civil service, began. The article points out that, both in the beginnings of the Polish civil service and nowadays, an important issue is the proper preparation of civil servants, especially at the higher level. In the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War, adequate solutions had not been developed. In the current period, since the beginning of the transformation, KSAP – the Government School of Administration – has been operating in Poland. The main task of the School is to educate and prepare candidates for high-ranking posts in public administration, and to develop the competences of those who perform these important functions for the state as a whole. The aim of this paper is to analyse legal solutions and practical methods for educating and training administrative personnel. The paper draws on materials from government commissions during the Second Republic of Poland and the experience gained by the National School of Public Administration since 1990.

Keywords: civil service, National School of Public Administration, professionalization of the civil service, training of civil servants, public integrity, leadership

Abstrakt: Na 2022 roku przypadła 100. rocznica uchwalenia pierwszej polskiej ustawy o państwowej służbie cywilnej. Nielatwa historia sprawiła, że przez połowę tego okresu pojęcie to nie funkcjonowało w praktyce. Dopiero po 1989 r. rozpoczęto w Polsce budowę nowoczesnej administracji publicznej, również opartej na idei służby cywilnej. W artykule przedstawiono

analizę, która wskazuje, że zarówno w początkach polskiej służby cywilnej, jak i obecnie istotną kwestią jest odpowiednie przygotowanie urzędników, zwłaszcza wyższego szczebla. W okresie do wybuchu II wojny światowej nie wypracowano całościowych rozwiązań tego zagadnienia. Od początku transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce działa Krajowa Szkoła Administracji Publicznej (KSAP). Głównym zadaniem Szkoły jest kształcenie i przygotowanie kandydatów na wysokie stanowiska w administracji publicznej oraz rozwijanie kompetencji osób pełniących te ważne dla całego państwa funkcje. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest analiza rozwiązań prawnych oraz praktycznych metod kształcenia i doskonalenia kadr administracji. W opracowaniu wykorzystano materiały komisji rządowych z okresu II Rzeczypospolitej oraz doświadczenia Krajowej Szkoły Administracji Publicznej zdobyte po 1990 roku.

Słowa kluczowe: służba cywilna, Krajowa Szkoła Administracji Publicznej (KSAP), profesjonalizacja służby cywilnej, rzetelność administracji, przywództwo

1. Introduction

The year 2022 marks one hundred years since the enactment of the first law in Poland to introduce the concept of civil service into the Polish administration. The troubled history of the last century meant that for half of that period the concept did not function in practice. It was only after 1989 that the building of a modern public administration, also based on the concept of civil service, began. The article points out that, both in the beginnings of the Polish Civil Service and nowadays, an important issue is the proper preparation of civil servants, especially at the higher level. In the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War, adequate solutions had not been developed. In the current period, National School of Public Administration (Polish acronym KSAP) – has been operating in Poland since the beginning of the transformation.

2. The essence of civil service

The concept of civil service has its own specific rich meaning and is not just one of the synonyms for state administration or a way of organising it. What then characterises civil service? It seems that the most important characteristic is that civil service is geared to work for the state and society, rather than for a particular authority. It is a corps of civil servants who work with equal commitment for any legitimate government. On the one hand, civil service has the advantage of being able to carry out the tasks of the state without interference, while – on the other one – there is the permanent and professional nature of administrative work.

The origins of civil services are linked to the births of modern states, with the move away from absolutist systems. The state and public institutions then

ceased to be regarded as the property of a reigning ruler. The modern state represents the empowerment of society. This transformation took place from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, and each European state has its own experience in this sphere. A uniform pattern for civil services has not therefore emerged, with the solution in each country dependent on historical circumstances. In France, that would be the legacy of the Great Revolution and the era of Napoleon Bonaparte; in Germany – the concept of the “rule of law”, and so on (Horton 2011: 37–39).

The idea of civil service is still relevant and applied in practice. At the same time, it is subject to constant change, due to the need to modernise public administration which must respond to the challenges of the given time. Hence, in the 20th century the concepts of public management, the welfare state, New Public Management and then public governance were implemented (Charakrabarty, Chand 2012: 112). These concepts vary in their emphasis on either the scope of activity or the ways in which tasks are carried out. What remains unchanged, however, is the basic assumption that work in the civil service has its own specificity, which can be described as public service. Indeed, studies carried out in European countries indicate that the main distinguishing feature of people working in civil service is a special motivation that differs from that of private-sector employees (Demke 2005: 117).

