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EMPOWERING PUBLIC PROFESSIONALS: THE ROLE OF DESIGN THINKING AND AGILE METHODS IN PROFESSIONALISM ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract. *In recent decades, the approach to public services management has undergone significant transformation (Osborne 2021), driven in part by the evolving context in which these services operate, characterized by the VUCA environment (Van der Wal 2017). As a result, a fundamental shift in management methods has become essential. Design thinking and Agile methods have been touted as potential catalysts for this shift. However, despite their growing popularity, empirical evidence on their effectiveness in public services management is scarce. This research aims to contribute to filling this knowledge gap by exploring how these methods can be leveraged to enhance public professionals' capabilities and ultimately improve services management. Drawing on empirical research from a case study of municipal administration (issuing permits for managing protected vegetation on non-forest land) implementing combined Design thinking and Agile methods, involving real-world data and observations, this research identifies how Design thinking and Agile methods enhance the professionalism of public employees. In such way this research broadens understanding on how Design thinking and Agile methods impact public services management and provides evidence-based recommendations for improving public services delivery through innovative management approaches. Results of research showed that in a VUCA environment, public employees need new competencies such as cognitive,*

analytical, intercultural and personal effectiveness that help them flexibly adapt to constantly changing conditions, solve problems creatively and collaborate effectively. Combining Design thinking and Agile methods (Scrum and Kanban) into public service management can significantly improve service quality and customer satisfaction, as these methods encourage innovation and strengthen the professionalism of employees. It is important that the organization's culture, training and resources are properly adapted to apply these methods effectively. When properly implemented, these methods can improve service management, employee engagement, and organizational performance.

Keywords: *VUCA environment, professionalism, Design Thinking, Agile methods, Public services management system.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *VUCA aplinka, profesionalizmas, Dizainu grįstas mąstymas, Agile metodai, viešosios paslaugos vadybos sistema.*

Introduction

The VUCA environment strategically becomes a challenge for public organizations and professionals (Van Der Wal 2017; Gläser 2021). The gap between the constantly changing needs of citizens and the capabilities of Public services management systems has created fertile ground for experimentation with new management methods. Design thinking and Agile methods represent two such innovations. In the public sector, Design thinking has stood out for its focus on customer needs and innovative problem-solving methods, making it widely discussed. However, its impact on addressing intricate societal issues remains uncertain. Likewise, while Agile methods are celebrated for enhancing efficiency, collaboration, and adaptability in various fields, their effectiveness in the realm of public services management continues to be an area of exploration.

Management methods significantly influence the way organizations are structured, processes are designed, and employees are managed. This directly impacts their behavior, motivation, and overall performance. Thus, this research delves into **how Design thinking and Agile methods – Scrum and Kanban – can empower public employees and enhance their professionalism in public services management. Aim of the research** – explore the role of Design thinking and Agile methods on the professionalism of public employees in public services management in the VUCA environment. **Tasks of the research:** (i) explore the interplay between management methods and employee professionalism in public services management in the VUCA environment; (ii) reveal benefits and constraints of Design thinking and Agile methods application empowering public professionals.

The first section of the paper discusses public services management in the VUCA environment and presents Public services management system (Prototype) based on Design thinking and Agile methods application. It examines public professionals' competencies required in the VUCA environment and how they are met by Design thinking and Agile methods application in public services management. The second section of the paper presents the results from the case study, i. e. it examines the application of Design thinking and Agile methods in Kaunas district municipality (Lithuania), more specifically, in one of the public services provided by the municipality – the issuing permits for managing protected vegetation on non-forest land. Key insights from the prototype testing revealed critical success factors for both Design thinking and Scrum methods and, additionally, Kanban principles are discussed. In this way potential challenges and necessary conditions for successful implementation of Design thinking and Agile methods are identified. They are directly related to both the competencies needed for Design thinking and Agile methods application (as enabler) and competencies enhanced applying Design thinking and Agile methods (as result of applying the management methods). Research insights were not confined to testing results alone; on the contrary, they were largely dependent on the practical knowledge and hands-on experience that the researchers, being certified experts of Design thinking and Scrum had gained from applying these methods in a wide range of organizations and teams.

