

Strategic Thinking in New Public Management

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Abstract

Free – market economy raises new requirements to the public management. As underlying and fundamental aim of the new public management (NPM) reform program is to transform management of public organizations into a business-like management. NPM incorporates the importation of private sector management systems and techniques into the public services.

The aim of the paper is after analysing IOP (Innovations, organization and personnel) public management model to find out Kaunas municipality heads' attitude to strategic personnel management as one of the structural parts of the IOP model.

The article has the following structure. After the introduction, the first part examines the importance of strategic management in public organizations. The second part analyses strategic management in Lithuania's public organizations. The third part presents a literature review of new public management, its international applicability and IOP public management model. The fourth part is devoted to the empirical research "Strategic personnel management at the Kaunas municipality". Finally, practical and theoretical issues are discussed.

Keywords

public organizations, new public management, IOP public management model, strategic management, strategic personnel management

Introduction

New public management (NPM) is trying to adopt the efficient business organizations management elements in public administration management. NPM has been around for well over a decade and its key features are well known. However, the term persists, as it is useful to describe the particular features of this developing management model. Moreover, although NPM is well established in the countries such as the UK and The Netherlands, it can still be described as "new" with respect to its introduction into some countries. Indeed the adoption of NPM by increasing numbers of countries worldwide has been described as "one of the most striking international trends in public administration" (Hood 1991, 3).

Aucoin (1990) points to the "internationalisation of public management" and argues that in almost every government with developed political systems and highly institutionalised administrations there is a new emphasis on the organizational designs for public management. The OECD, which is committed to a view of international convergence on a "common reform agenda", aims to foster NPM in all member countries (OECD, 1995). Implicit in such views is

the belief that NPM is a public administration management model that is universally applicable regardless of social, cultural and political nature of the intended host country.

In contrast with the arguments of Osborne and Gaebler (1992) that there exists a single NPM model, Hood (1995) rejects this view and argues instead that there is actually a range of alternative future patterns of NPM that will adjust to the developing organization of the public services. Ferlie *et al.* (1996) also see Osborne and Gaebler's view as simplistic and over deterministic, as for them the public management movement has had a highly variable international impact. They also identified variants that have emerged in different countries. The nature of the variation, they argue, seem to be dependent upon the basis of local history, culture and political and managerial leadership both of the state and of the public organization concerned.

The new public management model, which underpins the pursuit of the "3 e's" – economy, efficiency, and effectiveness – may offer the solution to public administration problems (Sozen and Shaw, 2002).

Public organizations management problems in Lithuania were analysed by Raipa *et al.*, (2001, 2002), Masiulis (2005), Puskorius (2002).

Research object of this paper is new public management. The aim of the paper is after analysing IOP public management model to find out Kaunas municipality heads' attitude to strategic personnel management as one of the structural parts of IOP model. Research methods consist of the analysis of scientific literature, logical analysis, analysis of statistical data, and conclusion formulating.

The importance of strategic management in public organizations

There is already a considerable body of experience and literature, which discusses how "reinvented" or "high performance" government organizations tend to look and operate. Extracting their essential characteristics, we think that a high-performance government organization is marked by the following:

- It is vision, mission and goal directed with continuous performance measurement as a central value;
- It prefers multi-skilled workers rather than those of narrow expertise because jobs are enriched, employees given greater latitude and discretion;
- A flatter, more flexible one replaces the tall and rigid organizational hierarchy. As a result, decision-making in a high-performance government organization is dispersed rather than centralized;
- Because of job enrichment and dispersed decision-making, a policy promoting continuous learning at all organizational levels is a priority;
- Worker involvement in decisions is stressed, new ideas encouraged, and pay is linked to performance;
- Managerial control is maintained less by exercise of formal authority, and more by leadership through an example and continuous effort to clarify organizational vision, mission, goals and values.

Effective managers around the world recognise the role that strategic management plays in their organization's performance.

Strategic management is that set of managerial decisions and actions that determines the long-run performance of an organization. It entails all of the basic management functions; that is, the organization's strategies must be planned, organised, put into effect and controlled.