The public-service motivation manifests itself in the ability to participate in the delivery of public service, out of patriotic motives; the desire to work for the benefit of society; the causal implementation of administrative functions. It is also characterised by a greater willingness to make sacrifices in the service of others (Zieliński 2010: 34).

3. The Civil Service in Poland

In Poland, the concept in question first appeared 100 years ago, namely in the Act of 17 February 1922, reflecting a delay due to the peculiarities of Polish history: the concept of the civil service in Poland was shaped at a time when the nation was deprived of its own state, and in fact was divided up between its three neighbours. The wisdom of the founders of reborn Poland in 1918 should therefore be admired. In laying the foundations for an efficient state, they reached straight away for the civil service model. Unfortunately, the subsequent history of the twentieth century interrupted the long-term pursuit of that plan. Still, by the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, they had managed to build an administrative apparatus that passed the toughest test during the Occupation. Between 1939 and 1945, the structures of the Underground State were established in Poland, with the majority of civil

servants involved. This was a heroic activity, as the risk of repression or even death was extremely high.

After the end of the Second World War, political changes in Poland led to the civil service being abolished. This was because the communist regime needed an administrative apparatus dedicated to that particular power. The Civil Service Act of 1922 was formally in force through to the time of adoption of the Labour Code in 1975. However, its provisions were removed gradually, as the Act was regarded as a relic of the capitalist system (Łukaszczuk 2010: 259). So there can be no doubt that there was no civil service in Poland for a period of 50 years (Górzyńska, Drobny 2016: 157).

A return to basing the modern administration of a democratic state on the idea of civil service came during Poland's systemic transformation. In 1990, KSAP was set up, and work began on drafting a new Civil Service Act.

4. Staff development in the civil service

The proper and effective fulfilment of the tasks of the state, serving the common good, requires appropriate preparation and professional development. Of lesser importance in this respect is the issue of the permanence of work in the civil service – realised by the so-called career system. Its premise is permanent, long-term work in public administration, often throughout a person's professional life. However, it should be borne in mind that not every civil servant has the right qualities and potential to take on successive positions in the civil-service hierarchy. On the other hand, in a situation where the legislator allows for the appointment of persons from outside the Corps to higher positions, appropriate training becomes all the more important as important tasks in a specific organisation are taken on (in Poland since 2016 – on the basis of the Act of 30.12.2015 (Dz.U. of 2016, item. 34). As indicated in the literature, civil service has developed valuable standards of human resources management, and it is not solely the case of learning from business, as the private sphere can also be provided with good models in this respect (Sidor-Rządkowska 2018: 85).

5. The period of the Second Republic

The need for adequate preparation and further training of civil servants emerged in Poland at the very beginning of the civil service. For legal regulation alone, even the best, does not guarantee the efficiency of the administrative apparatus. For this reason, in the 1920s, there were several Government Commissions in Poland set up with the task of improving administration

(Przygodzki 2019: 115; 159). Of these, the Commission set up on 27 September 1928 by PM Kazimierz Bartel's Government deserves special mention. Among its tasks was the development of a plan for a system of training civil servants and a whole personnel policy (M.P. No. 224 of 1928, non-official section, p. 2). The Commission was made up of a dozen or so people with scientific or clerical experience, under the leadership of Dr M. Jaroszyński (Przygodzki 2015: 188).

The Chairman of the Commission, (Jaroszyński 1929: 388(4)–390(6)), outlined the main problems encountered with making senior civil servants ready for their posts, namely:

- Are legal studies sufficient for such persons? and Should they be supplemented by socio-political knowledge?
- Should they be supplemented by relevant administrative apprenticeships and a civil service examination?
- Can graduates in political and social sciences also be admitted?
- Is there a need for a separate university for civil servants, or the creation of departments of administration?

A further fundamental question revolved around the issue of how to organise retraining for officials already working.

A special Section for the Preparation of Civil Servants was set up within the Commission, and on 15 March 1929 this circulated a Questionnaire on the Curriculum of the Universities from the point of view of their becoming involved in preparing future civil servants of the public administration. The questionnaire identified a number of different fields of study or types of higher education institutions that could educate civil servants, i.e. Faculties of Law and Political Science, Faculties of Economics and Politics and Faculties of Philosophy, as well as higher schools of a technical, commercial, mining-related, agricultural or medical profile (*Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej* 1929, No 12: 19(443)).