The need of public professionals' competencies in the VUCA environment

Public services operate in a dynamic and complex context that requires adaptable principles to meet changing public needs and perceptions (Lenaerts 2012). Understanding this context requires recognizing it as the VUCA environment characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity that is valuable as it aids public professionals in comprehending the environment in which they work (Johansen and Euchner 2013). Addressing the challenges of the VUCA environment requires new perceptions. *Volatility*, defined as the intensity of fluctuations over time (Gläser 2021), involves rapid and unpredictable changes when unexpected events disrupt systems and norms, making change constant (Van Der Wal 2017). Addressing this, "the strategy needs to evolve from resisting volatility to working with it through agility and enabling adaptive capacity" (Munich Business Scholl n.d). In the VUCA world, organizational strategy must be clear about its goals but flexible in its methods (Johansen and Euchner 2013). *Uncertainty*, which is characterized by the unpredictability of many events with uncertain short-term and medium-term nonlinear interaction consequences (Gläser 2021; Van Der Wal 2017) - requires that "strategy moves from defining one likely future environment to creating one optimal environment. A strategy for building organizations that can operate on multiple outcomes by increasing diversity" (Munich Business Scholl n.d). Addressing this challenge demands cultivating clarity and confidence (Johansen and Euchner 2013), along with fostering professionalism, to navigate uncertainties and ensure teams are prepared and knowledgeable in handling diverse situations. The complexity stems from the interaction and interdependence of numerous contributing factors (Gläser 2021; Çiçeklioğlu 2020), complicating the understanding of the intricate connections between events and issues (Van Der Wal 2017). In the public sector, addressing this complexity requires professionalism, as leaders must navigate these challenges with a deep understanding of the factors and an ability to manage and integrate diverse elements effectively. *Ambiguity* arising from the lack of explanatory models leads to multiple interpretations and misinterpretations of events (Gläser 2021; Nishimoto 2021; Van Der Wal 2017), professional of the public sector need to be a systems thinker to understand the interrelationships and gain different perspectives (Munich Business Scholl n.d). Professionalism in this context can be gained through ambiguity, agility, and adaptability.

The VUCA environment requires public employees to develop new competencies that would help them navigate and operate in such an environment. Active competence development enables better adaptation to a changing environment, ensures more effective problem-solving capabilities and provides a broader skill set (Bourne 2021). In the VUCA world, public employees need to navigate organisational and personal challenges of staying relevant (Shet 2024). Responding to these challenges, researchers examine various competencies that would help navigate this environment and attempt to classify them into appropriate categories. Shet (2024) developed the competencies framework consisting of four competencies` categories (cognitive, analytical, cross-cultural and personal effectiveness) for the VUCA environment (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Employee competencies for the VUCA environment*

Competencies for the VUCA	Sub-competencies	Examples of capabilities
Cognitive competencies	Cognitive flexibility	to adapt to a changing environment; to experiment and provide new ideas; to generate different ideas regarding new and fast changing information; to make decisions even without all the information, etc.
	Agility mindset	to see new opportunities; to solve complex challenges; to step out of the comfort zone, etc.
	Personal ambidexterity	to experiment with new ideas, technologies and approaches; to be open to new ideas; not to be afraid of risk; to make creative solutions, etc.

Competencies for the VUCA	Sub-competencies	Examples of capabilities
Analytical competencies	Complex problem solving	to solve complex challenges; to provide unknown solutions; to manage risks, etc.
	Creativity	to provide new, unexpected solutions; to explore different ideas; to turn ideas into tangible solutions, etc.
Cross-cultural competencies	Cross-cultural collaboration	to work with people who have different cultural background; to respect different opinion, etc.
	Cross-cultural intelligence	to effectively navigate and interact within diverse cultural and social contexts; tolerate different cultural and social contexts; to manage conflicts, etc.
Personal effectiveness competencies	Personal resilience	to be resilient in stressful situations; to manage emotions; to make decisions in stressful and unknown situations, etc.
	Continuous learning	to be curious; to be proactive; to be self-directed, etc.
	Adaptive mindset	not be afraid of new situations, etc.