The strategic management process is an eight-step process that encompasses strategic planning, implementation and evaluation. These eight steps are (Aldag & Stearns 1987, 206):

1. Identify the organization's current mission, objectives and strategies;
2. Analyse the environment;
3. Identify the opportunities and threats;
4. Analyse the organization's resources;
5. Identify strengths and weaknesses;
6. Formulate strategies;
7. Implement strategies;
8. Evaluate results.

Studies of the effectiveness of strategic planning and management have found that, as with planning in general, companies with formal strategic management systems had higher financial returns than did companies with no such system (Wilson, 1989).

Today, strategic management has moved beyond for-profit business organizations to include governmental agencies, hospitals, and other not-for-profit public organizations. Although strategic management in public organizations has not been as well researched as that in for-profit or business organizations, it is important for these organizations as well.

Strategic management in Lithuania's public sector

Among the strategic objectives of the Lithuania's National Audit Office we can find two connected with public sector management (National Audit Office of the Republic of Lithuania).

1. *To promote implementation of modern financial management and control systems in the public sector.*

Implementation of internationally recognised standards and best practices changed the main purpose of the public audit. Now the purpose of the audit is not merely to look for mistakes and deficiencies but also to help improve public sector transparency and accountability, efficient management of finances and reliable control.

Strengthening of internal control is one of the ways of improving accounting and accountability. By conducting financial audit we assess audited entities internal control procedures – are they sufficient and effective. Regularity and effectiveness of the use of state budget appropriations assigned to public institutions depend on whether internal control procedures detect and correct mistakes. In those institutions where internal control operates effectively detailed audit reduces significantly. The benefit for the State is obvious – economy

and regularity of the use of state budget funds are ensured and at the same time public audit costs are being reduced.

2. *To promote result oriented management in public sector entities.*

Beginning in 2000, programme-based budgeting is being implemented in Lithuania, Appropriations Managers are encouraged to orient activities towards results. Improved strategic planning methodology and the developing framework are related to Result Oriented Management. Encouragement of Result Oriented Management in the public sector is closely related to strengthening of internal control systems and more effective use of funds.

At present, Result Oriented Management is hardly implemented in public sector in Lithuania. Not all the institutions set programme objectives that reflect impact on society and demonstrate services provided. Evaluation criteria and supporting management system that allow evaluation of public sector programmes are not yet fully developed. Responsibility of Appropriation Managers for the results is often insufficient and unreliable.

From 2001, the National Audit Office of Lithuania has conducted performance audits aimed at providing recommendations for audited entities encouraging them to achieve effectiveness, efficiency and economy in the use of public funds. Therefore in the coming years increased attention will be devoted to improving Result Oriented Management approach in the public sector entities. Following this objective the National Audit Office will carry out not only audits focusing on programme implementation, but also audits focusing on the design of the very programmes taking into consideration the log frame of the programme, the system of evaluation criteria, and organization of the system of monitoring. Performance audit conducted by the National Audit Office will focus on such areas as monitoring of the budget program implementation, reporting to public on the program results, also on the reliability of Performance Indicator information relating to the results achieved provided in the activity reports. The National Audit Office will assess progress of public sector entities in the development of Result Oriented Management during a study in 2006.

Though representatives of Lithuania public management focus on strategic management, under our opinion, this transition can linger, because:

- Lithuania development according to the regions is inadequate, therefore strategic management arrival to the periphery can linger;
- Public organizations and authorities of large cities will install strategic management in the shortest time;
- Application of strategic management in public management will depend on the dominating ruling party in both Seimas (Parliament) and municipalities;
- Implementation of strategic management can be stopped due to deficit of money that is needed for data collection, training, employees certification, information spread;
- In case of economic and financial disorders, the strategic management can come to the second place.