The responses submitted by a dozen professors were published in Volume II of the Commission's materials. The majority of respondents were in favour of training candidates for the higher positions at University Law Faculties. Single voices indicated that any higher education would be sufficient, as that was deemed to provide a suitable method of working and thinking (Miklaszewski 1929: 51–53). Significantly, only Prof. W. Grabski advocated the establishment of a special institute that would educate for the needs of special departments of administration. However, he pointed out that the operation of such an institution would be difficult because senior positions in the civil service are filled and there would be no jobs for graduates of the special academy. Consequently, he leaned towards providing training at the existing universities (Grabski 1929: 69).

The majority of authors pointed out that the university curricula (especially law curricula) of that time might need to be supplemented with socio-economic issues, or indeed administrative specialisations. The professionalisation of civil servants through training is crucial for the development of a state administration that can confidently meet new challenges (Górski 2011: 19).

Furthermore, the Commission commissioned a comparative study in other European countries, which was carried out by Prof. L.W. Biegelesen. In the field of further training and qualification, he proposed establishment of a separate institution – the so-called administrative academy focused on the training of officials already in post (Biegelesen 1929: 554). A common form of upgrading the skills of administrative officials was the periodic meetings of clerks held in various institutions (Krzymkowski 2015: 104). Some of the proposals contained in the Commission's materials were implemented successfully. One of those was administrative courses organised by Voivodes (Provincial Governors). The greatest effect was achieved with the establishment of a three-year Economic and Administrative Course of Study at the Faculty of Law at Lvov University, established by virtue of an Order of the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment in 1930. Classes were held from 5 to 8 pm and were intended for future and current civil servants (Przygodzki 2015: 197). Regrettably, further development of civil-service cadres was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War.

6. National School of Public Administration (KSAP)

It has been pointed out in the literature that the communist authorities did not need exacting requirements for work in administration, and treated civil servants as a hostile caste (Liszczyński 2010: 19). It is therefore worth emphasising how, in the period of transformation, care was above all taken to prepare for work in administration candidates considered suitable, in the sense that they would be capable of rebuilding civil service in Poland. In that connection, the National School of Public Administration (Polish abbreviation: KSAP) was established as early as in May 1990, by virtue of a Resolution of the country's first non-communist government under PM T. Mazowiecki. Founded, therefore, in 1990, and thus at the very start of the transformation, Poland's KSAP was the first institution of its kind anywhere in the former Eastern Bloc.

It was only after several years, and many political disputes, that the first Civil Service Act in the period of the Third Republic of Poland was passed (Łukaszczuk 2014: 61). The systemic and organisational changes arrived at in the civil service are peculiar to Poland, and there have been three successive

laws on this since 1996, with the current one dating from 2008. The analysis of the legal basis of the functioning of the civil service has shown that the regulations drafted to ensure the effectiveness of the system were used only partially (Gadowska 2018: 99).

Notwithstanding these changes in legal regulations, KSAP has been in continuous operation for over 30 years. The National School was tasked with the rebuilding of a professional Civil Service Corps in Poland – a body of officials understanding and investing the principles at the heart of public service with practical effect. Accordingly, in all it does, KSAP seeks to pass on the experience of building civil service and modern public administration in a democratic state. KSAP's first activity was the preparation and implementation of a programme of applied intramural training for students, lasting about 1.5 years. Thus, in the course of classes given at the School, and domestic and foreign internships, students learn about the organisation and functioning of public administration in Poland. On the other hand, internships abroad represent a unique opportunity for Polish administrative practice to be set against that in other European countries, or international organisations.

Graduates undertake to work for at least five years after successful completion of their training at KSAP. With no need for any additional examination(s) to be passed, they are immediately in a position to receive appointments as Civil Servants, finding employment in posts designated for them by the Prime Minister. To date, KSAP has produced more than 1300 graduates, of whom most continue to work in the Civil Service, or else more broadly in the public sector.