Source: Shet, 2024

Shet (2024) stated this framework includes the key competencies that are crucial as they help "embrace change, remain motivated despite difficulties and approach learning as an ongoing journey of growth" (Shet 2024, p. 15). Which, in turn, leads to enhanced professionalism.

Design thinking and Agile methods application for Public services management

Service management is an area of activity that focuses on creating, providing and improving services to ensure the satisfaction of customer needs. This includes the entire process from the idea of the service to its realization and customer service. Service management encompasses a wide range of areas, including service design, service organization models, and activities that shape the value and customer relationships in service, marketing, and resourcing (both human and financial, as well as technological resources) (Osborne et al. 2013; Osborne et al. 2014; Osborne et al. 2015). The goal of service management is to provide high-quality service and create value for customers. Service management requires specific methods to manage the intangible, variable and often inseparable aspects of service, ensuring that customers receive consistently high-quality service and a positive experience.

The application of combined Design thinking and Agile methods can significantly enhance public services management and lead to improved service quality and customer satisfaction. By combining Design thinking and Agile methods, public services providers develop and provide services that are innovative and effective, customer-centered (based on customer needs/expectations and feedback). Each method being unique and distinguished, when applied together they reinforce each other and lead to improved work processes and public services delivery (see Table 2).

A **management system** is the organizing framework (a coherent set of policies, processes, procedures, and resources) used by an organization to fulfill effectively and efficiently the tasks required to achieve and sustain its operational and business goals/objectives through a process of continuous improvement (Osborne et al. 2022; Teixeira et al. 2017). Therefore, the **Public services management system** is based on iterative development or improvement and implementation of solutions, where the management methods integration is at the level of the service system (rather than the solution) (Campbell et al. 2010; Teixeira et al. 2017; Ostrom et al. 2015; Trischler et al. 2019). Public services management process consists of three phases: *Discovering*, *Delivering* and *Operations* (see Fig. 1).

Table 2. *Combining Design thinking and Agile methods in public services management*

Public services management features	Design thinking	Agile methods
Deep customer understanding and focused problem solving	provides public services commences with empathy, which involves comprehending customers' needs, emotions, and behaviors. By viewing challenges from the perspective of the customer, public service providers can prioritize the issues that are of paramount importance to citizens.	complements by breaking down these customer-defined problems into manageable tasks, allowing for continuous feedback and iterative improvement. This ensures that solutions are continuously refined based on real-world use and feedback, leading to more effective and customer-aligned public services.
Enhanced creativity and innovation	stimulates innovation and creativity as priority is given to idea generation, where the creation of many innovative concepts is essential. It encourages public service teams to push the boundaries of conventional thinking, thereby encouraging the development of innovative solutions and expanding the boundaries of possibility.	encourages creativity through a structured approach to rapid prototyping and experimentation. Public service teams can rapidly implement new ideas, test them in real-world conditions, and improve based on feedback. This continuous process of feedback and improvement helps ensure that innovative ideas are not only creative, but also practically effective and efficient.
Rapid prototyping and iterative improvement	focuses on prototyping and rapid validation of ideas. This hands-on approach enables public service teams to visualize and refine solutions at an early stage, reducing the chance of error	uses iterative cycles (Sprints) that allow continuous testing and improvement of processes. Each sprint phase ends with a review and retrospective, giving teams the opportunity to assess which strategies were effective and which were less successful, as well as to identify ways to improve efficiency in the next cycle. This iterative process creates a flexible and responsive public service management model that ensures continuous service improvement and responsiveness to customer needs.
Cross-functional collaboration and communication	the idea generation and prototyping involve professionals from various fields, ensuring that diverse perspectives are included. Such diversity helps create solutions that are comprehensive and reflect a wider range of interests	closer collaboration is encouraged by creating an environment of open communication and teamwork. Scrum and Kanban methodologies call for regular meetings, such as Daily stand-up discussions or Retrospective sessions, and the use of visual tools such as Scrum or Kanban boards that help the team stay informed and cohesive work together Such cooperation strengthens team spirit and ensures continuous involvement of all members in the service development process
Flexibility and adaptability	by continuous cycles of prototyping and testing enable teams to consistently improve solutions based on customer feedback. This approach helps to ensure that public services are designed based on the real needs of citizens and solve real problems.	an iterative approach encourages rapid adaptation, allowing teams to flexibly respond to changing requirements, priorities and feedback. This adaptation strategy is critical in the dynamic environment of public services, where needs and challenges can change rapidly and unpredictably.