Financial prospects are a priority field in Lithuania. Most functionaries focus on made expenses, irrespective of what results they give. There is no system, which would allow evaluation of the efficiency of using money. In meantime, business organizations can easily calculate what results are received from one or another project, introduction of new

technologies or personnel training. Training is the second priority field in Lithuania public management. However control - assessing the benefits of training related not only with money but also with time costs, is insufficient. It is not assessed how received information was used in one or another field. Internal processes, which in Lithuania associate with positions distribution and frequent labour turnover, would follow after. Customer needs stay at the last place in Lithuania public management unlike in other developed countries where a citizen is seen as a reference point. This determines that all people are taxpayers, and collected taxes are a base for functioning of public management (National Audit Office of the Republic of Lithuania).

Thus, implementation of strategic management in public sector can last longer than in profitmaking organizations, because unlike in the latter, public management is lacking of motivation, clearness and responsibility distribution.

New public management, its international applicability, and the IOP public management model

Free market economy raises new requirements to the public management. As underlying and fundamental aim of the new public management reform program is to transform the organizational identity of public organizations into a business-like identity.

Osborne and Gaebler (1992) see NPM as part of what they call “entrepreneurial government”. Their version of NPM is viewed as a new global paradigm emerging in contemporary public administration. Some commentators go even further and argue that NPM is a world-wide phenomenon (Lam, 1996), moving swiftly from one country to another, manifesting a kind of global demonstration affect (Nunberg, 1992) and as an “irresistible force” rapidly spreading across Europe (Ridley, 1996). Contrary to the view that the new public management movement is a “new global paradigm”, are some that argues that NPM represents only a short-term managerial fad (Abrahamson, 1991).

Six theses concerning the development of New Public Management reforms in the international context (Thom & Ritz 2004, 47):

1. NPM has emerged as a model of public administration reform since the mid 80s of the last century.
2. NPM is implemented faster and more radically in centralist structures than in decentralised states.
3. In decentralised structures, NPM first develops at the lower administrative levels before the reforms are adopted by the central administration.
4. NPM cannot be defined as a unified concept, but is constituted by a largely coherent set of reform elements, which are initiated individually according to the situation at hand.
5. In the pioneering countries, NPM had a strong impact on the cross-institutional range of activities and on institutional structures in the public sector, in contrast to the more restricted modernisation within individual units of the overall administrative structures in the countries that followed after.

6. In the advanced stage, NPM in most European administrations has raised issues with regard to privatisation possibilities, strategic administration management and contract-based coordination of government and administration.

Thom & Ritz (2004, 57) present IOP management concept of public sector, which develops public sector modernisation in three directions: innovations, organizations and personnel (see figure 1).

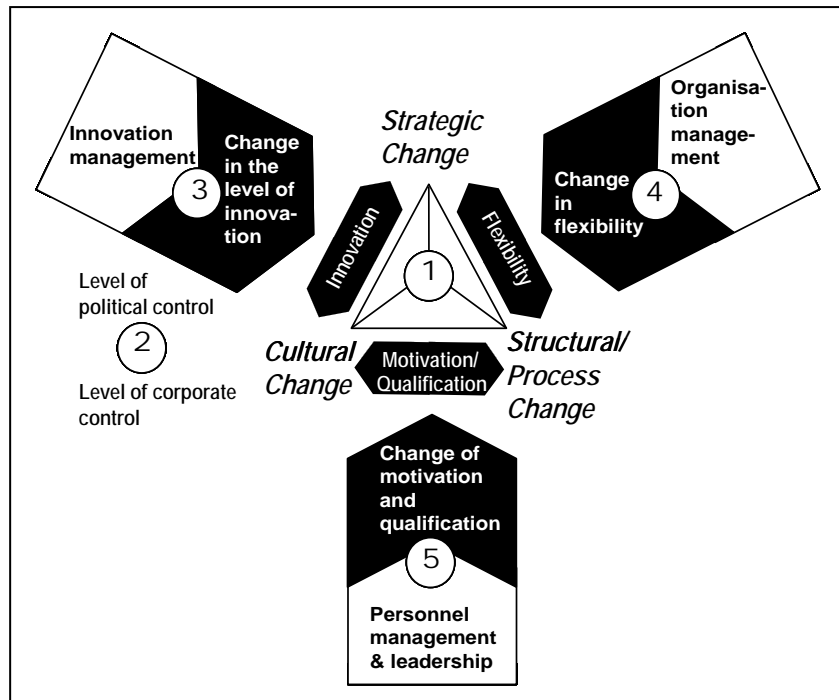


Figure 1. The IOP public management model

The relevance of change for public management (PM), according to Thom & Ritz (2004):

- Change as the single “constant” in our societies’ general environment;
- Capability of change gives governments and administrations a leeway in handling societal issues arising against a background of global developments.

