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CIVIL SERVANTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE

РОЗВИТОК НАВИЧОК КРИТИЧНОГО МИСЛЕННЯ ДЕРЖАВНИХ СЛУЖБОВЦІВ В УКРАЇНІ

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Nowadays modern requirements for civil servants are obtaining both hard and soft skills and abilities. Skills are required to evaluate effectively the information used in the decision-making process in their work. Civil servants' training in Ukraine requires a seemingly obvious and simple set of competencies, namely: thinking outside the box and critical thinking, the ability to work not to ensure processes, but to achieve results. A civil servant with good analytical skills will more easily detect contradictions in information and will most accurately determine its sufficiency. The civil servant in public administration must be able to argue to keep to his/her standpoint, using not only logic, but also intuition and empathy, which will allow him to be sensitive to the consumers' the needs. The question of the lack of effective development of civil servants' critical thinking and thinking outside the box remains open, as these soft skills are required for from the easiest tasks such as writing answers in job applications, personality tests or interview, and finally, to managing an entire department in government agencies.

Analysis of recent research and publications

Among the domestic researchers who studied the issues of critical thinking and thinking outside the box, it is necessary to highlight E. Pometun, I. Sushchenko, L. Pilipchatina, I. Baranova, N. Vukina and N. Dementievska, R. Kalytchak, G. Kharlamova, O. Klimentkova, O. Lutsenko, S. Paschenko, V. Pavlenko and O. Senyk and others. Among foreign scientists who dedicated their studies to these skills is worth noting R. Ennis, A. Doyle, R. Paul, L. Elder, R. Atanasiu, L. Vaughn and others.

Шепель М.Є., Мартинюк А.О., Пульча Д.О. Розвиток навичок критичного мислення державних службовців в Україні. Оглядова стаття.

У статті визначено сутність та приклади критичного та нестандартного мислення, досліджено різні способи розвитку цих м'яких навичок у державних службовців, виявлено відмінності критичного від звичайного мислення, що доводить важливість його розвитку у сучасних робітників державних органах. Розглянуто переваги нестандартного мислення на роботі та розроблено рекомендації для їх покращення.

Ключові слова: критичне мислення, нестандартне мислення, державний службовець, державний орган

Shepel M.Ye., Martyniuk A.O., Pulcha D.O. Civil Servants' Critical Thinking Skills Development in Ukraine. Review article.

The article identifies the essence and examples of critical thinking and thinking outside the box, explores different ways of developing these soft skills among civil servants, reveals the differences between critical and ordinary thinking, which proves the importance of its development in modern employees of government bodies. The advantages of thinking outside the box at work are considered and recommendations for their improvement are developed.

Keywords: critical thinking, thinking outside the box, civil servant, state body

Unsolved aspects of the problem

At present, civil service personnel in Ukraine are not adequately aware of the importance of developing critical thinking and thinking outside the box. To date, professional training programmes for civil servants do not include separate blocks for learning these soft skills in order to improve their competencies. Nowadays professional training programmes include courses for soft skills development into selective blocks, but not into compulsory ones.

The aim of the article is to analyze the impact of civil servants' critical thinking and thinking outside the box development on their professional careers and to find ways to develop these soft skills in government agencies.

The main part

According to research literature critical thinking is the ability to analyze and evaluate the consistency of reasoning. Critical thinking is by no means a new concept, in fact its origin dates back to ancient Greece: Socrates and his maieutics, Plato and his dialectics, Aristotle and his rhetoric. Critical sense helps to distinguish between mediocre and brilliant arguments, to distinguish valuable information from unnecessary,

to eliminate superstitions, to find reasonable conclusions, to generate alternatives, to improve communication and, finally, to be the owners of our thinking and act accordingly. Although it is a cognitive activity closely related to the mind, the goal of critical thinking is action-oriented and applicable to every aspect of our daily lives, including problem-solving or decision-making, so its sphere of influence varies from personal to civil service.

The examples of critical thinking are:

- Experimentation (lab / hypothesis testing);
- Social research
- Data interpretation and explanation;
- Creative problem solving;
- Identify the issue;
- Come up with alternative solutions;
- Learning to cope with uncertainty and embracing it as a learning tool [1].