Source: prepared by the authors.

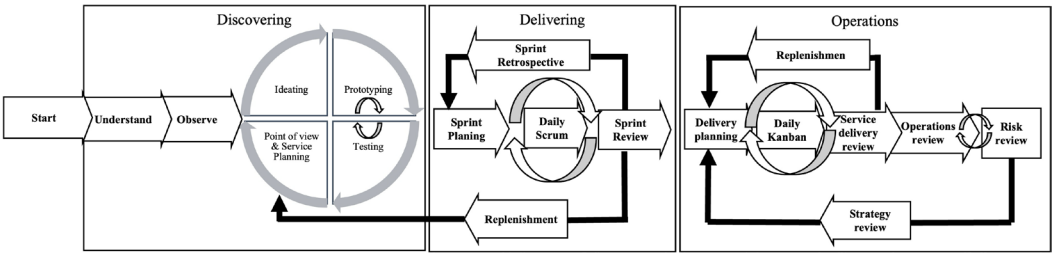

Figure 1. *Public services management process*

Source: prepared by the authors

The service *Discovering* by co-defining service value is set to develop a **Service concept** based on the logic of the service **as single Business case** and focused on value creation. Discovering is based on the logic of Design thinking, which includes 6 steps (Glomann 2018; Tschimmel 2012) and is supplemented with the missing elements of the Business model.

The service *Delivering by* co-designing service value is carried out using the Scrum, which enables the development of the Service system on continuous iterations (i.e., Sprints). Iterative Service backlog implementation ensures incremental service development growing both the quality and resources efficiency. This phase ends with set up of or improvements in functioning Service system.

Service *Operations* by co-delivering service value is carried out using the Kanban method, which is focused on the efficient achievement of a quality result. It is based on service value creation and its support streams uniting the interaction of the customer and the provider. The service value creation stream focuses on the day-to-day delivery of the service revealing front-office and back-office actions at each touchpoint, while service value support stream focuses on reinforced customer service and incident management.

Professionalism in Public services management in the VUCA environment

Professionalism in the context of public services management includes competences (skills and capacities, knowledge and behavior) that indicates how efficiently, and qualitatively public sector professionals perform their work in public service design and delivery. Design thinking and Agile methods can significantly enhance various skills and capacities in public services management (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Design thinking and Agile methods` role to employees' competencies f or the VUCA environment in public services management*

	Analytical	**Cognitive**	**Cross-cultural**	**Personal effectiveness**
Skills and capacities	Problem definition and solving	Prototyping and testing Iterative delivery Time management	Collaboration Communication	Creativity and ideation Customer-centered mindset Value-oriented thinking
Knowledge and behavior	Data analysis and problem-solving	Adaptability and innovation	Collaboration and communication	Customer-centricity

Source: prepared by the authors.

These practical abilities can be acquired, refined, and developed through training, practice, and experience. Empowering public professionals involves not only improving specific skills but also enhancing their overall capacity to act effectively in diverse situations or contexts (Todhunter 2017; Ganapati 2021). This includes expanding their knowledge base and refining their behaviors to meet the demands of modern public services.

Services management methods play a significant role in the professionalism of public employees, as they provide a structured and systematic approach to service design and delivery. Management methods are enablers of improved work processes and public service delivery leads to *high service quality, efficiency and customer satisfaction.* It enhances the skills and capacities of employees which improves *professionalism* and overall professional growth fosters *empowered public professionals.* Thus, Design thinking and Agile methods emphasizing learning and improvement can enhance public employees` knowledge and skills, boosting their professionalism. As well as fostering professionals' autonomy and decision-making, it can enhance a sense of ownership, commitment and responsibility among public servants, leading to increased professionalism.

