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## THE QUALITY OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL LEVEL IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC\*

**Abstract.** Competencies and duties which the municipalities have to fill with the aim to increase quality of life of inhabitant and to create better conditions for local entrepreneurs require skilled and educated self-government management. The experts in theory and practice of local self-government coincide in opinion that good mayor has to be good manager, good leader and visionary. In the Slovak Republic all inhabitants permanently residing with the age of 18 may elect municipal authorities. Also they may be elected in individual bodies of local self-government (mayor and Council member). The aim of the article is to show current quality structure of mayors and Council members in Slovakian municipalities. We focused on level of achieved education of elected representatives, number of their mandates periods and their skills in managerial position in their original employee (only mayors). The research was made in the sample of 285 municipalities of Slovakia

**Key words:** municipality; self-government management; mayor; Council; education; quality.

**JEL Classification:** H7, H11, H83

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#### ЯКІСТЬ ОБРАНИХ ПРЕДСТАВНИКІВ ВЛАДИ НА МІСЦЕВОМУ РІВНІ У СЛОВАЦЬКІЙ РЕСПУБЛІЦІ

**Анотація.** Компетенції та обов'язки, які муніципалітети повинні виконувати для підвищення якості життя мешканців і створення більш сприятливих умов для місцевих підприємців, вимагають кваліфікованих та освічених керівників органів місцевого самоврядування. Експерти в галузі теорії і практики муніципального менеджменту збігаються в думці, що ефективним мером має бути професійний менеджер і далекоглядний лідер. У Словацькій Республіці всі жителі, які постійно проживають на території муніципалітету з 18 років, можуть обирати муніципальну владу, у тому числі мера і депутатів місцевої ради. Метою статті є дослідження нинішньої кваліфікаційної структури мерів і членів рад у словацьких муніципалітетах. Автори зосередили свою увагу на рівні освіти обраних представників влади (тільки мерів), їх навичках на керівній посаді. Вибірка для дослідження становила 285 муніципалітетів Словаччини.

**Ключові слова:** муніципалітет, самоврядування, мер, рада, освіта, якість.

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#### КАЧЕСТВО ИЗБРАННЫХ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЕЙ ВЛАСТИ НА МЕСТНОВОМ УРОВНЕ В СЛОВАЦКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКЕ

**Аннотация.** Компетенции и обязанности, которые муниципалитеты должны выполнять для повышения качества жизни жителей и создания более благоприятных условий для местных предпринимателей, требуют квалифицированных и образованных руководителей в системе местного самоуправления. Эксперты в области теории и практики муниципального менеджмента сходятся в мысли, что хорошим мэром может быть профессиональный менеджер и дальновидный лидер. В Словацкой Республике все жители, которые постоянно проживают на территории муниципалитета с 18 лет, могут избирать муниципальную власть. Целью статьи является определение современной квалификационной структуры мэров и членов советов в словацких муниципалитетах. Авторы сосредоточили свое внимание на уровне образования избранных представителей власти (только мэров), их навыках на руководящей должности. Выборка для исследования составила 285 муниципалитетов Словакии.

**Ключевые слова:** муниципалитет, самоуправление, мэр, совет, образование, качество.

**Introduction.** The quality in the modern world is no longer in the forefront of only production organizations and their managements, but it also applies to service enterprises and successively introduces in the processes and activities of public sector organizations and public administration. Implementation of management approaches in public administration, in particular the implementation of New Public Management and New Public Services creates an appropriate way for the quality evaluation and quality improvement in local government and its management.

The self-government management as an important part of local self-government is created by elected bodies, which at the local level are the mayors and members of municipal councils. The local level of governance in the Slovak Republic is represented by municipalities. Municipality is an autonomous territorial self-governing and administrative unit of Slovakia, which gathers persons having in its territory permanent residence.