Varieties of change (Thom, 2004):

1. Strategic change - Elaboration and thorough communication of the long-term goal system (including product and service range) for the prior guidance of all administrative activities. Central task of the parliament, the head of the executive and the corporate management.
2. Cultural change - Change of behaviour, values and attitudes towards people-, cost-, customer- and innovation-orientation. Central task of all members of the political and administrative body.
3. Structural and process change - Change and redesign of organizational structures in the public sector. Redefinition and development of methods and procedures towards long-term quality sustainment and enhancement. Central task mainly of political and corporate heads.

The three building blocks of the IOP-model are innovation management (I), organizational management (O), and personnel management and leadership (P).

1. Innovation management

Innovation in politics and administration are indispensable and serve the following purposes:

- Enhancement of *competitiveness* in comparison with other nations, other state organizations or private institutions; Improvement of *ability to cooperate* with other nations, other state organizations or private institutions; *Exerting influence* on the social and economic embedding systems; *Increasing the attractiveness* of state institutions in the public opinion and on the labour market.

The status quo regularly poses the following questions to any “innovator” in the public administration:

- How can a slowing down of the innovation process and target achievement by the political and legal system be prevented? How much planning, analysis and information gathering will be required before actual implementation? What possible amendments and changes by parliament and administration is a planned innovation subject to in the political process? What incentives could be offered and effectively used for innovation?

2. Organizational management

Reform goals aimed at by NPM and organizational consequences presented in Figure 2.

Reform targets		Organizational consequences
More scope for action	➡	More independent organizational units
More cost consciousness	➡	Structures that allow cost assignment to services and products
Stronger customer orientation	➡	Structures oriented to service recipients
Process and procedure acceleration	➡	Structures oriented to service production processes
Enhancement of service quality	➡	Orientation to service recipients and production processes

Figure 2. Reform goals aimed at by NPM and organizational consequences (Thom & Ritz 2004, 194)

The main criteria for an efficient and effective organizational form:

- Target orientation of the organization (political and corporate dimension);
- Enhancement of manageability and reduction of coordination efforts;
- Rapidity and quality of information processing and decision-making procedures;
- Adaptability and capacity for action and innovation of the organization;
- Improvement of the capability of organizational learning (bundling of competences);
- Enhancement of social efficiency and of individual learning capacities.

3. Personnel management and leadership

Generalizing actual personnel management and structure reforms elements of eleven countries (Australia, Germany, the Great Britain, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland,

Finland, Norway, Sweden and USA) with respect to NPM we can distinguish the following tendencies of NPM personnel functions formation:

- When carrying out personnel selection, people are hired from the outside more frequently and the duration of the made hiring contracts is limited. So more new pretenders are admitted;
- Almost in all studied countries it was noticed that mobility development is treated as important or even the most more important factor;
- Training of managing personnel becomes the most important task of personnel development;
- Freedom and flexibility spreading in personnel field actively show more flexible possibilities of employee layoff and wider arsenal of staff change and their reduction means;
- The most important mean while implementing NPM goals is decentralisation of personnel functions;
- The first NPM countries (Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands) have implemented the largest and most radical personnel management novelties;
- Austria and Switzerland, as countries later involved into NPM development, step only the first steps in this field.

IOP concept approach to personnel functions

Changed creed and cultural values change personnel management methods radically. They allow impacting strongly on those employees who lack of motivation in their work and are effective only, when routine and indifference prevail in a work.

During the public management reforms main attention is paid not to traditional personnel administration means, but to such, which would stimulate growth of personnel motivation, qualification, efficiency and flexibility. The conception of personnel service and its functions in the public sector more and more resemble to the conception of the relevant services naturalized in the private sector.