In the whole period since the School's founding, the training programme has been a flexible one, subject to change in line with the needs of public administration. Training offered currently comprises four programme blocks: Administration and Law, International Policy, Economics and Management, and Personal Competence Development. Also, to learn the specifics of working in managerial positions in the Civil Service, each student operates under the Mentor Programme, in this way establishing a relationship with an experienced manager in public administration. An invariable element is the shaping of students' attitudes towards public service. Among other things, this represents an implementation of the OECD Recommendation on Public Integrity (<https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/recommendation-public-integrity/>), as well as a Recommendation of Poland's Head of the Civil Service on the promotion of a culture of integrity in the Civil Service (<https://www.gov.pl/web/sluzbacywilna/zalecenie-szefa-sluzby-cywilnej>).

Since the aim of training students is to ensure that there are candidates made ready for senior positions in public administration, recruitment represents

a major first step in selecting people with the right aptitudes. This is, among others, achieved by way of integrated assessment, with both an Assessment Centre and Motivational Profiling of candidates applied.

Challenges facing the Polish Civil Service (e.g. recovery from COVID-19, war in Ukraine and the energy crisis have resulted in the enrichment of KSAP's Programme with an approach founded upon "strategic leadership" (with a combination of strategic thinking and leadership). This comprises:

- an appreciation of the significance of one's own actions in a broader strategic (social, political and economic) context; as well as impacts they exert on a larger scale;
- the ability to identify the significance of individual phenomena as parts of major trends, with differentiation thus achieved between 'signals' and non-relevant 'noise';
 - a focus on "work at the centre" (key issues to be resolved);
 - personal integrity as a fundamental condition or *sine qua non* – a person remains a whole human being, with no sub-division by reference to social roles, or what is public vs. private;
 - understanding of the role of values, norms and attitudes where public governance is concerned.

KSAP's activities also include caring for those currently working in the civil service and administration. In particular, there are projects operating in support of those in senior roles. Analyses carried out by the National School point to a finding, also noted in other OECD countries, that developing leadership capabilities is of key importance as ways to better respond to complex policy challenges are sought. And that denotes:

- values-based leadership;
- open inclusion;
- organisational stewardship;
- networked collaboration (Gerson 2020: 20).

The National School has been implementing advanced training projects for civil-service executives for 5 years now. In the years 2017-2019 what was involved here was known as the *Argo Top Public Executive* Programme, with 2 editions attended by 120 people, in a venture pursued jointly with the Barcelona-based IESE Business School.

On the other hand, a project still being pursued is called "Synergy" – *A network for cooperation and the exchange of experience between high-level officials from Central and Eastern European Countries* (from Bulgaria, Latvia and Hungary, besides Poland). Objectives here include:

- development of a cooperation network, through exchange of information and solutions regarding effective governance between units of public admin-

istration in the different CEECs; as well as by drawing on the experience of supranational partners;

- the devising of a new training and cooperation programme, whose outcome is raised levels of competence among high-level staff in the civil service;
- the implementation of solutions and best practices as devised and developed, i.e. the above-mentioned training programme, and selected recommendations developed on the basis of it.

The four editions of this project involve 240 representatives of institutions in public administration: 1/2 from Poland, 1/2 from other Project partner countries among the CEECs. The Project is innovative in that it strives to integrate the training part with implementation, while helping develop a network between officials from different countries – a matter of great importance in view of challenges posed to administration that often have a global dimension.

7. Summary

A strong civil service is the foundation of a modern and efficient state. This is why it was decided in Poland 100 years ago that such a Civil Service Corps should be put in place here, too. However, the basis of the administration's work is always properly prepared and trained people. That is why, just a few years after the Civil Service began to be established in Poland, thought was given to ways of training people, especially to work in administration, in managerial positions in particular. The realisation of these intentions, of course adapted to modern times, only emerged as possible on any broader scale after the systemic change of 1989 had taken place. Since then, the activities of the Government (National) School of Administration have been developed. This obviously does not leave KSAP as the only institution in Poland training candidates for officialdom. However, the School does discharge the very important task of supporting leadership competences (and developing them further) among people already holding important posts in public administration. This approach is in line with contemporary trends in the development of civil services – as is confirmed, for example, by the UK's 2017 establishment of a dedicated Civil Service Leadership Academy – in 2022 replaced by the Leadership College for Government. Indeed, the changes adopted by KSAP in regard to both the intramural training of its students and the mounting of training projects for senior civil servants represent manifestations of this same way of thinking on how civil-service resilience can be strengthened yet further in the years ahead.