Methodology

The Public services management system was treated as the prototype. Thus, prototype testing was an essential step to ensure the effectiveness and real-world suitability of the Public services management system. Qualitative case study was selected as a research methodology as it helps exploring a real-time phenomenon within its naturally occurring context through various data sources (Rashid et al. 2019). Following the process of case study (Rashid et al. 2019) in the foundation phase there was aim of testing and objectives set. The **aim of testing** was to evaluate and optimize the Public services management system to ensure its effectiveness and relevance under the real-world conditions. The **objectives of testing** were set up following the requirements of prototype testing (Cagan 2017) based on categories of usability, value, feasibility and viability: (i) To identify any usability issues or barriers that hinder the efficient and effective operation of the Public services management system; (ii) To assess the extent to which the Public services management system delivers tangible benefits (both for customers and public employees); (iii) To identify any (technical, operational, resource, etc.) constraints that may hinder the Public services management system's deployment; (iv) To assess the Public services management system's compliance with and/or adaptability to organization context (structure, processes, culture, etc.).

In the pre-field phase case selection involving various participants was conducted. The case study was carried out by analyzing the specific public service - ***the issuance of permits to cut, prune or transform protected vegetation growing on non-forest land***. Greenery is important to public welfare as it performs important ecological functions such as air purification, maintaining biodiversity, climate regulation and creating aesthetic value, i.e. help maintain a healthy and quality environment. The state must ensure that plantations are properly managed and protected. The permit system allows authorities to monitor and protect vegetation, prevent illegal logging and destruction, thereby maintaining environmental balance and biodiversity. The permit system helps protect valuable trees and other plants from illegal felling, pruning or conversion. When issuing permits, public authorities can ensure compliance with all legal requirements and standards, which helps to avoid potential disputes and conflicts. So, the essence of the service is to ensure that protected vegetation is properly managed and protected (in compliance with legal acts), which is important for the well-being of society and the environment. The issuance of these permits is assigned to the municipal administration unit responsible for environmental protection in Lithuania. In medium-sized municipalities, several dozen to several hundred permits can be issued per year, depending on the amount of vegetation, the level of urbanization and the needs of the population. The number of permits may also vary depending on specific projects of the year, season or other factors. Customers of this service include **residents** who own private holdings; **business entities and organizations** when any

organization oversees its territory, and when the company's activity is the construction of real estate or engineering or communication infrastructure, etc.; and **municipal institutions** itself, which can carry out maintenance and management of greenery in public spaces.

Kaunas district (Lithuania) has a large amount of greenery (one of the largest and most densely populated districts in the country, with an area of 149.5 thousand hectares, the population is over 103 thousand, 30% of the territory is covered with forests), which is important for the local ecosystem and the well-being of the population. As the area continues to expand and develop, it is important to ensure that the right balance between urbanization and greenspace protection is maintained during development. **The Environmental Protection Department of Kaunas District Municipality Administration** was looking for the improvement of the issuing permits (the public service) that must accommodate frequent legislative changes, dissatisfaction of customers and is complex and dealt manually in case-by-case manner.

The selected public Service team (6 members) performing the testing consisted of the Service owner (head of the department), Service manager (deputy manager of the department), Service specialists (department employees), head of the Department of Resident services and document management and the IT manager. The Department of Resident services and document management is the department responsible for advising service customers (by providing information on the municipality's website, by phone or upon arrival), assistance in filling out and registering service requests both upon arrival and online, i.e. serves as the customer "entry" into the service process point. The head of this department is directly related to and responsible for the design and development of various cross-functional processes happening in the department. The IT manager is responsible for the development and maintenance of IT tools and systems used by the municipality, also consulting and assisting customers. By improving the system's functionality and data connectivity, it reduces the complexity of the service and increases the speed of the process for both customers and employees.

