Perception of Work by Public Servants

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Ambiguous situation of planned Administrative Reform in Ukraine

The understanding of complexity and reality of the problems of survival of independent state replaces the euphoria of Ukrainian society connected with the finding of the independence. Since 1995 the broad masses of the population have realised that the redistribution of the property was practically finished. They saw the reality of unemployment, the necessity to transform the individual system of values and the mode of life. The economic and political instability, the slum of living standards, spread of corruption, organised criminality, anormative forms of behaviour practically in all layers of society, the change of social values, the raise of the suicide rates, the lack of the professionalism among managers of various levels, the fall of the government legitimacy, the economic dissociation of a society are the reality for the Ukraine in transition.

The knowledge of social environment conditions and of human resources (those people who will realize reforms and will work in new conditions) is the basic term of success to realise the Administrative Reform in Ukraine. The Administrative Reform will touch administrators and managers first of all. Exactly administrators of a various level, their perception of working conditions, their values, psychological state, skills of rational work under emergency conditions, their capability to recover, traditions and culture of labour activity represent the basic resource of Administrative Reform in the country.

However, it is not the banal problem for Ukraine to get the exact knowledge on the characteristics of own human resources as well as about any other internal socio economic conditions of modern life. Besides even if to assume, that such knowledge will be received, it is completely incomprehensible who and how can use one to conduct large-scale reforms. It is obvious that the above formulated term will not be taken into account during the development and realization of administrative reform. There was made the content analysis study of texts of Russian politics-leaders of twenty’s century (from 1916 till 1996). It was found that all of them have the image of reformator. But the reform initiatives were not born as the results of the “place” and “time” influence, nor under influence of “existence” reality.
The reforms were outgoing from the scenarious and plans of politicians itself and the influence of the external factors were minimal (Batov, 1996).

The fate of the ship in the storm strongly depends upon the skill and self-control of the man at the rudder (top-manager). The state's helmsmen, the top leaders, public servants, managers keep in their hands the fate of the country. That is why much attention should be paid to their skills, professionalism, personal features, their health, their ability to work under continuous stress and to recover after the emergency situations.

**Objectives**

The goal of this study is the exploration of reality of Ukrainian Administrative Reform human resources through the assesment of the following Ukrainian manager’s characteristics connected with their job:

- the perception of work conditions,
- their personal characteristics,
- state of mental and somatic health,
- coping strategies, the habits of recovering after the hard job,
- the influence of organisation type on the psychological state of managers.

Regarding this data we try to answer on the following questions:

- working at what type of organisations makes more pressure on managers and gives them more satisfaction,
- what types of “working culture” are observed among public servants, state employees (managers from budget organisations), private sector managers,
- would public servants be subjects who will principally change the system of public administration.

**Hypotheses**

Significant organisational changes in Ukraine derivates two basic variants for the perception of pressure at work:

1) as the significant sources of pressure, increased danger of life and work conditions,
2) as the source of the opportunity to achieve authority, property, well-being, prosperity.

It is supposed, that the perceived pressure at work is determined essentially by degree of participation in society transformation, by position and role of subject in forming social system. Active participation is characterised by high control and lower perceived pressure at work.
**Method**

*Sampling of organisation*

The perception of working conditions by the civil servants (public administrators) in comparison with the representatives of private enterprises (hereinafter - simply private business) and group of budget organizations (organisations funded through state budget) is considered in this paper. These three groups of organizations execute essentially various roles in transformation of the Ukrainian society. The prospective function (role) of the civil servants consists in design and development of the administrative reform project, plan of ones realization, transition to new style and culture of administrative management of the state at various levels of a state authority. Therefore civil servants are regarded as main target group of administrative reform (AR), as the subjects of AR, as a main human resource of AR. The second group, private business, represents the people accepted new system of values and consistently realizing politics of transition to market economy and capitalist mode of life. Private business is a readout point, leader of main stream direction of Ukrainian society development. The third group represents the conservative majority of the population working in budget organizations, relying on principles of social justice, more or less trusting in parthenalistic function of the state. The "sign representatives" of this group are "teachers" and "power structures" (army, militia, security service). The teachers, system of education provide cultural reproduction of society, his cultural self-identification. “Power structures” have been the guarantee for certain level of public order and security, counteract for development of rough destructive tendencies, criminal chaos and preserv territorial borders of the state. “Teachers” and “Power structures” ensure stability of the society.