Doctors Richard Paul and Linda Elder [2], researchers at The Critical Thinking Organization, have determined seven universal intellectual standards that must be applied to thinking every time you want to evaluate the quality of reasoning (figure 1).

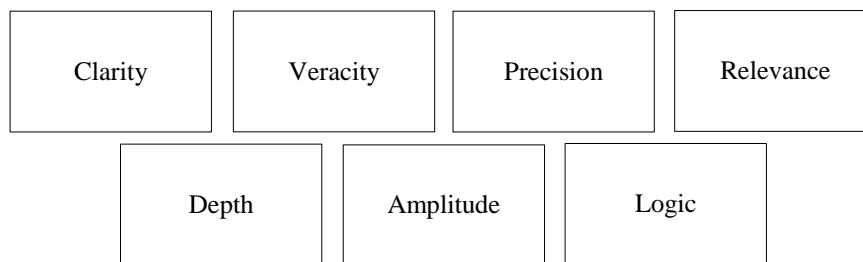


Figure 1. Universal Intellectual Standards of Critical Thinking

Source: compiled by authors on materials [2].

They are the following and each one is related to its predecessor:

- Clarity. If reasoning is not clear, the person receiving it cannot assess whether the idea is true or relevant, nor can they launch counterarguments. In this case, it is convenient to ask questions such as "Could you give me an example?" that help to understand, and even visualize the idea.
- Veracity. A proposition can be clear, but not exact. The vagueness and ambiguities with enemies of a solid message. Throwing questions like "what is the source?" we make sure that the proposition, if it comes from reliable sources, is true.
- Precision. A proposition such as "That girl is tall enough" may be true and true, but it lacks precision. Faced with a statement of these characteristics, more details must be requested: "Can you be more specific" or "how tall exactly?"
- Relevance. A proposition can be clear, truthful and precise, but not pertinent. By this we mean whether it is directly related to, for example, the topic under discussion. To ensure its relevance, we can question the interlocutor about how they connect with the topic.

- Depth. A proposition can be clear, truthful, precise, and relevant, but lacking depth. For example, the phrase "No to drugs", used to discourage drug use, deals with a very complex problem in a superficial way. "Could you give me arguments?" is the question to ask in this case.
- Amplitude. A proposition can be clear, truthful, precise, pertinent, and profound, but not broad enough by not taking other points of view into account. Questions like "is there another way to approach this problem?" help to gain perspective.
- Logic. A proposition can be clear, truthful, precise, pertinent, deep, and broad, but not logical. When we argue we put different thoughts in order. If these thoughts are mutually supportive, the thought is logical. If instead they are not supported or are contradictory, then the combination is not logical.

Reference literature regards critical thinking as the process of analysing information in order to make a logical decision about the extent to which you believe something to be true or false [3].

Thus, in a narrow sense, critical thinking is interpreted as a correct assessment of statements. Canadian professor Ralph H. Johnson defines critical

thinking as "a special type of mental activity that allows a person to make rational judgments about the proposed point of view or pattern of behavior" [4]. Close to this formulation is the opinion of Robert Ennis, who characterizes critical thinking as "intelligent reflexive thinking aimed at making an informed decision about why to trust and how to act" [5].

In a more meaningful sense, critical thinking is the process of thinking carefully about a subject or idea, without allowing feelings or opinions to affect a person [6].

And here sociability comes to the fore. To find a mutually acceptable solution, one has to communicate with different people, to find his/her own approach to everyone.

Critical thinking is often underestimated as a urgent competence in the evaluation and professional development of civil servants. It is often believed that the experience they have gained is enough to make the right decisions at this level. And even if it turns out that this is not the case – the negative consequences for decision-making do not immediately become apparent.

Thinking outside the box is the ability to think outside the generally accepted norms and rules. This does not mean that one needs to break all the laws, including the criminal code or norms of public morality, they still need to be followed, but there are rules that can be violated. Standard thinking, or as it is also called in psychology – convergent, involves actions according to strictly defined standards and algorithms.

