

Lithuanian Administration Development Problems and the Role of Training in Resolving Them

Artashes Gazaryan

1. PROBLEMS IN DEMOCRACIES UNDER TRANSITION

The view that the collapse of totalitarian regimes would suffice for the victory of democracy is an illusion. A sincere commitment of the “winners” to genuine, albeit idealistic democratic models unfortunately does not suffice for a guarantee that they can implement these models in the reality arising out of the transitional revolution.

Learning by trial and error would take too long. That method is also expensive to the degree that it may jeopardise the very effort of democratic nation re-building.

In re-established independent states, aspirations to build democracy and allow economic markets to take full shape have typically arisen in circumstances that entail the destruction of the previous structures. Changing the previous mentality is particularly hard and slow.

During transition, the inertia of old stereotypes of political and societal thinking may turn out to be fatal. “Fighting with the past” does not necessarily lead to a “victory of the future”, but may turn into various “diseases of transition”. Periods of “creative democratic destruction” and periods of “constructive democratic dictatorship” may follow one another. Before long the cyclical movement stops at either of its two extremes: a new, democratic polity is created, or a new, totalitarian regime takes shape.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which have recently been able to re-establish their true democratic independence, do not only have to struggle with communist organisational conventions and communist culture in public institutions. They also have to work to overcome barriers made up by mental maps and thesauri held by civil servants and politicians. Both two groups are typically prevented from quick and

adequate responses to the new challenges and the new opportunities provided by the transitional circumstances. Much too few people have a sufficient grasp of how to implement measures that take advantage of the unique transitional opportunities to change public organisations and their way of action.

There is no logic to guarantee that drastic changes of political leadership enable comparable improvements in public sector performance. The reason for this is that performance is based upon the competence and experience of the personnel. Both reliance upon people with previous experience and upon newcomers poses problems. The former are inclined to stick to their previous ways, stemming from the regime of the past, whereas the latter are obliged to take their time of learning under the supervision of veteran people. Brain drain of people with marketable skills, both younger and older, away from the public sector is also a serious problem.

Now, after some five years from the dramatic discontinuity with the previous political regime, one can make a paradoxical observation. There are institutions which have preserved their venerable structures and organisational conventions but operate better than certain institutions that have been fundamentally reorganised with replacement of much of their previous staff. The former organisations seem to work well enough at the overt level, and therefore they seem to lack incentives for development. Some of the newly established organisations, which should provide best practice models for other organisations, frequently continue to suffer from the recent complete destruction of the operations and practices which should now be taken care of these new organisations.

The challenge encountered now is formidable. One should as if influence too many variables at the same time. To take the example of local gov-

ernment, it is necessary both to impose changes in the attitudes of local officials towards their duties, but also enable them to improve their level of performance in their duties. They should both be enabled to do different, "right" things than previously, and enabled to do those right things in "the right way", that is, efficiently.

To accomplish the required re-orientation of efforts, improvement of effectiveness, reorganisation of actions, and improvement of efficiency, not less than the mentality and overall capacity of political leaders and civil servants should be changed. This will not be possible without certain failures in the course of a slow accumulation of experience. In a transitional process this is particularly difficult, as key officials tend to stay in office only briefly, and a rapidly changing legislative, social and economic environment makes most of their experience irrelevant or leads to their immediate replacement.

2. FOCUSING UPON LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LITHUANIA

In the Lithuanian local government frequently not only implementation, but the sheer adoption of decisions in a council of local representatives has been difficult. The combination of the still lacking competence of councillors regarding questions discussed at the sessions, together with the new democratic procedure of discussing first and voting next, has created almost insurmountable barriers to decision-making. The time to discuss many an issue has varied according to the level of understanding regarding the matter possessed by the councillors. The longest and mostly useless discussions have taken place in cases which have provided the deputies with the most chances to demonstrate their inexperience. Fundamentally, this has satisfied neither the deputies nor the electorate.

Even where neither the local councils nor the central government constrain the discretion of local executives, they have had difficulties to figure out what they should do, let alone how they should do it. An important reason is the forty-five year -long tradition of only implementing minutiously detailed instructions from the top, which was either the national top government or, not infrequently, Moscow itself.