**Subjects**

In each of the three groups, samples of managers were obtained by interrogation of the participants of conferences, seminars and courses for professional qualification improvement and also on-site questionnaire administration of a various level in different organizations. Characteristic for each sample are presented in table 1 including the number of males and females, mean age, mean weekly work hours and the percentage of the sample with a higher education or above. In group of the civil servants (26 persons) 20 of them had finished the Ukrainian Academy of Public Administration, Office of the President of Ukraine and had received the diplomas of public administration magister.
Table 1
Professional groups included in the analysis and descriptive statistics of each sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>% higher education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>public servants</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45,2</td>
<td>52,1</td>
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<td>budget employees</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35,6</td>
<td>36,6</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>private business managers</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40,1</td>
<td>54,8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Age is mean years per professional groups, Hours depicted are mean weekly work hours, % higher education is percentage of group sample with higher education or above.

Measures

The research is based on interactional model of occupational stress (Lazarus, 1991; Cooper et al., 1988). It includes four key elements:

− Conditions of work and Sources of pressure (stress),
− Personal characteristics,
− Coping strategies,
− Individual and organisational effects of stress.

The present research involves the data obtained from the questionnaire consisted of the Occupational Stress Indicator Version 2 (OSI 2 - Cooper & Williams, 1996) and Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS - 16 items) (Spector, 1988) along with other measures and demographic items including age, gender, education, weekly work hours and managerial position.

The OSI 2 is a 90 item version of the Occupational Stress Indicator (Cooper, Sloan & Williams, 1988). A self-completion questionnaire, the OSI incorporates four key elements: the source of job pressure (job strains); the characteristics of the individual (personality) who may be experiencing stress; coping strategies; and the effects of stress on the individual, (i.e. job satisfaction, physical and mental well-being) and the organization (e.g. performance, absenteeism, turnover, morale). These elements are measured by the seven component scales of: Sources of Pressure; Type A Behaviour, and Locus of Control (both measuring the characteristics of the individual); Coping; Mental Health, Physical Health, and Job Satisfaction (measuring the effects of stress on the individual and organisation respectively). The theoretical and empirical development of the OSI has been fully documented (Cooper, Sloan & Williams, 1988a; Rees & Cooper, 1992), and its validity demonstrated (e.g. Robertson, Cooper, &
It has been widely used in occupational stress research in a range of occupations (e.g. Rees & Smith, 1991; Tharakan, 1992; Kirkcaldy, Cooper, Shepard & Brown, 1994; Bogg & Cooper, 1995) and translated into several languages for cross-cultural research (e.g. Kirkcaldy & Cooper, 1992; De Moraes, Swan & Cooper, 1993; Cooper, Salamatov, 1995).

The OSI 2 was developed from a reliability and factor structure evaluation of the OSI (Williams, 1996), and contains no new items.

The OSI 2 Job Satisfaction scale comprises 12 items assessing satisfaction with the organization and the job itself. Respondents are asked to rate each item on a 6 point Likert-type rating scale ranging from ‘very much dissatisfaction’ (1) to ‘very much satisfaction’ (6).

The Mental Health scale in the OSI 2 consists of 12 items, with individual response parameters for each question. Respondents are asked to rate items on a 6 point Likert-type rating scale ranging from a negative answer (e.g. never, very untrue, definitely no) at the lower end of the scale to a positive answer (e.g. often, very true, definitely yes) at the upper end of the scale. The role of these questions is to give the user an insight into general mental health, including their resilience or ability to recover from setbacks or problems and their tendency to worry about aspects of work and life.