The field phase encompassed data collection and analysis. Based on the principles of prototype testing, a testing plan and tasks were prepared for testing, the testing progress and results were recorded (in the protocols), and the directions for improving the prototype were identified. In testing a subset of Public services management system was covered: the activities of Kick-off meeting, Design thinking approach, Value stream diagramming and Public service concept definition in the Discovery phase, implementation planning and Scrum implementation (one Sprint only) in the Delivery phase. The Service team worked according to the challenge created for the municipality, corresponding to the real problems of providing selected public service. During the testing, the main components of the prototype were identified, the implementation of which would allow the Service team to achieve the expected result - to improve public service. For each workshop and in-between the workshops, the feedback was collected via live communication and notes-taking during the implementation and at the end of the implementation, interviews with the Service team members were conducted. Feedback from the Research team members was recorded from the positions of the session leader and observer. The testing lasted up to 2 months (in March and April of 2023), with the Service team meeting once or twice each week. During the testing, a series of face-to-face and online events (overall 11 sessions) took place in a workshop format, of which 7 sessions (duration up to 3 hours each) were organized in the municipality and 4 sessions remotely (duration from 15 up to 30 minutes each).

The reporting phase included developing a detailed report on results and recommendations on Public services management system (prototype) improvement. This testing process revealed the essential improvements needed to increase the service's efficiency and provided valuable insights into the impact of real conditions on the Public services management system. The feedback and collected data provide a better understanding of how the system works in practice and highlight important aspects for further improvement. Detailed testing results and recommendations based on them are presented in the following sections.

Findings

Analysis of the role of management methods on employee professionalism was partial aspect of testing. However, several key aspects were revealed during testing. First, it was seen that the system helps employees improve their professional competencies, employees acquire new knowledge and skills needed for effective service management. The system helped employees perform tasks more efficiently (in this case, to find and implement service improvement solutions), thus using the system reduced time costs and increased work productivity. Noteworthy, Design thinking and Scrum require specific skills that employees did not have beforehand in testing. Since the research team members were Design Thinking facilitator and Scrum master roles during the testing, the employees did not experience a lack of knowledge. Otherwise, it can lead to stress and dissatisfaction if employees feel they are not competent enough to take on new tasks. Moreover, if there is not enough time and resources for employees' training, they may not be able to effectively use new methods, which may reduce the quality of their work.

Second, the system encouraged collaboration between different units and employees, created synergy between the Service team members and positively affected the overall working atmosphere. The system enabled effective feedback mechanisms between managers and employees, thus allowing quick and efficient resolution of issues and improvement of processes based on the results of employee and customer research. The system clearly defined responsibilities and division of tasks among employees, thus helping to reduce the transfer of responsibility and encouraging clear tasks, voluntary and proactive involvement of each employee. The system encouraged the creation and implementation of innovations, provided employees with opportunities to test new ideas and methods, and to assess how much this contributes to improving the quality of services. During the test, it was observed that the implementation of new methods can lead to conflicts between employees and managers due to incompatible work methods and expectations. When managers are not sufficiently committed (attending meetings) and thus do not sufficiently support new methods or understand their importance, this can demotivate employees and reduce their enthusiasm for innovation. In addition, Scrum iterations (Sprints) are intensive and require high employee involvement, which can lead to burnout and reduced work efficiency in the long run. This can lead to resistance and demotivation. Relying heavily on process changes and customer feedback can be frustrating and stressful, especially if employees don't have enough time to adapt to the new requirements. Thus, this showed that the system requires a cultural shift towards flexibility and collaboration, which may be difficult for managers and employees in traditional structures to accept.

As the Public services management system serves as a foundation for future implementations, the case study provided valuable insights and lessons learned for public organizations. The testing revealed the most important success factors for each management method and conditions necessary for the application of the public services management system (prototype). A well-formed Service team is very important for the Design thinking process, which must be multidisciplinary, i.e. composed of employees from various units. This ensures that different ideas and perspectives are included in the process. While an external facilitator can be helpful, it is important that all team members participate equally, without pre-defined roles, as this encourages creativity and open collaboration. To be effective, it is necessary to define the challenge the team will solve to focus on solving specific problems throughout the Design thinking process. It is also important to ensure a properly organized space for collaboration and creativity, with all the necessary tools and a set time frame for the process.

A Service team applying Scrum should have enough members who have the right competencies and are drawn from different functional units to effectively solve complex problems. It is important that the team is empowered and has the autonomy to make decisions so that the Scrum processes can run smoothly and without interruptions. To successfully implement the process, it is necessary to ensure proper training of team members and maintain a motivating Service vision that is clearly understood by all team members. In addition, it is necessary to constantly review and prioritize the Service backlog, considering customer value and team satisfaction, to ensure efficient and high-quality work output.