Municipality as a legal entity independently manages its own property and their finance. Municipalities which fulfill the criteria set out in § 22 of Act no. 369/90 Coll. on municipal establishment amended by later regulations have granted status of a town [1]. In the settlement structure of Slovakia is total 2,891 municipalities, including 138 towns and villages form the rest. All municipalities in Slovakia, regardless of whether they have the status of town or not, have equal responsibility and meet the same tasks assigned to them by law.

**Brief Literature Overview.** Quality is generally defined as the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of the product meets customer requirements [2]. According to A. Matrides (2006) [3] for any organization and its management quality is an essential tool for maintaining and increasing competitiveness. G. Wright and J. Nemeč (2003) [4], N. Stefkova (2004) [5], J. Medved and J. Nemeč (2011), [6], F. Ochraňa (2007) [7] and J. Tej (2011) [8] suggest that between the management of public administration and management in the private sector exist some differences. First, the managements of public sector and private sector are operating in different le-

\* The article is related to Grant Agencies of VSEMvs project, project No. 2/2010, The Quality of Self-government Management on Local Level.

gislative environment. Secondly, the profit motive characteristic for private sector cannot be used in the public sector. And thirdly, public organizations address the needs politically determined, under which they operate. In no small measure they shall be subject political lobbying [9].

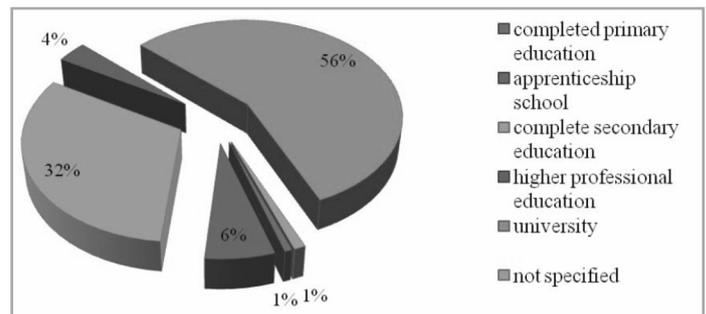
*Ochrana* (2011) [10] increasing quality of public administration called modern public administration. It is closely related to degree of fulfillment of the requirements of citizens for certain public service or with growth rate of the quality life of the inhabitants. These changes relate to changes in the quality of customer (citizen, business entity, state or other entity of public administration), changes in the performance of public services and changes in the costs incurred for this service. Application of this trend puts increased demands on self-government management, especially the mayor [11]. According to *F. Fisher* (2005) [12] and *M. Armstrong* (2007) [13] every successful manager should have a general education, vocational maturity, talent management, organizational skills and life experiences. *J. Papula* and *Z. Papulova* (2012) [14] show that every manager should be a strategist. This also applies to managers in local self-government. The mayor should be a strategist, leader and visionary [15] and [16]. *C. R. Hickman* (1995) [17] writes that leaders are doing the right thing and managers do things right. Characteristic of successful leaders is high emotional intelligence [18]. *H. Spisiakova* (2011) [19] writes that the quality of self-government management, fulfillment of functions and services by self-government are influenced different determinants, including the education of managers and employees in managerial positions. Education as *A. Mateides* (2006) [20] so belongs to the activity of significant importance for quality management.

**Purpose.** The aim of article is to identify and characterize the status of elected authorities of local self-management, to highlight their appointment to public function and identify requirements that are associated with performance of a specific public function. Part of article is on a selected sample of municipalities point the current situation in the quality of the elected representatives of local government. The paper presents a particular educational page of mayors and municipality council members, the length of their time in public office and their involvement in educational activities organized for the local self-government. Underlying data we obtained by primary collection of information directly in the municipalities from September to December 2011, one year after municipal elections. For data collection, we used a questionnaire survey. Selection of municipalities was conducted randomly and it represents all size categories of municipalities. The total number of municipalities was after processing and control of sheet questionnaire steady on 285.