References

Studies

- Biegeleisen, Leon Władysław. 1929. *Zagadnienia dokształcania urzędników państwowych i komunalnych ze stanowiska usprawnienia administracji publicznej* (Materiały Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej przy Prezesie Rady Ministrów, vol. III: Zagadnienia urzędnicze). Warszawa: nakładem Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej przy Prezesie Rady Ministrów.
- Charakrabarty Bidyut, Chand Prakash. 2012. *Public Administration in a Globalizing World. Theories and Practices*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Demke, Christoph. 2005. *Are civil servants different because they are civil servants?* Luxembourg: Ministère de la Fonction publique et de la Réforme administrative.
- Gadowska, Kaja. 2018. *The Process of Creating Civil Service in Poland*. In: *The Transformations of the Civil Service in Poland in Comparison with International Experience*, (eds.) Jolanta Itrich-Drabarek, Stanisław Mazur, Justyna Wiśniewska-Grzelak, pp. 77–108 (Studies in Politics, Security and Society, vol. 18). Wien: Peter Lang.
- Gerson, Daniel. 2020. Leadership for a high performing civil service: Towards senior civil service systems in OECD countries. OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 40. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Grabski, Władysław. 1929. W sprawie przygotowania wyższych urzędników służb cywilnych. In: *Materiały Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej przy Prezesie Rady Ministrów*, vol. II: *Zagadnienia urzędnicze*, pp. 68–72. Warszawa: nakładem Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej przy Prezesie Rady Ministrów.
- Górski, Piotr. 2011. *Profesjonalizacja administracji państwowej w Polsce 1918–1939. Uwarunkowania społeczne i kulturowe*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Górzyńska, Terasa and Wojciech Drobny (compiled by). 2016. *Polskie prawo urzędnicze – kryzys tożsamości?* Warszawa: C.H. Beck.
- Horton, Sylvia. 2011. Contrasting Anglo-American and Continental European civil service systems. In: *International Handbook on Civil Service System*, (ed.) Andrew Massey, pp. 31–53. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Jaroszyński, Maurycy Z. 1929. Problemy personalne w reformie administracji. *Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej* 11: 1(385)–6(390).
- Krzymkowski, Marek. 2015. Kwalifikacje zawodowe urzędników w II Rzeczypospolitej. *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 67(2): 97–110.
- Liszczyńska, Teresa, Renata Borek-Buchajczyk, Wiesław Perdeus (eds.). 2010. *Prawo urzędnicze*. Lublin: Oficyna wydawnicza Verba.
- Łukaszczuk, Agnieszka. 2014. *Kształtowanie się modelu ustrojowego służby cywilnej w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe.
- Łukaszczuk, Agnieszka. 2010. Służba cywilna w II Rzeczypospolitej. *Przegląd Prawa i Administracji Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* 83(3264): 233–261.
- Miklaszewski, Bolesław. 1929. W sprawie studium kandydatów do wyższej służby administracyjnej. In: *Materiały Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej przy Prezesie Rady Ministrów*, vol. II: *Zagadnienia urzędnicze*, pp. 50–56. Warszawa: nakładem Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej przy Prezesie Rady Ministrów.

- Przygodzki, Jacek. 2019. *Komisje dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej w II Rzeczypospolitej. Studium historycznoprawne*. Wrocław: E-Wydawnictwo. Prawnicza i Ekonomiczna Biblioteka Cyfrowa. Wydział Prawa, Administracji i Ekonomii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Przygodzki, Jacek. 2015. Kształcenie kandydatów na wyższych urzędników administracji w ankiecie Komisji dla Usprawnienia Administracji Publicznej z 1929 r. *Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa* 8(2): 185–198.
- Sidor-Rządkowska, Małgorzata. 2018. Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w organizacjach komercyjnych i w administracji publicznej: Czego biznes może się uczyć od służby cywilnej? *Zarządzanie Publiczne* 1(43): 78–87.
- Zieliński, Wojciech. 2010. Kierunki zmian systemu zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi w służbie cywilnej. *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi* 6: 31–44.
- Z Komisji dla usprawnienia administracji publicznej. Sekcja przygotowania urzędników. 1929. *Gazeta Administracji i Policji Państwowej* 12: 17(441)–19(443).

Online sources

- <https://www.gov.pl/web/sluzbacywilna/zalecenie-szefa-sluzby-cywilnej>. Last accessed: 1.10.2023.
- <https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/recommendation-public-integrity/>. Last accesses: 1.10.2023.