
The Professional Training Qualification Process for Prison Service Officers

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Abstract:

Purpose: The article depicts the way the process of qualifying for professional training is perceived by the participants of the process.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Theoretical methods: content analysis of the subject literature, normative documents and synthesis, but also empirical methods: diagnostic study made with the use of an interview technique, diagnostic study with a questionnaire technique, were both used in the paper.

Findings: The conducted empirical studies reveal, that the process of qualifying the Prison Service officers for professional training is perceived by its participants in many different ways and needs improvement.

Practical implications: Shortening the latency time through extending the entrance limit for training may significantly influence the mitigation of stress connected to work in the characterised formation and will let prepare the Prison Service Officers for professional duties much quicker.

Originality/ value: Refinement directions have been indicated. They can be of an important value in improving the professional training qualification process for Prison Service Officers.

Keywords: Prison service, professional training, training qualification process.

JEL codes: M53, M54, Y1.

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1. Introduction

The requirements set for the Prison Service Officers as well as the legal notices regarding their qualifications improvement, have been stated in a normative document, which is a Prison Service Act of 9 April 2010 ('PSA')¹² (OJ 2021, item 1064). The cited document enumerates the types of training the Prison Service Officers have to undergo the moment they join the service and during the service. They include: initial, professional and technical training.

Their general aim is to shape the officers' competences especially in the scope of: dealing with difficult and extreme situations; assertive and emphatic behaviors; discipline and cooperation; creative problem solving; ethics; acting according to the law and within the law.

Prison Service is a formation created by personnel which is diverse in terms of education and tasks. The training process of Prison Service Officers thereupon requires creating training programs, which are professional and adequate to the realized tasks.

The appropriate regulations are normalized by Prison Service General Director's enactments, which include not only the training programs, but also other guidelines regarding, among others, the training planning subprocess, with particular interest put on the time and form of the training; the rules of passing and taking exams; the positions of the officers being subjected to trainings, especially from the perspective of the employment conditions.

The process of professional training the officers take part in during the service in a particular formation is aimed at complementing the knowledge and skills connected with the Prison Service personnel professional tasks. The training is of a continual character and is prepared to create an integrated professional knowledge and skills system.

The training needs of Prison Service organizational units are notified at a commandant of a given unit, who is appointed by a General Director, and who realizes the recruitment of Prison Service Officers in an electronic training support system and appoints a recruitment commission to conduct recruitment proceedings.

Recruitment proceedings are based on assessing the candidates according to accepted professional training recruitment criteria, set by the General Director with an appropriate enactment. A knowledge test ordered by the General Director can also be grounds for qualifying for the training.

The Prison Service officers, who get the highest score in the knowledge test are qualified for the training according to a settled place limit for a given Academy, Central Administration, particular regional inspectorates and centers. Both, the kinds

and the times of the professional trainings are stated in the central training schedule prepared for a given calendar year and approved by the Prison Service General Director.

The process of qualifying the Prison Service officers has been accepted as the research subject. Taking into account the formulated research subject, the main aim was the assessment of the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers by its participants and notifying the possibilities for improvement. In compliance with the subject and the aim of the study, the research problem has been brought to a question: how is the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers assessed and what actions can be undertaken to efficiently realize it?

The accepted research subject, the aim and the problem led to formulate a working hypothesis: the process of qualifying the Prison Service officers for professional training is variously assessed by its participants. Detailed hypotheses:

H₁: Women assessed the process of qualifying for Prison Service officers professional training worse than men.

H₂: The longer the job seniority of the participants the worse assessment of the process.

H₃: The representatives of different corps assessed the qualification process differently.

2. Materials and Methods

Theoretical and empirical research methods have been adapted to solve the formulated research problem and verify the accepted hypothesis. The analysis of the subject literature and normative documentation has served a role of a starting point to set theoretical frames. Synthesis has been used to formulate final conclusions, which stemmed from the adapted research methods. The synthesis also allowed to develop the propounded proposals of solutions, in the context of qualifying the officers for Prison Service professional training.

During the research following empirical methods have been applied: diagnostic survey with a interview method, diagnostic survey with a questionnaire method. The material collected with a questionnaire was of a qualitative character. The choice of the experts has been based on the epistemic authority (Bocheński, 1993) that is the authority of the assessing. That is why the group of experts included four people, who had experience in organizing the Prison Service officers training process. Because of the tasks they were involved in Prison Service, the full characteristics has not been revealed.

The diagnostic survey with the questionnaire method was conducted among the participants of the Prison Service Professional training (group I) and scientific-

didactic staff (group II) of the Central Prison Service Training Center in Kalisz. 588 professional Prison Service training participants took part in the research conducted with a questionnaire technique, which constitutes 97% of the total number of trainings realized and finalized in Central Prison Service Training Centre (COSSW) in Kalisz in 2019. After checking the questionnaires, $n_1=578$ items were accepted for the analysis.