The Kanban method's success requires a good understanding of Kanban principles by the managers and Service team. It is important to visualize workflows, clearly defining both existing and target processes, so that the team can effectively work towards the desired results. Determining and incremental improvement of work-in-progress (WIP) constraints should be based on historical data analysis to optimize processes and avoid excessive workload. In addition, feedback loops and Kanban board implementation must be tailored to the specifics of the organization, ensuring effective and efficient team collaboration and process management.

Discussion

The case study shows that Design thinking and Agile methods supported the development of employees' competencies for VUCA environment (*Analytical, Cognitive, Cross-cultural, Personal effectiveness*) and thus confirmed role on professionalism. However, while Design thinking and Agile methods have many advantages, combining Design Thinking and Agile methods raises several important challenges. The first challenge relates to the potential conflict between design thinking, which is based on deep empathy, and Agile methods, whose nature is focused on rapid iterations. Design thinking seeks to deeply understand customer needs and problems, which requires time and extensive research. Meanwhile, Agile methods focus on fast decision cycles, which do not always allow for sufficient attention to detail. This can lead to a tension between the two approaches, as the design thinking process requires more time and in-depth research, while Agile requires rapid and continuous testing.

A second challenge comes from the potential for confusion when teams try to integrate these different approaches. Each of them has its own specific principles and processes, so combining them can be difficult. Agile methods require rapid action to build, measure and learn, while design thinking is based on continuous learning followed by development. This difference can lead to misunderstandings and issues with process management, as different workflows and priorities can confuse teams.

A third challenge relates to the organizational culture changes required to implement these approaches. Both methods are characterized by an experimental approach, which may introduce the risk that the final solutions will not be successful or will not meet the objectives. Although design thinking emphasizes customer needs, important political, legal, and other factors can be overlooked that can make it difficult to adapt solutions to a wider population.

Finally, these approaches require different competencies, and organizations may experience resistance to change. Design thinking and Agile methods often challenge conventional working methods and the status quo, so teams must learn to adapt to new ways of working and ensure that all members are well informed and focused on common goals. Additionally, these methods may require significant resources to conduct the necessary research, prototyping, and testing, which can be a financial burden.

To successfully implement design thinking and Agile methods in public services management, it is necessary to ensure certain conditions and enabling factors. First, the organizational culture must support innovation and customer orientation, and team members must be ready to embrace new ideas and continuously improve service delivery processes. For the effective application of these methods, it is important to prioritize the client's needs, so that decisions are not focused on administrative convenience, but on accessibility, fairness and ensuring client involvement. Transparency and clearly stated expectations are essential to make services understandable and accessible to everyone.

The second important aspect is the development of a culture of flexibility, adaptability and cooperation. Organizational structures must allow for easy response to changing requirements and needs, and design thinking and Agile methods must be integrated into daily processes so that teams can quickly adapt and create services that meet real customer expectations. Cooperation between different disciplines and different organizational levels must be encouraged to avoid bureaucratic barriers and to better integrate specialists from different fields into the process of service development and improvement. This includes

ensuring that citizens and stakeholders are continuously engaged through feedback, so that services are responsive to real needs and effectively adapted to changing challenges.

Finally, leadership and adequate resources are essential to ensure successful integration of the methods. Managers must actively support the implementation of these methods by motivating teams and providing the necessary support and resources to ensure that these methods are applied effectively and become an integral part of the organization's operations. Adequate resources (time, budget, and personnel) include financial resources, training and time required to develop skills. For example, Design thinking requires specific skills of ethnography, behavioral sciences, communication, design, and architecture. Training programs are essential for employees to acquire the necessary skills to work with Design Thinking and Agile methods. Such training helps teams understand how to use both methods effectively and how to integrate them into their daily work processes.