Thus, personnel management of public organization is important, because:

A personnel is not only the most important resource of public organizations, but also the most sensitive field, therefore when managing it, it is necessary to invoke modern prime methods and refer to the new personnel management scientific research results (Thom & Ritz 2004, 229).

In personnel system of public organization some essential problems exist. They mostly determine often spilled out criticism for various limitations of public sector. The most important are the following problems:

1. Lack of motivation. Employees of public organizations partially are prepared to take larger workload and think that requirements raised for them are rather too small than too large.
2. Status of officials. Too strictly defined status determines lack of flexibility, and this first of all does not allow optimally use personnel capabilities, and this prevents public officials to seek personal career in the public sector.
3. Lack of possibilities to pursue career and to develop.
4. Limitations of motivation and salary systems.

5. Automatic position preferment.
6. Limited possibilities to select personnel.

These problems can be solved only by referring to personnel management as to an entire process, where all personnel management elements are applied together, from the hiring mechanism to discharge system, adding each other and meeting strategic goals of an organization. Personnel management function as a process is presented on figure 3.

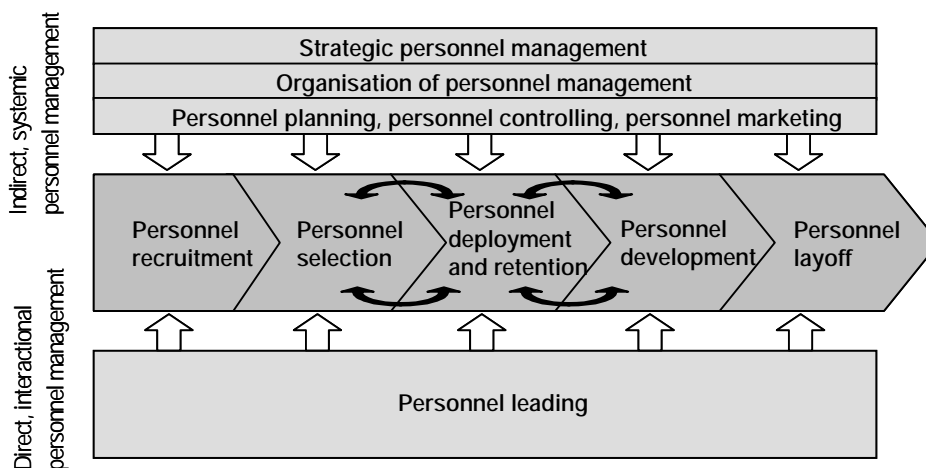


Figure 3. Personnel management function as a process (Thom & Ritz 2004, 237)

Strategic goal orientation in personnel management helps to find and solidify long-term personnel policy goals and, following these goals, to coordinate individual functions of personnel management. Having organised personnel management and each component of it in every specific organization in such way it is possible to achieve the best results.

IOP concept allows concluding that strategic management is one of the most important elements of modern management. With changing requirements applied to public organizations, strategic singleness of personnel management becomes more and more important. Capability to forecast as precisely as possible directions of organization development determined by external actions and referring to them to make decisions of personnel policy allow to answer essential strategic questions of the personnel management:

- What potentials of personnel the management does now treat as the most important and what important they will be in the future?
- What actions should be taken already now in order to introduce, keep and use these personnel potentials or to refuse them?

Personnel management strategy is an active, long-term approach, forming a total concept of the organization, to the most common aspects of the organization personnel. In its turn is related with management strategies. Four versions of the connections of these strategies are possible:

1. *Personnel and management strategies exist separate from each other.* Such version contradicts with principles of strategic management and provision, that personnel management is the essential function of all management processes.

2. *Personnel strategy arises from management strategy.* This version corresponds to the common approach to personnel strategy evolution.
3. *Management strategy arises from personnel strategy.* In contrary to the second case, here personnel are named as the dominating and the most difficulties causing factor. However in the public sector such situation is practically impossible, because management strategy is formed by political goals. And the lack of personnel has not been felt until now in this sector.
4. *Personnel and organization strategies are developed in mutual interaction and coordination way.* This case of strategies link is a combination of the 2nd and the 3rd variants. The point is that personnel management creating a management strategy has an innovative task – to develop such features of personnel, which stimulate creating new and critical evaluation of the old strategic attitudes. It is necessary to stimulate employees' strategic thinking and their attitude to strategic development of such features, like creativeness, critical self evaluation, tolerance to different opinions, autonomy, courage, curiosity, social sensibility, according to their future prospects.