In carrying out routines, let alone in trying something more, the new leaders have frequently found themselves in complete dependence on the former "apparatchiks". Those of the latter who

remain more or less in the positions of influence know at least one way of trying to get the things done, namely "how the things were done before", whereas the new leaders may suffer from a quite high degree of ignorance.

In Lithuania, about one half of the high-ranking local managers rose to their positions in local government only in 1991-3, to replace the first generation of leaders elected or appointed just after the elections of 1990. The reason for such a merry-go-round was a chronic councillors' dissatisfaction with their own failure of making their pre-election promises to the electorate come true. This dissatisfaction led to political "witch hunts", accusations of "sabotage" towards the transitional reforms, and subsequent rapid and frequently hasty dismissals.

The transition is still a relatively young phenomenon to allow the judgment of its effects let alone the effects of the public policies pursued in its course. The time has also been short to pursue systematic policies in the general transitional circumstances of a considerable lability. Last but not least, knowledge and competence can only be enhanced slowly and gradually. The above problems render some explanation why, at the end of 1996, we have to witness of a quite widespread disappointment with the institutions of democratic representation, such as parliament and local councils, and of incessant citizen, party and interest group complaints against an alleged authoritarian and corrupt rule by the executive institutions.

Spurred by the leaders' slow learning of efficiency in the vein of democracy, people have come to distrust the "heralds of democracy"; people do not find they particularly like the "fruits of democracy"; and they face the risk of losing much of the democracy that has now existed for a few years. A "return of the repressed" is not ruled out: the degeneration of what should be local democracy into local governance in the socialist pattern. It is revealing to go through the supplements to Lithuanian Law on Local Government. In the course of the last three years, no amendments extending the role of local self-government and strengthening local democracy has been passed. Despite radical changes of political leadership during the period of two parliaments and five national governments, all supplements reveal the same tendency – that of centralisation.

In the best case, the tendency towards the degeneration of Lithuanian local government would turn at the stabilisation of a normal democratic structure of public power. However, it is

rather the pessimistic prognosis that is capable of self-fulfillment, whereas to make an optimistic prognosis come true requires specific efforts and coordination between them. Cycles made up of democratisation on the one hand and increasing authoritarian rule on the other can be expected to go on in the post-communist countries at least until this tendency will be put under the firm control of a stable regime. Let us hope that it will be a democratic one.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN LITHUANIA

The transition of the overall political government necessitates novel structures of territorial administration and the creation of democratic local self-government. However, it has been hard to get rid of established ways to conceive of the role of local government in the transitional countries. There are national leaders in the transitional countries who still see the territorial units of administration as "lands", "raions", "oblasts", and so on, which should be ruled much in the same ways as was pursued for decades. Where independence, long lost, has now been restored, these "lands" are no more governed from the alien centre of Moscow, but such native centres of "flesh and blood" as Vilnius, Kishinev or Tbilisi. Frequently, the recent popular striving towards "territorial economic independence" is labelled as "local egoism", and seen as an enemy to the national cause. Thus the process of regional and community auto-development is rather harmed than promoted by many of the new national governments.

The new national governments may indeed harm the "region building" and the local "community building", if they keep too strictly under their control both the resources and investments, or if they redraw administrative borders against the "natural" socioeconomic determination of territorial and local entities. Reference is often made to the pursuit of systematic "regional policies" in this context, and to a "necessity to smooth out developmental differences". The true meaning behind such appeals often remains opaque.

The national legislative processes have played an important role in the transitional processes of the countries in question. At the first stage, just after the transitional "revolution", there were unique opportunities for genuine political decentralisation and for the creation of as "natural" territorial units of administration as possible. At that

stage, any notion of government monopoly was typically unpopular, whereas ideas of self-government and self-determination enjoyed of a high popularity. Gradually, the latter ideas have become less attractive, and local mistakes, together with pressures exerted in different ways by national central governments of each country in question, have brought about a situation where local communities may find themselves in an increasing direct dependence on the central authority.