However, even in science, the highest achievements are achieved by those who allow themselves some non-standard. They do not accept common, imposed beliefs, they all try to test themselves to have their own opinion of what is really good and what is bad. For a person with non-standard thinking, finding a solution means not just finding the right answer, but several answer options.

Is there room for thinking outside the box and decisions in the civil service? For example, if we talk about legal departments, we cannot do without creative thinking in this work. New laws and bylaws are passed every day. To take them into account and generalize, you need non-standard and critical thinking. It is also necessary in working with citizens who apply, for example, to the agency for physical culture and sports. After all, everyone has their own, individual problems that need to be delved into to find a solution.

Thinking outside the box means dropping everything there is and looking for unusual solutions to common problems. It tries to go beyond the obvious or what everyone sees. It approaches the problem differently.

But why should civil servants use thinking outside the box?

There are five benefits of thinking outside the box:

When a problem does not seem to have a solution, thinking outside the box means to come up with a completely different approach that can be the key to finding a solution that no one else could see. In this way, you expand the possibilities.

This will help step out of one's own comfort zone: the place where one feels comfortable or comfortable, but where nothing surprising can happen.

It will develop or nurture one's own creativity and critical thinking skills much more.

It will help a person learn a lot. Every time ones perform an action, he/she generates a result. And sometimes one may not get the desired result, but one gets something. If the result is successful, one will continue to look for ways to apply it in other situations. And if it was not successful or simply the result was different from what one has expected, one will use the knowledge and experience gained in problems or situations similar to those he/she faces.

And of course, with all of this, a specialist will stand out from the crowd. In fact, thinking outside the box is considered one of the most valuable skills for any leader. Thus, only those who think differently will be able to offer their followers new opportunities for success.

We offer some ways to train a specialists' mind to think outside this imaginary box:

- Challenge the status quo regularly. Always ask yourself: "Why?", "How can we improve/solve/innovate?", "What if..." Don't stop thinking about a problem as soon as you find the first, most obvious solution that comes to your mind. Think of alternative solutions that require a completely different approach. Something that worked for me in this sense always asked itself: "Let's see, any normal person will solve this problem this way and that" (and I am listing them). And after that, I set myself the task of finding other solutions or other ingenious ways to solve the same problem. This may interest you: Least known and most effective method of achieving your goals.
- Look for separate or opposite viewpoints. Why? Because this is one of the best ways to consider all possible alternatives. This may interest you: how should/can you be different from others?
- Do what requires creativity. Like what? How to freely write, draw, make mind map and more. It doesn't matter that you are not very good at these creative pursuits. The joke is to start stimulating and energizing creativity. Even walking can help. A recent study by Stanford University and Santa Clara University has found that free walking unlocks your creativity both while walking and after walking. So give it a try. Changing the space or environment also helps a lot. There are those who say that even bathing gives the best ideas.
- Read and consume content that is not your usual choice. For example, if you are reading books about personal growth, choose a thriller. It will help you change your surroundings and instill new perspectives in your mind. And that idea can also be extrapolated to other questions, such as learning a different religion, asking for a template you have never asked for, or attending a course that never crossed your mind.
- Reconceptualize the problem. Go back to review a problem or project that you have had in the past and

- ask yourself how you could have solved or reworked it using a totally different methodology.
- Change your daily routine. Creativity surfaces when you are not stuck in the same routine. Even the smallest changes can have good results to get you out of the ordinary and promote creative thinking. You can start by changing the order of your activities or even the way you do them, or simply doing something spontaneous and different.
 - Brainstorming without limits. There are no silly or absurd ideas. Allow yourself to bring up even the most random ideas or concepts. Some even recommend asking children for advice because they do not yet have inherited or preconceived ideas. So ask a little one how he or she would solve the problem.
 - Correct your limiting beliefs. Be careful when you say things like: "This is the way they taught me", "This is the way I have always done it", or "This is how everyone does it". These phrases are the worst enemy of this mode of thinking because they are mentally limiting you to explore new horizons. Rather, faced with these preconceptions, ask yourself: why have we always thought or acted this way? We also advise you reading the following books: "Creativity, Inc. Overcoming the Unseen Forces that Stand in the Way of True Inspiration" by Ed Catmull [7], Amy Wallace and "The Creativity Thinking Handbook" by Chris Griffiths, Melina Costi [8]. Do Self-Improvement and Self-Help Books Really Work?
 - Do exercises that stimulate creative thinking. You can do certain exercises to think outside the box, just do a Google search for the term "exercises to think outside the box" and practice a few.
- To understand what critical thinking is, it is necessary to compare it with ordinary thinking (table 1).