Strategic personnel management at the Kaunas municipality

The choice of a data collecting method

Data collecting is a very important procedure. Generalizations and conclusions depend on the precise data; therefore it is very important to choose the most appropriate data collecting method.

The research has been aimed to find out Kaunas municipality heads' attitude to strategic personnel management and main functions of personnel management. Inquiry appeared to be the most suitable to this end (Janilionis 1999, Kardelis 2002). The main disadvantage of the method is that an inquiry is often reactive; however, its easiness and cheapness as well as the possibility to easily collect a lot of data make this method very popular.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, the aim of this research and short instruction how to fill in the form was presented. The questionnaire consists of 35 close-type interrogative questions. Question number 1 and numbers 5-30 were formulated to find out the attitude to the main functions of personnel management. Questions number 2-4 and number 31 questions were set to define the heads' attitudes to strategic personnel management. Question number 32 deals with the main problems of personnel management. The questionnaire ends with demographic data about respondents' sex and age.

Respondents' selection

The research was carried out in August 12-23, 2005 at the Kaunas municipality. The general number of department heads is 47. In order to check if the number of respondents is representative enough for obtaining valid results, Paniott (1986) formula has been used for this purpose:

$$n = \frac{1}{\Delta^2 + \frac{1}{N}}$$

Where n – the necessary number of respondents;

Δ – possible error amount (in social sciences research standard error is 5%, obtained with 0.95 probability (P));

N – the number of the members of the whole.

Table 1 presents the indices that characterize the research sample. Results of personnel management functions assessment are given in table 2.

Table 1. Indices characterizing the research sample

Indices	Qualitative expression
The number of the members of the whole, N	47
The necessary number of respondents, n	42
Probability of Reliability, P	0.95
Choice error, Δ	0.05

42 department heads were surveyed. From all respondents who participated in survey - 54% were men, and 46% women. Most of interviewers were of 46-60-years-old (69%).

Table 2. Assessment of key personnel management functions (n=42)

Functions	Unimportant %	Partially important %	Important %
Personnel hiring	0	0	88
Personnel keeping (promotion)	0	35	54
Personnel development	0	19	69
Personnel management	0	19	65

Management survey at the Kaunas municipality showed that personnel management strategy exists partially – 61% of respondents stated this. Such results show that importance of strategy when seeking for the best results of personnel management is still not really understood. 65% of respondents state that their administration director is responsible for strategic control of personnel at their organization. 31% of inquired managers say, that personnel strategy goes from control strategy, and only 15% of respondents think that personnel and enterprise strategies are developed in mutual interaction and coordination way.

Most of the survey participants think that personnel service should focus on strategic personnel management (54%). This means that in the future personnel departments would focus less on personnel control at their workplaces, but by personnel management actions will seek implementation of strategic goals of the organization.

Search of potential employees at the Kaunas municipality is carried out both from internal and external resources of organization (81%); all 42 respondents say that this process is fully or partially influenced by laws and decrees. Survey showed that 3 personnel selection tools are mostly used: capabilities, intellect and personality tests (14%), interview regarding hiring (13%) and analysis of documents presented by pretender (11%). Services of assessment centres are totally unused. Hiring execution is fully influenced by legal basis, as 100% of respondents say.

81% of managers, who participated in the survey, state that an assessment system exists in the organization. Mostly individual assessment of each employee according to the criteria established in the organization is applied. Assessment commission carries it out. Main objectives of the assessment are as follows: To receive information, referring to which employee can be promoted in position, to increase salary (88%); To help to define the need for employee training and to stimulate employees to develop (50%); To help to assess if employees are properly and qualitatively carrying their work or not (38%).