The Physical Health scale has 6 items on which respondents have to indicate the frequency of occurrence of particular ailments on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘never’ (1) to ‘very frequently’ (6). This scale provides a ‘psychosomatic measure’ and is intended to give a description of stress related complaints (Cooper, et al. 1988).

The OSI 2 Sources of Pressure scale consists of 40 items on which respondents are asked to indicate how much an item is a source of pressure on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘very definitely’ (1) to ‘very definitely not’ (6). The scale can be divided into 8 sub-scales measuring sources of pressure from ‘workload’, ‘relationships’, ‘recognition’, ‘personal responsibility’, ‘organizational climate’, ‘managerial role’, ‘home/work balance’ and ‘daily hassles’.

The Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS) is a 16 item scale intended to assess employee beliefs about their control at work in general, as opposed to their particular job (Spector, 1988). It concerns beliefs about control specifically in the job domain. It has been linked to job strains as job dissatisfaction and negative emotional states at work (Spector, 1997). WLCS measures the perception of self control over the work, the degree of Internal/External personality type self perception in occupational circumstances. Half the items are written in the external and half in the internal direction. Six response choices range
from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Low scores indicate internality (the increase subject control over situation) and high scores represent externality.

**Procedure**

The questionnaires were translated into Russian language using a back-translation technique.

The package of questionnaires were distributed among managers for self completion. It was stipulated to the respondents that the results will be only used to describe groups. The individual data were not represented to the organizations’ officials where respondents worked. As a rule, the interrogation was conducted anonymously and the respondents did not specify their surnames.

**Statistical Analyses**

The statistical analysis of the data was conducted with the help of one way analysis of varience. Using three types of professional groups (public servants, managers from budget organisations and from private business), one way analyses of variance were conducted to compare the scores on the each pressure factors, strategies of stress coping, work locus of control across professional groups for the total sample. This was to assess the importance of belonging to the group of public administrators or private business or budget organisations on the work conditions perception and self perception under the work.

**Results**

One way analysis of varience (ANOVA) of the data for the total sample had shown significant differences between managers working in three described above professional groups on parameters of satisfaction (JI, JO), psychological flexibility (MR), leadership (TD), sources of pressure or stress (PR, PM, PP, PD, PO), strategy of problems overcoming by objective interaction with an environment and rational use of time (CT) and work locus of control (WLCS). The results of this analysis are submitted in table 2.

Managers of budget organizations had the highest average score for each of the eight sources of pressure in comparison with two other role groups. Post hoc analyses (least significant differences tests) revealed that public servants had significantly lower scores for sources of pressure from managerial role (PM), personal responsibility (PP) and daily hassles (PD) compared with budget organizations’ managers and public servants had significantly higher scores on pressure from relationships (PR) compared with private business managers.
Private business managers reported the least pressure on all scales compared to the other two groups. For job satisfaction, public servants and budget organisations' managers reported significantly less pressure compared with private business managers.

Public servants had scored significantly higher in mental health on resilience then managers from budget organisations.

Public servants reported the highest score on desire to succeed and achieve results (TD). It is one of characteristics of type A behaviour. Public servants and managers from budget organisations reported significantly higher score on work locus of control scale compared with private business managers. It means that public servants and budget organisation managers demonstrated higher externality then private business managers.

Public servants scored the highest in stress coping through objective and time management strategies (CT) in comparison with budget organisations and private business.