Table 1. Comparing Ordinary Thinking to Critical Thinking

Ordinary Thinking	Critical Thinking
Guessing	Estimating
Preferring	Evaluating
Grouping	Classifying
Believing	Assuming
Inferring	Inferring logically
Associating concepts	Grasping principles
Noting relationships	Noting relationships among other relationships
Supposing	Hypothesizing
Offering opinions without reasons	Offering opinions with reasons
Making judgments without criteria	Making judgments with criteria

Source: compiled by authors on materials [1].

A civil servant is a citizen of Ukraine who holds a civil service position in a public authority, another state body, its staff (secretariat), receives a salary from the state budget and exercises the powers established for this position, directly related to the performing tasks and functions of such a state body, as well as adheres to the of civil service principles [9].

As it is known a critical thinking person is able to recognize and define a problem; productively observe and carefully listen to others; structure ideas; use different sources of information, in order to find necessary background; ask corresponding questions; detect and explore the beliefs, assumptions and opinions of both own and other people; assess the validity of allegations and argument; see the difference between rational and irrational arguments; to make Solomon's decisions and express wise judgements; find efficient solutions [10].

We believe that every leader, for example, when hiring, and every month in the future should hold a meeting where the problem of developing critical thinking is discussed. Describing these five steps for staff members to help them make good decisions through the application of critical thinking and setting a situation for decision can significantly improve the civil servants' soft skills.

- The problem formulation. In other words, civil servants need to know what to look for. It is not

always as easy as it sounds. If you want to try a new method of solving a problem, your desire may be dictated by various factors, for example, the hope for a quick result. But if you approach a situation with a clear idea of what exactly you want to achieve with this method, be it an urgent task or improving your technical skills, it will help you critically reflect on the problem and understand if this method suits your needs.

- Collecting information. Having a complete understanding of the problem will help you better understand what really matters in this matter. If you are trying, for example, to solve an urgent task of using the E-Governance system, you can ask an expert for advice or look for reviews from other people. Gathering information will help you see the different options and thus get closer to making an informed decision.
- Using information. You need to ask yourself critical questions. When faced with a decision to make, ask yourself: How does it work? What are the options for the development of events? Does the interpretation of the information sound logical? Take a situation in which your boss promises you a promotion. It is worth pondering: how is the approach to this increase formed? Can I really count on this to happen? Based on the obvious

facts, is it logical to think that I can confidently get it?

- The consequences consideration. Imagine that it is election time. And you choose a candidate based on his/her promises to make gasoline cheaper for drivers. It sounds great at first glance. But what about the long-term impact on the environment? If gasoline becomes readily available, it could cause severe air pollution in your area – these are unintended consequences to consider.
- Exploring other viewpoints. One should ask why is a candidate's position with opposing views appealing to so many people. Even if you disagree with everything, he/she says, exploring all possible points of view can explain why some strategies that you do not find attractive may work for others. This

will help you analyze all the options, evaluate your own choices and, in the end, make an informed decision.

This technique is just one of the tools that, of course, will not free civil servants from the need to make difficult decisions, but will help them make the right choice more often. Critical thinking helps us sift through the sea of information and find what we are looking for.

All these above-mentioned functions are also very important for a civil servant in public administration and are key in this field of activity.

A. Doyle defines the following Top Critical Thinking Skills, which, in our opinion, are decisive, for example, when selecting a candidate for a particular position in local or public authorities (table 2).