A new Law on Local Government was passed in Lithuania on July 7, 1994 and came into force on the first day after elections on March 25, 1995. The previous two-tier system of local self-government with a so-called "lower level" (526 communities) and a "higher level" (44 raions and 11 cities) was replaced by a one-level system of self-government, called *savivaldybe* (56), which share the previous boundaries of the former higher level units of local self-government. The *savivaldybe* have their own councils elected in regular municipal elections and their own budgets. A system of revenue-sharing between the national government and the *savivaldybe* governments provides the bulk of the *savivaldybe* revenue, but they do not so far have rights for direct income taxation.

The "lower level" of administrative-territorial units of self-government was abolished. However, local councils were given the right to establish in their territory of *savivaldybe* smaller units, called *seniunija*, managed by *seniunas*. This official is appointed by the mayor of the *savivaldybe*, and is authorised by the mayor to exert a rather limited discretion within bounds left by existing legislation.

Ten new territorial entities under central government were established by the Law on Administrative-Territorial Division, passed on July 19, 1994. Each of these districts, called *apskritis*, consist of the territories of several *savivaldybe*. Each *apskritis* is managed by a governor, appointed by the national government. The scope of responsibilities of the *apskritiai* was formed not from previous responsibilities of the national government, but from previous responsibilities of the *savivaldybe*. Thus a formal "decentralisation" of state power actually involved centralisation, and the *savivaldybe* have now less power than before the reform.

The "democratic pie" of 100 per cent self-government on the sub-national level in 1990-5 was replaced by a "national government made hamburger", with national government control at the

top, the savivaldybe units at the bottom, and the apskritiai in between. The size of the savivaldybe now ranges in the 11 older cities and the one new city from 12 to 286 sq. km and from 4 100 to 582 000 inhabitants, and in the 44 former raions from 911 to 2 243 sq. km and from 21 500 to 93 800 inhabitants. Some 84 per cent of the citizens of Lithuania now live in "self-governing" communities of more than 40.000 inhabitants. Although this may seem as if the universal dream of an efficiency-oriented reformer of municipal administration come true, the large unit size makes the citizens' actual direct involvement in democratic decision-making processes necessarily quite constrained. The true realisation rate of democracy therefore remains low, and most people are deprived of opportunities to train themselves to the still new democratic practices.

Each savivaldybe council shall elect a mayor, a vice-mayor and an auditor, and may establish a board involving the mayor, the vice-mayor and some councillors (typically, the chairpersons of council committees). In case no board is established, all the relevant functions remain vested with the mayor.

The savivaldybe mayor shall appoint an administrator, who is directly responsible before the mayor. It is the administrator's function to organise the preparation of matters to be taken before the council and the board, and to work towards implementation of the decisions taken. The administrator is also responsible for disciplining the savivaldybe administration.

As was mentioned above, in each savivaldybe there may be one or several seniunija, each with their seniunas. Such units and positions may be established on condition that the council has passed a decision to this end. However, it is the mayor who will nominate the seniunas, who are only responsible before the mayor.

Only the mayor alone bears direct responsibility for the services provided and the functions fulfilled by each savivaldybe. The mayor is also directly responsible for carrying out the tasks delegated by the national government to the savivaldybe. To take one example, that of Silute: no board has been established, and the mayor wields unlimited powers over the savivaldybe. Such centralising tendencies are common in the savivaldybe.

The Lithuanian legislative authorities have been less interested in the actual functions of the local authorities than in the form of the local institutions. There is no special section in the Law on Local Government upon the actual functions

of the savivaldybe, and no standards for municipal services are fixed by the law. Only the section on the mayor's duties gives hints in this respect. The mayor shall bear responsibility for

1) organising primary and youth education and "additional general education for adults"

2) taking care of "cultural education" of the inhabitants, and fostering "general and ethnic culture"

3) organising primary health care and sickness prevention, and care of the sick, invalids and the elderly

4) take care of sanitation with respect to the hygiene and environment protection norms

5) develop recreation and tourism industry.