Discussion

During group discussions concerned their work the civil servants frequently talk about overwork and unfavorable working conditions, regular stressful overload related both to job responsibilities (which are increasingly being expended under conditions of unchanged administrative functions and quick changes in social and public life in transition) and to regular unsystematic structural changes - rapid personnel rotations and turnover in government organizations. They reported about increasing uncertainty, lack of job security, bribery and corruption in place. However, the received data do not specify exclusive complexity and hardness of public servants job. It is perceived as a little bit more difficult only in comparison with the private business managers. As shown in Table 2, public servants scored significantly less sources of pressure then managers from budget organizations and a bit more high stress pressure then private business managers. The increased sensitivity to stress factors of the budget organizations employees is explained, first of all, by low wages, which are paid with significant delay as a rule, reducing of production volumes, personal cutting out because of funding lack. All these explains readiness and desire of budget organizations employees to move at a state service, even in spite of the fact that the average duration of working week in budget organizations comprise 36.6 hours against 52.1 hours on civil service (tab. 1).

The low level of civil servants satisfaction in comparison with private business managers explains desire of the civil servants to move into private business and joint ventures. Quite often this desire happened to be realized because the experience of work in a state
service is considered as dignity for employment in private and commercial firms. But some personal features of civil servants could become an obstacle, certain contradiction for transition from a state service into private business.

The data specify on rather more high level of aspiration to success and achievement of results (TD) in a combination with tendency for externality among civil servants in comparison with the representatives of private business for these samples. The civil servants also demonstrate significantly higher scores on stress coping strategy by objective interaction and time management in comparison with two other groups of managers. Apparently, such behaviour strategy is acceptable and possible in conditions of hierarchical state service organization and could not be realised in the same extent in the extremely dynamic conditions of business activity.

Significant expression of externality among public servants in comparison with business managers specifies that the civil servants have a rather small opportunity to influence events and manage them. It is possible to assume, that it creates certain cognitive dissonance with their aspiration to success and results achievement. Discord between personal features (the aspiration to achievement) and externality of professional position causes rather low satisfaction by work. On the contrary, business managers perceive their working conditions as allowing them to influence and to manage events. The managers of private enterprises are considerably more satisfied with work and feel considerably smaller level of pressure. It meets the earlier data on connection between locus of control, satisfaction and perceived tension [Spector and O'Connell, 1994; Spector, 1997]. Hence, private business managers are more active and successful in society transformation in comparison with civil servants.

The received results allow to put forward a number of the assumptions concerning the position, role and opportunities of civil servants in system transformation public governance. The combination of public servants aspiration for activity, achieving results with externality testifies that their professional activity is focused on active realization of ideas, concepts, principles which are put forward by "system" on a more higher level of service hierarchy. They are basically guided by the external instructions, actively embody them in life, broadcast into social life. That is why the wide participation of civil servants in substantial development and realization of administrative reform seems rather problematic. This assumption is supported also by rather low motivation of civil servants to change the system of their professional activity in comparison with budget organizations employees who teach children, serve in army, work on state production enterprises because civil servants feel much lower level of pressure, professional tension at work in comparison with managers of budget.
organizations. Maybe, inside existing system of state service there are extremely limited opportunities for civil servants to participate actively in design, development and realization of new style and culture of administration management oriented on broader satisfaction of citizens needs. The basic political decisions and their consecutive implementation are necessary for realization of declared administrative reform.

The comprehension by the civil servants of their work specificity and own psychological features in comparison with other professional and social groups will allow to interact with other professional groups more consciously, will promote self-identification of state service as subject of system transformation of society.

The reformers of modern Ukraine should take into account an internal occupational multiculture of a society, rather low level of concern by the personal responsibility and high level of externality of the ambitious Public Administrators, high risk of transition to the anormative forms of behaviour as a way of adaptation to modern socio economic conditions. The perception of occupational position and conditions of work in public service pose a series of challenges to those who should be the actors of democratic reforms in Ukraine and to the transformation process itself.