Most of the interviewed (73%) indicated that both material and immaterial stimulus are equally important. Now, in order to keep the good specialists in the company various bonuses and additional payouts are paid. Other means (bonuses for collective achievements, individual remuneration for productivity, flexible work schedule, longer than established holidays, work at home) are applied very rarely or even unapplied. Having asked what would stimulate to seek for better results, most of the respondents noted these means: bonuses, higher basic salary, possibility to make career, salary oriented to the achieved results, recognition by manager and colleagues, personnel development and development possibilities.

All 42 respondents say that employees' trainings are carried out constantly in the organization. Survey has shown that in order to develop personnel in the institutions, means of education, development, professional development and interviews with employees are mostly used. Modern tools – testing centres, rotation in the work, practice programs, enrichment of work content – are poorly applied.

Career planning is almost unexecuted. Only 31% of respondents say that career planning is carried out partially. Only 1 respondent answered positively. Although career process is legally specified, the political processes significantly influence career – even 77% of respondents agreed with this statement.

When analyzing reasons of discharge one of them was clearly distinguishing – discharge determined by activity circumstances (61%). Reasons, like skills have not met raised requirements, or improper behaviour are very rare. Results of answers to question how personnel management functions are executed are given in table 3. As we can see from the data, attention to execution of main personnel management functions at the Kaunas municipality is insufficient.

Table 3. Execution of main personnel management functions (n=42)

Functions	Fully (%)	Partially (%)	The first signs (%)	Non-executed (%)

Personnel planning	8	31	8	4
Selection	15	23	0	8
Assessment	23	35	0	8
Training	27	23	4	4
Promotion	4	31	4	8
Career planning	0	4	11	11

Main personnel management problems at the Kaunas municipality are given in table 4. Even 46% of respondents have defined limited possibilities to select the personnel as the essential problem.

Table 4. Main problems of personnel management

Problems	%
Lack of motivation	10
Officer status	4
Limited possibilities to select personnel	46
Automatic promotion of position	15

Conclusions

Free market economy raises new requirements to the public management. Underlying and fundamental aim of the new public management (NPM) reform program is to transform management of public organizations into a business-like management.

From a literature review of new public management and its international applicability, we can find two opposite opinions:

1. NPM is a public administration management model that is universally applicable regardless of social, cultural and political nature of the intended host country.
2. Public management movement has a highly variable international impact, and different variants that have emerged in different countries. The nature of the variation seems to be dependent upon the basis of local history, culture, and political and managerial leadership.

Although NPM is well established in the countries such as the UK, Australia, The Netherlands, and others, it still can be described as “new” into some countries, and Lithuania is among them. Though public management in Lithuania focus on strategic management, this transition lingers, because Lithuania development according to the regions is inadequate, application of strategic management in public management depends on the dominating ruling party in both Parliament and municipalities, and implementation of strategic management can stoop due to deficit of money. In case of economic and financial disorders, the strategic management can come to the second place.

IOP management concept of public sector develops public sector modernisation in three directions: innovations, organizations and personnel. Changed creed and cultural values change personnel management methods radically. During the public management reforms main attention is paid not to traditional personnel administration means, but to such, which

would stimulate growth of personnel motivation, qualification, efficiency and flexibility. A personnel is not only the most important resource of public organizations, but also the most sensitive field, therefore when managing it, it is necessary to invoke modern prime methods and refer to the new personnel management scientific research results.

The empirical research has been made to find out Kaunas municipality heads' attitude to strategic personnel management and main functions of personnel management. The research showed that personnel management strategy at the Kaunas municipality exists partially – 61% of respondents stated this. The importance of strategy when seeking for the best results of personnel management is still not really understood.

Personnel management strategy is an active, long-term approach, forming a total concept of the organization, to the most common aspects of the organization personnel. In its turn is related with management strategies. 31% of inquired managers say, that personnel strategy goes from management strategy, and only 15% of respondents think that personnel and organization strategies are developed in mutual interaction and coordination way. 54% of the participants think that personnel service should focus on strategic personnel management. In the future, personnel departments would less focus on personnel control at their workplaces, but by personnel management actions will seek implementation of strategic goals of organization.

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