Some other service functions are mentioned in prescribing the duties of the savivaldybe board, although insofar as no board is established, the respective functions should be added to the list regarding the mayor. The board should:

6) organise the planning work for territorial development and devise general long-term social, cultural, economic, investment, demographic, ecological and other programmes

7) organise a general territorial plan with prescribed amendments and supplements

8) consider issues of social and industrial infrastructure design and construction

9) organise local housing policies including construction and maintenance, allocation of housing benefits to citizens looking for these benefits, and lease and sale of houses from the stock held by the savivaldybe

10) in co-operation with the employment authorities of the national government, provide municipal citizens employment opportunities, vocational training, vocational re-qualification, and work opportunities in public works

11) in co-operation with other institutions, prepare and implement preventative means for the rescue of citizens in catastrophes, epidemics, and other contingencies

There is no mention in the new Law of some of the functions actually carried out by local governments, such as water supply and street lighting. Furthermore, the savivaldybe mayors are busy with carrying out responsibilities delegated to the savivaldybe by the national government. These responsibilities include census, enterprise registration, national parks management, and conditionally they also include the organisation of municipal police and fire protection, as well as "other functions delegated by law".

In accordance with the Constitution of 1992, a savivaldybe cannot own land, which may be

long only either to the national government or a private person. The savivaldybe may own other kinds of immovable property as far as a special law is passed and a government decision regarding the property to be transferred to local government is accepted. However, this is nothing else than what was included in a law passed 1990, but never implemented. Meanwhile, the savivaldybe have run much of the national government property, which has been put under savivaldybe control in accordance with a government decision of 1991. Now, in turn, a significant part of this property is being transferred to the newly established apskritiai, that is, really returned within the domain of the national government.

4. DEFICIENCIES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF AN IDEAL TYPE OF DEMOCRACY

The new Lithuanian order of elections does stimulate local political life and political development and establish a definite political mandate for the local council members. However, the large average savivaldybe size and the low level of politicisation in society (members of all parties hardly make more than 1 per cent of the population in cities and even less in rural areas) make that the representativeness of the Lithuanian representative municipal democracy is rather poor. Although analogous circumstances prevail not infrequently in stably established political democracies, they are no less appalling from the point of view of the strict democratic requirements of an active civic democracy. There, citizens are not only formally empowered, but they are also politically empowered in the actual daily practice.

A small number of politically active people actually defines the distribution of seats in local councils. This definition also takes place rather accidentally from the point of view of the actual distribution of opinions and attitudes in the public. Gaps between the citizens and the councils formally representing them are not rare. The popularity of the republican leaders of political parties is more evident than that of political personalities in local precincts. Local interest groups and local political organisations are mostly deprived of opportunities to participate in local elections unless they belong to one or another subdivision of the key political parties.

In Lithuania, the municipal council members are nowadays elected by the means of one version

of the system of proportional representation from a list including representatives of those political parties which reach at least the threshold of four per cent of the total vote. It has been something of an unwelcome surprise to conceive of also in Lithuania the common paradox of Western democracy that the total number of those who have actually cast their vote bears no significance, but the election remains no less formally valid, would only one citizen per each savivaldybe turn out to the polls.

Despite the positive changes in the Lithuanian political arena, centralisation has advanced. Appeals drawn out from the national political agenda of each participating political grouping have been common, and the actions of new council members have remained under strict control by national political organisations and their leaders. The independence and the direct responsibility of the public of local council members have not considerably increased either in the administrative or the political dimension.

During the 1990s, the delivery and improvement of public services has been only weakly present in the explicit Lithuanian political agenda. Instead of questions regarding services, their rational allocation and their quality, there have been tendencies to utilise changes in the public service systems to enhance directly the powers of those who decide upon these systems. Such issues as the number of enterprises, real estate and land reform have been of the primary concern instead of the provision of services to meet people's everyday needs. General legislation on municipal self-government may not have to regulate in detail the substance of municipal services in established Western democracies, but in the particular transitional circumstances of Lithuania the absence of such mention is a deficiency. Unlike in the better developed countries, it should neither be ruled out that criteria of effective and efficient local governance be written explicitly in general legislation on local government.

After long discussion at the legislative stage, the Lithuanian parliament Seimas did adopt a quite fruitful definition of local self-government. Section 1 of the Law states that local self-government (savivalda) involves the right and the competence of the representatives elected by the citizens of an administrative territorial unit to regulate and manage the local public affairs freely and without external control, and within the discretion defined by the Constitution and law, to meet the local residents' demands. This definition does give hope that the holes in existing leg-

islation will be patched, and that the complex existing regulations will be simplified by the means of suitable future legislative decisions.