References:


Table 2
One way analysis of variance of work perception by managers, grouped on a role of their organizations in society transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Public Servants</th>
<th>Budget Organisations Managers</th>
<th>Private Business Managers</th>
<th>Mean sq Effect</th>
<th>Mean sq Error</th>
<th>F(df1,2)</th>
<th>p-level</th>
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<td><strong>1. EFFECTS: JOB SATISFACTION</strong></td>
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<td>1.1 SATISFACTION WITH THE JOB ITSELF</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>24,65ab</td>
<td>25,32b</td>
<td>26,81ab</td>
<td>80,92</td>
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<td>3,27</td>
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<td>JO</td>
<td>22,62a</td>
<td>22,01b</td>
<td>24,89ab</td>
<td>125,92</td>
<td>30,01</td>
<td>4,20</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>18,19</td>
<td>18,10</td>
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<td>23,04</td>
<td>25,43</td>
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<td>2.2 MENTAL RESILIENCE</td>
<td>MR</td>
<td>18,62a</td>
<td>16,69a</td>
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<td>53,98</td>
<td>13,75</td>
<td>3,92</td>
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<td>MW</td>
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<td>12,30</td>
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<td>14,56</td>
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<td>10,73</td>
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<td><strong>4. A. PERSON: TYPE AB BEHAVIOUR</strong></td>
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<td>11,33</td>
<td>64,19</td>
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<td><strong>4.B PERSON: LOCUS OF CONTROL - INFLUENCE</strong></td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>10,23</td>
<td>11,58</td>
<td>11,56</td>
<td>25,57</td>
<td>11,75</td>
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<td><strong>5. SOURCES OF PRESSURE</strong></td>
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<td>5.1 STRESS FROM WORKLOAD</td>
<td>PW</td>
<td>18,65</td>
<td>19,76</td>
<td>16,67</td>
<td>21,66</td>
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<td>5.2 STRESS FROM RELATIONSHIPS</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>26,73a</td>
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<td>25,56ab</td>
<td>331,05</td>
<td>53,89</td>
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<td>5.3 STRESS FROM HOME AND WORK BALANCE</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>17,00</td>
<td>19,12</td>
<td>16,70</td>
<td>77,56</td>
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<td>5.4 STRESS FROM MANAGERAL ROLE</td>
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<td>10,27a</td>
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<td>13,95</td>
<td>3,11</td>
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<td>5.5 STRESS FROM PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>12,35a</td>
<td>13,96ab</td>
<td>12,48b</td>
<td>55,74</td>
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V. Salamatov
Table 2 (Continue)

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<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Public Servants</th>
<th>Budget Organisations Managers</th>
<th>Private Business Managers</th>
<th>Mean sqr Effect</th>
<th>Mean sqr Error</th>
<th>F(df1,2)</th>
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<tr>
<td>5.6 STRESS FROM HASSLES AT WORK</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>11,08a</td>
<td>13,39ab</td>
<td>10,56b</td>
<td>110,38</td>
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<td>5.7 STRESS FROM RECOGNITION</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>13,23</td>
<td>13,61</td>
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<td>22,67</td>
<td>16,78</td>
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<td>5.8 STRESS FROM ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE</td>
<td>PO</td>
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<td>13,85a</td>
<td>12,70a</td>
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<td>6. STRESS COPING</td>
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<td>6.1 COPING USING CONTROL</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>28,00ab</td>
<td>25,53a</td>
<td>25,63b</td>
<td>90,38</td>
<td>17,92</td>
<td>5,04</td>
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<td>6.2 COPING USING SOCIAL SUPPORT</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>16,35</td>
<td>16,76</td>
<td>14,52</td>
<td>11,02</td>
<td>10,68</td>
<td>1,03</td>
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<td>7. WORK LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE</td>
<td>WLCS</td>
<td>55,65a</td>
<td>54,37b</td>
<td>46,29ab</td>
<td>246,70</td>
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<td>Quality of Life</td>
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<td>2,71ab</td>
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*Note:* Superscript letters indicate which professional group means were significantly different from each other at p < 0.05 (post hoc Least Significant Difference tests)