**Results.** The authorities representing self-government management in the municipality and established by the law are mayor and municipal council members. The mayor and council members manage, lead, supervise and administer the municipality fulfill practically all of the relevant features for managers and therefore it is possible in this context to talk about them as a self-government management. Like in business management, and in local self-government should be observed and perceived skills and competencies of people, carry it out. It is necessary to implement and monitor management approaches, expertise, quality of human resources, and professionalism of self-governing management [21]. All the inhabitants permanently residing in the territory with the age of 18 of age may elect representatives of local self-government. On the other hand, they may be in individual bodies of local self-government elected. All inhabitants so involve in the creating of self-government management and its performance [22]. The mandate of the mayor as well as the member of council is obtained on the basis of universal, secret, equal and direct elections by secret vote of community residents. Democracy and electoral law allow the mandate of mayor or deputy could bid every citizen without distinction of education. In order to carry out their work as possible, it is necessary to almost imperative that you increase your knowledge further education [23].

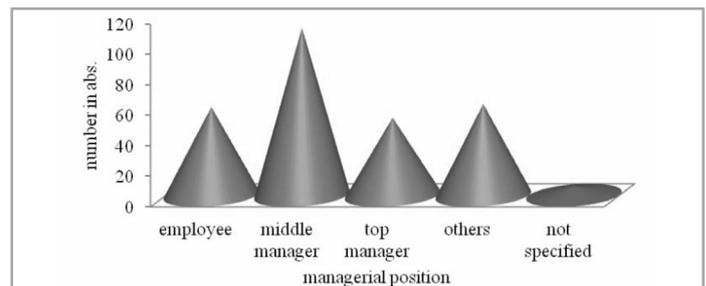
**1. Mayor.** Mayor is the municipal representatives and the highest executive body the municipality. Function of mayor is a public function. The term of the mayor is expired by taking an oath by newly elected mayor. Selection of the mayor shall be regulated by law [24]. The mayor is statutory authority of property relations and labor relations. In the administrative legal relationships he is the administration body. It is elected by the inhabitants of municipality in direct elections on four years. It is selectable when he is over 25, is resident in the municipality, where he candidate and is impeccable.

His responsibilities include convene and chair the municipality council meetings, perform municipal administration, represent the municipality in relation to state authorities, to decide all matters of municipal administration, suspend performance of the municipal council resolution, to impose a fine on legal entity. In view of the responsibilities and demands arising from the mayor function we expect that for this post will seek candidates who have attained at least upper secondary education. However, the Slovak legislation with regard to basic human rights does not impose any educational requirements for this function [25]. In the survey conducted (*Fig. 1*), we found that up to 56% responded mayors attained tertiary education and 32% achieved a complete secondary education. In our sample are not connected a municipalities in which the post of mayor function is occupied by inhabitant without completed primary education. However, experience shows that such municipalities in Slovakia are located and to public are presented in a negative way, especially the abuse of public function on private gain mayor function (as Zehra village where the mayor had trouble reading the oath, which is required to pass taking up duty and subsequently pardoned all underpayments on long-term local tax defaulters).



*Fig. 1. Educational structure of mayors (in %)*  
Source: Own research

The possibility of operation in self-government management is not just influenced by the height of achieved education. For managers is one way of gaining experience and knowledge, managerial experience itself [26]. If a candidate for the post of mayor function worked in his original profession on management position he gained the certain management skills and communication skills, he is able to better assess and predict certain situations that may arise within the managing municipalities. The results presented in *Fig. 2* show that 161 mayors have taking up duty have management experience and people management. 110 of them (38.6%) were active in the position of



*Fig. 2. Structure of mayors due to managerial position in original position (in abs.)*  
Source: Own research

middle managers and 51 (17.9%) in function top management. No experience in managing had 20.35% of respondents (58 mayors). 60 mayors acted in a different position than they were offered categories in the questionnaire sheet. On a closer specification up to 90% of them said they had opened their own trade license and they made business activities based upon business license as entrepreneurs – physical persons. Given that a small business must plan, manage (if not employees, so at least themselves and their time) and control their influence can also be seen in some way as managerial.