Another matter to be improved is the deficient public image of public officials. In a study made by the Baltic Surveys, Ltd. in 1994, a negative attitude towards officials of central and local governments was expressed by 59 and 55 per cent of the respondents, respectively. People in the active working age and people with higher education were the most critical citizens according to the survey. However, only four per cent of the respondents were able to indicate reasons for their belief in the low competence of public officials. As far as reasons were mentioned, there were selfishness (27%), bureaucracy in the sense of red tape (24) and corruption (7).

There is a need to change the attitudes of the public officials towards their duties. This need is even more urgent than the improvement of their qualifications. If we assume that the citizens are right in their critical opinions, what are the main reasons for the flourishing of selfishness, bureaucracy and corruption? Above all, there is the deficiently organised operation of public institutions. Why are they deficiently organised? A deeper reason for this is the scant interest so far in Lithuanian policy-making in the performance of public service. Again, these matters may not enjoy a high priority in established democracies, either, but the consequences of the ignorance are particularly severe in the transitional countries.

In the transitional country of Lithuania there is a need to define, what public organisations should do and how they could best to it. To change the attitude of civil servants towards their duties, one should start with changing the working environment towards one which encourages adoption of new attitudes and makes the misbehaviours mentioned unlikely. Public official training is one conceivable tool towards this end.

5. TRAINING AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CHANGING ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND CULTURE

The attitude of public officials towards their duties, clients, sources of power, performance standards and responsibilities is based on a mentality learned in their onetime education and socialisation, and embedded in the organisational culture inherited from the previous administrative regime. The actual working environment and the relationships set by the actual circumstances

also play an important role.

To achieve sustainable positive development in the attitudes of public officials, one potentially fruitful instrument is to change first the "landscape" of external factors. However, such legal and political change does not suffice alone for reforming the attitude structures quickly. In a transitional period, the inertia of mental maps tends to be considerably stronger than the inertia of legislation. The former inertia is frequently masked by a widely proclaimed readiness for change, which may conceal a preference towards benefiting from the new order of things instead of a capacity to start doing the things differently for the sake of increasing the new order's potential for survival.

Legislation and the official political agenda may be changed almost overnight, but the same is not true as regards people. Still it is only people who can ensure the sustainability of positive changes. So the two tasks of changing the "landscape" and changing people go actually hand in hand. The first one is especially relevant from the point of view of the very top decision-makers. The second one is very relevant for in-service training targeted upon a sufficiently large critical mass of politicians and civil servants.

In some cases changing attitudes may be accomplished through mere enlightenment of public officials. For example, in transitional countries members of local councils may be positively surprised to learn that the primary mission of elected representatives is to express the wishes and attitudes of the electorate, not to be experts in construction, engineering, public utilities management, and the like. Sheer learning may suffice for a considerable change of attitudes. For another example, the concept of "majority rule" is almost an exclusive definition of the concept of "democracy" for the multitude of new "democrats" borne by totalitarian regimes. To supplement this concept with the concept of "minority rights" may make uncomfortable feelings to come forth among the trainees, but fundamental changes in attitudes towards minorities may well ensue.

There are also other cases where new skills enhance changes in attitudes. For instance, previously boring and time-consuming meetings become interesting, efficient and effective when properly prepared and when pursued by the support of suitable techniques. The attitude towards utilising groups instead of singular decision-makers in problem analysis and actual decision-taking may also lead to dramatic change insofar as the trainees are allowed experiences in construc-

tive team work and the respective skills. Individualists and even some outright authoritarians may start to think and feel differently with respect to possibilities of reaching consensus through well-organised co-operation with others.

Willingness to do things differently may well develop simultaneously with accumulating experiences of doing the things better. Here, people are frequently well motivated towards accepting and pursuing fundamental changes. People are best motivated if they can feel that they have learnt to act more successfully than before. For instance, anyone who wants to win or who at least wants to avoid losses in a negotiation process will obviously apply new skills received through training, if s/he firmly believes that these skills are useful. To generate such willingness to adopt new ways, training should not only be effective and efficient in itself, but it should also be relevant with respect to the practical needs of the trainees' working environment. The best of training is better than what the participants first expected, as it provides them new knowledges, skills and competences that they were not aware of prior to the training.