Table 2. Top Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking skills	Requirments for the specialist	The skill content
Analysis	Part of critical thinking is the ability to carefully examine something, whether it is a problem, a set of data, or a text. People with analytical skills can examine information, understand what it means, and properly explain to others the implications of that information	Asking thoughtful questions, data analysis, research, interpretation, judgment, questioning evidence, recognizing patterns, skepticism
Communication	Often, an employee will need to share your conclusions with his/her employers or with a group of colleagues. The specialists need to be able to communicate with others to share his/her ideas effectively. He/she might also need to engage critical thinking in a group. In this case, the professional will need to work with others and communicate effectively to figure out solutions to complex problems	Active listening, assessment, collaboration, explanation, interpersonal, presentation, teamwork, verbal communication, written communication
Creativity critical thinking often involves creativity and innovation	The specialist might need to spot patterns in the information he/she are looking at or come up with a solution that no one else has thought of before. All of this involves a creative eye that can take a different approach from all other approaches	Flexibility, conceptualization, curiosity, imagination, drawing connections, inferring, predicting, synthesizing, vision
Open-mindedness	To think critically, the specialist needs to be able to put aside any assumptions or judgments and merely analyze the information you receive. He/she need to be objective, evaluating ideas without bias	Diversity, fairness, humility, inclusiveness, objectivity, observation; reflection
Problem solving	Problem solving is another critical thinking skill that involves analyzing a problem, generating and implementing a solution, and assessing the success of the plan. Employers don't simply want employees who can think about information critically. They also need to be able to come up with practical solutions.	Attention to detail, clarification, decision making, evaluation, being grounded, identifying patterns, innovation

Source: compiled by authors on materials [11].

From our point of view, there are the following reasons why it is necessary to develop critical thinking skills of civil servants in public administration in Ukraine:

First of all, we create a civil society, where public organizations are able to solve problems that cannot to be solved by state bodies. But a public organization consists of citizens and individuals endowed with civic competences, which are inextricably linked with critical thinking.

Second reason is the absence of democratic traditions in our society. A totalitarian regime does not need critical thinking citizens. We have never developed critical thinking, and those who naturally had it and used it were under the pressure of this regime. The so-called «traditional» pedagogy, or rather authoritarian, was aimed at educating an obedient citizen, not a thinking one. For our stereotypical thinking, even today, the term "critical" often means "to criticize" (that is, to say what is bad), and not to think.

In order to develop critical thinking in civil servants, it is necessary:

- To teach them to watch, not listen. Collect data through personal inspections and observations as much as possible, and not from the explanations of the subordinates responsible for this area.
- To structure classes with civil servants in such a way that each student can connect the information received with his/her own experience and draw his/her own conclusions;
- To build the training programme so that it should include cases with recipients of public services on the development of "the ability to ask questions" and "assessment of statements".
- To teach the leader or future leader to predict the course of events in the future based on the analysis of the past (for example, analysis of the trend of statistics).
- To include in the retraining programme the writing of essays on topical issues for students, which can be an effective method of developing the ability of civil servants to express their opinion on a specific topic and the ability to reflect on a specific topic or idea.
- When planning and conducting classes, to use the professional experience of civil servants, practice-oriented exercises and tasks for the possibility of immediate application of critical thinking in matters of local government and interaction with the population and colleagues.

Also, in the work of a civil servant, writing of reports takes a significant place. So here is recommendations for effective report writing using critical and thinking outside the box:

Structure characteristics. Well-structured report should begin from the title page, than it can include contents page, then introduction (5-10% of the overall volume), where reasonably to distinguish the purpose, tasks or hypothesis of your report. Main (central) part of report should include key information – base conceptions, facts and arguments, which illustrate and prove your point of view, accenting and explaining revealed contradictions instead of suppression them. Use examples, statistics, tables and illustrations.

Report usually finishes by conclusions or summary (5%) where it is generalizing the results and discuss if the purpose and tasks were realized and why, if the hypotheses were confirmed. All supplementary information should be taking away to appendix to free the report from the overload by excessive details.

To write well-structured report it needs to involve such writing abilities:

- Ability to draft an outline plan.
- Ability to formulate the head of report.
- Skills to write abstract if the report is long.
- Ability to set up the goal and the tasks of your report.
- Skills to structure materials and to design the plan of your report.
- Ability to formulate conclusions, to add necessary appendix.