Qualifications and skills, candidates for mayor can obtain during his time in office of mayor function. From that point of view it is interesting to know how many mandates the current mayor worked on post of mayor in the past. As can be seen from Fig. 3, the most numerous group were mayors, who worked in this position for the first time (90 mayors, representing 31.58% of share). The second largest group consisted of mayors in the second term (81 mayors 28.42% of share). We found that with increasing number of terms of decreasing the number of incumbent mayors.

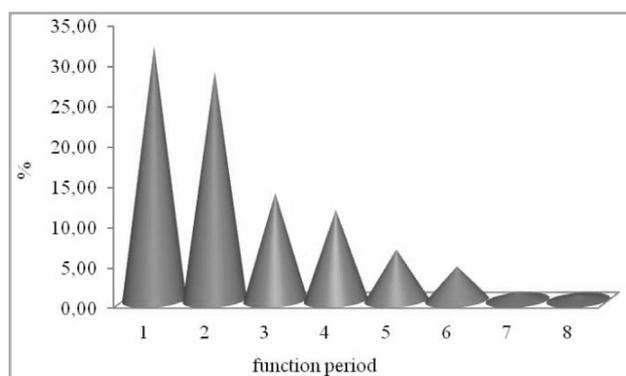


Fig. 3. Structure of mayors by mandates (function period) on mayor function post (in %) Source: Own research

Training for elected self-government representatives have taken place mostly in the form of one-day training at regular intervals. Of course education is voluntary and depends on the actual mayor or member of municipality council, to what extent self-education will dedicate. We found that for the periods when questionnaire survey had realized to 87 mayors of the sample with share 30.5% was in any educational activity not participated. Other mayors are involved in educational activities as needed, usually when changing the laws relating to the performance of their duties. In addition, some mayors were trained in courses aimed at obtaining managerial and communication skills. At the same time, we found that in a group of mayors serving in 1 term, there were only two mayors, who at the time of the survey (that was after 1 year of operation) attended training for mayors.

**2. Municipality Council.** The municipal council is a representative council of municipalities, composed of representatives elected in direct elections by inhabitants for four years. Election rules are governed by a special regulation [27]. The term of office of the municipal council shall end taking an oath the newly elected members of the municipal council. Its meeting is convened and chaired by mayor. The municipal council negotiates always in Corps. It is capable of negotiating and acting by if the majority of members are present.

Municipal council decides on the most important issues of community life (Act 369/90 Coll.), especially determines the principles of management and disposal of municipal property, approves the municipal budget and its changes, approves important strategic and development documents of municipality, establishes and controls a general business and budgetary and contributory organizations, decides to regulations of municipality, declares a local referendum etc.

The post of municipality council member can apply inhabitants who are reached latest on election' day the age of 18, have permanent residence in the municipality and are blameless.

If we evaluate the quality of surveyed municipality council members by amount of achieved education (Fig. 4), we find that, similar like with mayors the municipal council members are predominates higher education (35% of share) and completed secondary education (21% of share). Despite the fact that 37% of municipalities did not give the education of councilors, we found that inhabitants during the election already rate the amount of candidate education, and they more confident to candidate with higher levels of education.

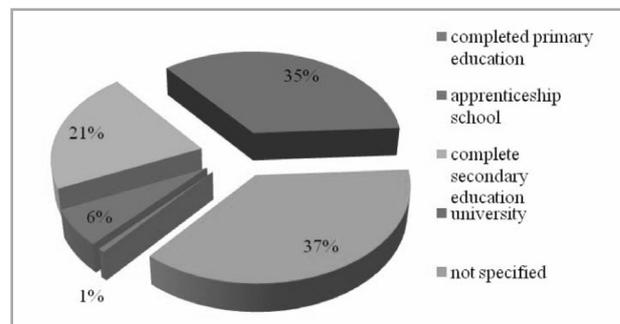


Fig. 4. Educational structure of surveyed municipality council members (in %) Source: Own research

Like the mayor, the deputy is gaining professional knowledge and practical skills in length time in office of municipal member. 47% of councilors of surveyed municipalities although this issue has not commented, however on the results presented in Fig. 5, we can conclude that most councilors act as newly elected members of the 1st term (23%) and 2nd term (15%).