Conclusions

The VUCA environment requires new competencies to help public employees deal effectively with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. According to Shet (2024), these competencies include cognitive, analytical, intercultural and personal effectiveness. They enable professionals to flexibly adapt to changing conditions, solve problems creatively and collaborate effectively in different contexts. Service management methods contribute to a more structured approach to service management, emphasizing quality and efficiency. At the same time, it can adapt and improve these methods to better suit the specific needs and culture of the organization. By doing so, service management can ensure that the methods are effective and well-received and embraced by the employees within the organization. Such an approach can led to employees' professionalism and higher engagement, improving overall organizational performance.

Combining Design thinking and Agile methods (Scrum and Kanban) in public services management can significantly improve service quality and customer satisfaction. These methods encourage the creation of innovative services that meet customer needs, while at the same time strengthening the professionalism of employees. The iterative process of creating and implementing solutions allows us to quickly respond to constantly changing requirements, ensuring the improvement of service quality and efficiency. In addition, these methods develop civil servants' competencies such as the ability to analyze data, solve problems, adapt to change and work in teams. After mastering these methods, professionals become more customer-oriented, more efficient and able to achieve better service quality and higher customer satisfaction, which contributes to the growth of public welfare. However, while Design Thinking and Agile methods can improve employee competencies and service management, their successful adoption requires significant organizational culture changes, employee training, and appropriate resource allocation. Combining these approaches can be difficult due to different work styles and priorities, but if an organization is able to overcome these challenges, it can significantly improve both service quality and employee engagement.

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VIEŠŲJŲ PASLAUGŲ DARBUOTOJŲ ĮGALINIMAS: DIZAINU GRĮSTO MĄSTYMO IR AGILE METODŲ VAIDMUO DIDINANT PROFESIONALIZMĄ

Anotacija. *Pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais nuolat besikeičiantis viešųjų paslaugų kontekstas, sąlygojamas VUCA aplinkos (Van der Wal 2017), lemia esminius paslaugų valdymo bei valdymo metodų pokyčius (Osborne 2021). Dizainu grįstas mąstymas ir Agile metodai yra laikomi potencialiais šių pokyčių katalizatoriais. Tačiau, nepaisant didėjančio jų populiarumo, empirinių įrodymų apie šių metodų veiksmingumą viešųjų paslaugų valdyme stokojama. Šio straipsnio tikslas – ištirti šių metodų panaudojimo galimybes, siekiant padidinti viešųjų paslaugų darbuotojų profesionalizmą ir pagerinti viešųjų paslaugų valdymą. Taikant Dizainu grįsto mąstymo ir Agile metodus, atlikta atvejo analizė savivaldybės administracijoje, tiriant viešąją paslaugą – leidimų išdavimą saugotinų medžių ir krūmų kirtimui bei genėjimui. Nustatyta, kad Dizainu grįsto mąstymo ir Agile metodų taikymas didina viešųjų paslaugų darbuotojų profesionalizmą. Šio tyrimo rezultatai ne tik praplėtė supratimą apie tai, kaip Dizainu grįsto mąstymo ir Agile metodų taikymas prisideda prie viešųjų paslaugų valdymo tobulinimo, bet ir leido pateikti įrodymais grįstas rekomendacijas, kaip pagerinti viešųjų paslaugų teikimą taikant novatoriškus valdymo metodus. Tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad VUCA aplinkoje viešųjų paslaugų darbuotojams reikalingos tokios naujos kompetencijos, kaip kognityvinė, analitinė, tarpkultūrinė ir asmeninio efektyvumo, kurios padeda lanksčiai prisitaikyti prie nuolat kintančių sąlygų, kūrybiškai spręsti problemas ir efektyviai bendradarbiauti. Dizainu grįsto mąstymo ir Agile metodų (Scrum ir Kanban) derinimas viešųjų paslaugų valdyme gali ženkliai pagerinti viešųjų paslaugų kokybę ir vartotojų pasitenkinimą, nes skatina inovacijas ir stiprina darbuotojų profesionalizmą. Siekiant šių metodų panaudojimo veiksmingumo, būtina adaptuoti organizacijos kultūrą, mokymus ir išteklius. Tinkamas šių metodų įgyvendinimas gali prisidėti prie paslaugų valdymo, darbuotojų įsitraukimo ir organizacijos veiklos tobulinimo.*

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