Content characteristics. Orientation on reader's/reviewer's needs, awareness about qualification level and request of potential or actual reader/reviewer.

Referencing and citation all texts, thoughts, illustrative materials which were have not created by yourself. Responsible citation answers the questions: "Who?", "What?", "When?" and "Where?". Do not copy word for word when making notes. Try reading a paragraph at time and then summarize the main points using your own words. This alternative way of referring to an author's ideas is called paraphrasing and is a way in which you can avoid plagiarism.

The specialist should be aware about his/her attitudes, expectations and beliefs in the matter which he/she describes in the essay, assignment, article or other text. The specialist should to be honest with him/her and ask himself/herself if he/she really wants to examine this matter or he/she simply seeks the ways to confirm my preferences and views. If something was not solved in the specialists' report he/she should not be afraid to acknowledge it in the summary and admit that it needs more researches to explain, find out or confirm.

In our opinion thinking skills development is connected with developing writing skills. In this case using and developing academic style of writing is important. It has the following characteristics

The following characteristics are typical of academic writing:

- Use of correct grammar and punctuation;
- Uses cautious language;
- Avoids subjective and emotive language;
- Uses linking words and phrases;
- Uses correct referencing;
- Clear and concise language;
- Formal writing style.

The specialist should define the main concepts and hold them up to finish and do not change the key terms even to avoid tautology. As research and theories are being developed and updated all the time, the specialists tend to use cautious or tentative language. The language used in academic writing should reflect the amount of strength of evidence to support a topic or claim [1].

Conclusions

Summing up, it is necessary to emphasize that it is possible and necessary to develop critical thinking of employees in the field of public administration. This is a skill that requires constant work. Critical thinking is defined by the skills of collecting, processing and applying information in order to choose the best way to achieve a certain goal or to resolve a difficult situation. Critical thinking is about how to navigate a huge information flow, about how to question incoming information. It is important for civil servants to double-check information, not to be afraid to look for primary sources and compare several sources.

Heads of departments need to conduct trainings with subordinates, give various situations that require the work of critical thinking, as well as give numerous

advice for the development of these soft skills in civil servants.

Civil servants have different levels of development of this competence and therefore it is important to determine in advance what exactly needs to be formed and developed: knowledge, content-value or

behavioral component of the "critical thinking" competence. The development of critical thinking and thinking outside the box in adults in the system of advanced training and retraining requires special attention to the creation of a meaningful and supportive educational environment.

Abstract

The article is dedicated to the development of critical thinking and thinking outside the box of public services in Ukraine. The main idea of the article is that without sufficient development of these soft skills, a civil servant is not able to effectively make modern decisions. Therefore, it is important for department heads to conduct special trainings, meetings, and to share tips for improving these skills, as in Ukraine the level of civil servants' critical thinking and thinking outside the box is very low, as these skills are provided during the vocational training at a very low level. Emphasis is also placed on the consideration of basic universal standards of critical thinking, which consistently describe its nature. Attention is paid to the comparison of critical thinking and ordinary thinking, which shows that critical thinking needs to be developed not only in employees, but also in each person.

The advantages of the civil servants' thinking outside the box are also considered, which confirm the need to improve it, as this thinking is used in various areas of public administration. Finding opposing points of view, rethinking problems, brainstorming without restrictions, performing exercises that stimulate creative thinking and other developed ways help to train the mind to think outside the box. It was found that even to write ordinary effective reports in a short time, civil servants must have the skills of critical thinking and thinking outside the box.

Five steps have been developed for civil servants to help them make the right decisions through critical thinking: problem statement, information gathering, using information, considering consequences, and study of other viewpoints. Critical thinking skills play a role in selecting a candidate for a position, as the ability to analyze, communicate with colleagues, solve problems, openness and creativity provide significant advantages over candidates in which these skills are not developed. Thus, the development of critical and non-standard thinking of civil servants in Ukraine is at a very low level and requires that special blocks of knowledge about these skills appear in professional training programmes.

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