6. TRAINING AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

One of the harmful illusions held by public officials in transitional countries is the view that only financial and material resources are needed as capacity. For instance, almost all trainees in the School of Democracy and Administration in Nida, directed by the present author and providing training for participants in the Baltic countries and CIS countries, tend to start defining their problems in terms of insufficient financial resources, land or buildings to execute their mission of public services provision. It is useless to argue with them at that point, but later, creative problem identification, realistic solution finding and systematic action planning tend to bring the trainees to the discovery that in most cases the real problems can be solved without additional financing. This is crucial especially where additional resources are absolutely unavailable.

The participants come to such courses as the above ones with a frustration arisen out of their conviction that they are they are regularly doing wrong things. Having in mind some performance standards, transferred from other spheres of activity, literature or visiting experience, the participants tend to feel that their performance is infe-

rior, that they are incompetent or insufficiently qualified, and that their low salaries do not motivate them to improve their ways. However, what they usually have not been able to figure out is what is worth trying and doing and what is not, and what procedures are the most likely to bring about the desirable results.

Training may play a crucial role in enabling public officials to identify problems and not only symptoms, to screen alternative paths of action before decisions, and to screen opportunities and real reasons for problems that they feel they encounter. Here, they have a chance to learn that the goal perhaps cannot be rationally set before the alternative ways of problem solving are carefully analyzed, that restraining forces are often more important than driving factors, and that initially indifferent stakeholders need be initiated to the problématique at hand. At this stage the trainees frequently come to the understanding that the bad performance they are accustomed to tolerate is actually much worse than they used to think, since they have been doing the wrong things, not only in terms of solving artificially formulated problems or setting up unrealistic or just counterproductive goals, but also in terms of wrong definitions of each small step required to proceed towards goal-achievement. Such an experience in training cannot be easily forgotten and should not, either. Trainees undergo important changes both in skills, knowledges, competences and attitudes. Their ensuing activities in the local governments, from where their bulk comes from, tends to become clearly more effective and efficient. This indicates their rising capacity, also as far as the final outcome of their utilisation of the same financial and material resources become considerably better.

Practical skills of brain-storming, team-building, action planning, time and meetings management, communication skills and so on further enhance the capacity of the trainees. These skills enable the trainees to use better the human resources they are in command of. The ultimate result is better use of public resources for the public benefit.

7. THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR CIVIL SERVANTS IN LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian Law on Public Officials, passed in April 1995, includes only the weakly phrased requirement that the officials of a given category

should have the "relevant qualifications". The Law does not mention any measures for acquiring or improving these qualifications. There is no indication of standards, either.

In Lithuania so far there are no regular training courses for civil servants. All training activity has thus remained incidental character. As a result, the contingent of trainees has also remained rather incidental.

Under the Soviet regime until 1990, there was a system of professional qualification improvement and retraining for public officials. It was mainly centralised in two institutions: the Higher School of Communist Party for top political and executive leaders, and the Institute for Qualification Improvement for Managerial Staff and Specialists of the Public Economy. Both had branches in the main cities. The system of party schools was abolished immediately after Lithuania restored here independence and split from the USSR. This is also understandable. However, and differently from the situation in the other spin-off countries of the former Union, the physical training premises and facilities in Vilnius were handed over for regular higher education and in this way removed from utilisation for in-service training of public officials.

The Institute for Qualification Improvement, in turn, was reorganised as the Academy of Management in 1989. In 1990 it became the only institution in the independent Lithuania to provide in-service training for directors of state enterprises and ministerial and local officials. In 1991 this Academy was liquidated, and all its buildings and facilities were re-distributed to many different purposes. No official explanation for these measures were given. It can be expected that the reasons were at least to some extent related to ongoing political struggle. They may have been related to the struggle ensuing after the resignation of Prof. Kazimiera Prunskiene (former Rector of the Academy) from the post of the Prime Minister in January 1991. This is how Lithuania became a country deprived of systematic training of public officials.