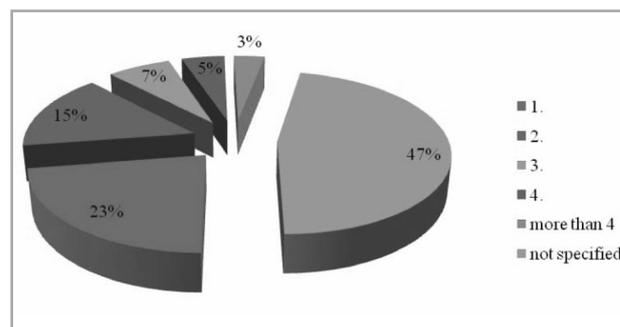


Fig. 5. Councilors share in the municipalities under mandates (in %) Source: Own research

Like on function of mayor nor the municipality council member on function are not asked any qualifying requirements. I. Palus (2010) [28] would refer to the fact that if a municipality council member has to comply with the Constitution and the laws, regulations and apply them in the performance of their duties, he must certainly know and understand them properly. For this reason, it is necessary to transmit councilors on training that they give a basic overview of self-government minimum. These training sessions are typically one-day, in rare cases, 2-day range, which is on be released from work for the member public office (§ 172 of the Labour Code). In Slovakia, namely was performance of member municipal council normally carried out without interruption of their job. Mentioned paragraph refers on right of elected deputies in employment draw 30 days in on exercise of public elective office to which the employer is obliged to release him. Given that a significant proportion of councilors the municipal council is 1 term, we assumed that the municipality send them on educational activities related to understanding the functioning of local self-government. We found that just 17% of surveyed municipalities (48 municipalities) through councilors was active involved in education. The remaining 83% of municipalities at the time of the survey did not use this option (Fig. 6).

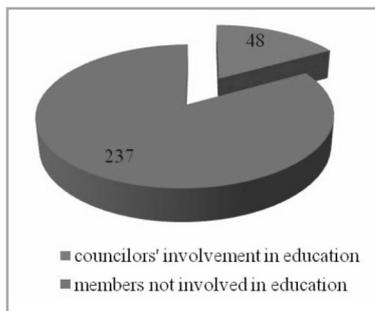


Fig. 6. Share of municipalities in which was deputies involved in education for local self-government (in %)

Source: Own research

### Conclusions

1<sup>st</sup>: With the increasing amount of responsibilities and tasks which are transferred on local self-government, was demands on self-government management and local self-government employees constantly increasing. With the trend, such as New Public Management and New Public Services, in particular were increased demands on self-government management. Increasingly required type of manager-oriented outcome compared to the type oriented towards performance. Also related to this more responsible and proactive approach of self-government management to improve the quality and professionalism, especially in functionally and substantively limited education system of elected representatives and executive authorities.

2<sup>nd</sup>: All the inhabitants permanently residing in the territory with the age of 18 of age may elect municipal authorities. On the other hand, they may be elected in individual bodies of local self-government. All inhabitants so involve in the creating of self-government management and its performance.

3<sup>rd</sup>: The system free choice of self-government management with decision-makers affects its quality in the following years and tenure. It is almost necessary inhabitants clarify and rank properties and values preferred in the selection and election of representatives of local governments. Results of the survey showed that residents in elections to post of mayor and councilors prefer educated the candidates. On the other hand, the question is whether university educated mayors and MPs understand the functioning of local self-government, aware of the relevant legislative standards and know their optimal use in making decisions about the operation and development the municipality.

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Received 11.06.2013

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