At the beginning of 1996 there were three institutions for in-service training of public officials in Lithuania. There was the Public Administration Training Centre (VTTC) in Vilnius, the Municipal Training Centre (MTC) in Kaunas, and the School of Democracy and Administration (VDM) in Nida. The total staff of these institutes was about 25, of whom 5 to 7 were full-time trainers. The total amount of training provided in 1995 was about 2 000 person days, which is small for a country with

17 000 civil servants and a many times higher number of other employees in the public sector.

The supply of in-service training for the public administration personnel in Lithuania is lagging behind the demand. This gap is caused by the absence, in 1990–5, of any national strategy for capacity-building of local governments and by the passiveness of the government in this area. Despite considerable international aid and favorable location at Vilnius, the VTTC has remained weak and without a clearly articulated leading position in the civil service training system devised by its superior Ministry of Public Administration Reform and Local Government. The MTC is a university-affiliated institution and therefore without an official governmental standing. The VDM, in turn, is a private sector provider and therefore without official status. The establishment of a fourth training organisation in the spa resort Druskinkai through a joint effort of local government and national government stakeholders in 1996–7 can neither be expected to resolve the existing problems quickly. Finally, any extensive public sector utilisation of the bulk of market-based providers – including branches of international consulting companies mushrooming in Lithuania – is ruled out for reasons of fiscal austerity.

8. CONCLUSION

"What you sow – that you will reap". Actual development of Lithuanian local self-government in the course of the last five transitional years has not yet brought about crucial improvements in the quality of the public services nor an essentially deeper involvement of the Lithuanian people in political decision-making at the municipal level. In several cases, the opposite has happened.

Some services (such as kindergartens or public laundries) have suffered badly and to a large extent been wiped out in the recent years. Some other services have been deteriorating inexorably, such as public housing services, public services for private housing, and street cleaning. At the same time, what was substandard already before the transition, continues to be so, such as nursing, care for the elderly, and public libraries. This is by no necessity a result of lack of funds. Inability to do the right things and to do them in the right way is the prime reason.

The extent of corruption and protectionism in the Lithuanian local governments would be worth

an investigation. It might be found that these deficiencies are now more severe than they used to be when the local governments were under the strong supervision by the KGB and the Communist Party committees. A wide and deep brain drain has impoverished Lithuanian public governments in the recent years, and the level of education and skill present in those governments is lower than it was five years ago.

It should not be seen as surprising that the trust of the Lithuanian people in the public authorities reached an all-time low in the mid-1990s. It would have been unjust to require of faultlessly democratic and untouchable municipal and other public institutions at the first period of transition. At that time, the democratic slogans were needed nationally and internationally to be able to overthrow the previous regime. Now, ultimately, revolutionary disorder should be changed to a solid public order. The most complicated challenge is to create a really democratic country, although there is nothing that is more difficult for the young democracies.

In the recent years, general competition for power and political struggle regarding property rights, their definition and their restoration have dominated the Lithuanian political arena. That phase is now coming towards the end. In the present situation, we will either have to witness of the degeneration of the Lithuanian local democracy into institutions of local execution of national government policies, or of the revival of democracy at the local level. To reverse the tendency of national government-led centralisation does not have to mean a collapse at the local governments.

To overcome the previous authoritarian rule led by the CPSU and recover from its aftermath was only one part of the transition. The second part involves giving the free-floating power, taken from the hands of the CPSU, to the Lithuanian people. This also involves an end to using "territory" and administration regarding territories for the implementation of centralised national ideals instead of improving the services provided for the local citizens on a permanent basis and under the principle of "continuous improvement". This can be seen to amount to nothing less than a "second democratic revolution".

Reconstruction of the functions of local governments in Lithuania and other post-communist states in the period of critical socio-economic changes demands a great amount of re-engineering of the structures and functions of public administration, including the management of service provision. The scope of feasible change is strictly framed by the scope of available professional knowledge, skill and competence. They are needed to operate the re-designed organisations.

The experience of wild, jumping re-engineering in Lithuania demonstrates the hopelessness of efforts to implement dynamic and sustainable models of up-to-date public management before the corresponding development of human resources is well enough under way. This takes time, even when the appropriate measures are well designed and implemented, and it will never happen automatically. The ability to accommodate desirable changes is an important parameter for any organisation. In the post-totalitarian societies this parameter is as important as anywhere.