The conclusions drawn on the basis of the collected research material were referred to the researched people as the researched group did not comply with the representativeness demand for the Prison Service.

Among the variables differentiating the interviewees in group I there were: sex, job seniority, age and the type of professional training they attended. Because of the specifics of work in Prison Service, the research was conducted mainly on men (367) constituting almost 64% of all interviewees.

The collected data regarding the age of the respondents had a form of a simple series, in other words detailed series. The further analysis required segregating the data and generating a distributive, statistical series. A number of classes $k=7$ was adapted and the class length $h=5$. The series has a precisely determined top and low limits (Table 1).

Table 1. The characteristics of training participants according to age.

Age of the participants [in years]	Number of participants	Structure [%]
(20-25>	6	1.04
(25-30>	86	14.88
(30-35>	226	39.10
(35-40>	191	33.04
(40-45>	55	9.52
(45-50>	14	2.42
Total	578	100.00

Source: Self study.

Another variable describing the officers who took part in the research, was the job seniority in Prison Service. The respondent analysis on the basis of the feature, revealed that almost half (around 45%) of the research participants, which gives 257 people, pointed to the job seniority in a given formation in the range 5-10 years (Table 2).

The questioned officers most often had been on a duty for 10 years. An average seniority was 8.5 years. The smallest group included interviewees with job seniority ranged 15-20 years (almost 5%). The presented research results allow to draw a conclusion, that officers with the longest and the shortest job seniority constitute the

smallest group of respondents. The type of the professional training was the fourth and the last criteria differentiating the respondents.

Table 2. *The characteristics of training participants according to job seniority.*

Job senioroty of the participants [in years]	Number of participants	Structure [%]
(0-5>	142	24.57
(5-10>	257	44.46
(10-15>	151	26.13
(15-20>	28	4.84
Total	578	100.00

Source: Self study.

The dominant group among the interviewees were participants of the professional training preparing for the position in the commissioned officer corps. They constituted almost half of the respondents (284 cases). The lowest number of officers was taking part in the training preparing for the non-commissioned officer corps – 68 people, which is 11.76% of the respondents (Table 3).

Table 3. *The characteristics of training participants according to the type of the training.*

Type of Prison Service training	Number of participants	Structure [%]
Professional training prepearing for a position in non-commissioned officer corps.	68	11.76
Professional training prepearing for a position in warrant officer corps.	226	39.10
Professional training prepearing for a position in commissioned officer corps.	284	49.14
Total	578	100.00

Source: Self study.

The second group of respondents, constituted of 31 people from the research and didactive staff of COSSW in Kalisz. It is important to note that the research was conducted on around $\frac{3}{4}$ of the whole professional group employed in a given institution. Part of the interviewees did not provide personal data, that is why the gathered material was divided in two groups. The first (group IIa) constituted of 20 questionnaires with personal data (64.5% of the research and didactive staff). The second group (group IIb) are questionnaires without personal data.

The features differentiating the research and didactive staff of COSSW in Kalisz were: job seniority in Prison Service and experience in didactic work in a given formation. The conducted analysis of the respondents, based on the distinguished features, allowed to notice that the interviewees (group IIa) gained experience in

Prison Service work outside the training facility. Average job seniority of the research and didactic staff in Prison Service was 16.1 years. The period of research and didactic work was much shorter (arithmetic average 9.9 years).

The development of the data required applying the statistical description and statistical inference. In particular:

- numerical characteristics, where mode was used as variants appearing most frequently, due to adapted ordinal scale and qualitative variables.
- w_i structure indicators, which define the ratio of a part of the researched group n_i to the whole group N (Bielecka, 2011).
- w_p structure similarity indicators, which allowed to compare the structures of different groups (collectivity) according to the same feature. The closer w_p to one, the more similar were the structures of the researched groups (Piątkowska, 2010).
- phenomena correlation analysis, V-Cramer's measure of correlation was used to determine the importance and strength of the correlation due to the qualitative variables applied in the research process (Stanisz, 2006; Cieślarczyk, 2003). The starting point of the analysis was the comparison of the data regarding the researched features in a form of a chart and setting the χ^2 statistics (chi-square).

For the purpose of the paper $\alpha=0.05$ salience level has been adapted, which is a predefined number showing the maximal accepted I type mistake probability. In social science it is 0.05 and with more rigorous requirements 0.01 (Cieślarczyk, 2003). In the research process, sex, age, job seniority and type of the professional training were adapted as independent variables. Particular questions in the survey were the dependent variables.

3. Results

In 2019 the recruitment criterium for a professional training preparing for a position in non-commissioned officer corps was the job seniority in the formation (Resolution no. 15/2019). Prison Service personnel with the longest job seniority was directed for the recruitment process according to the granted place limit. The recruitment criteria for a professional training preparing for the position in warrant officer corps, were job qualifications of the personnel and job seniority in Prison Service.

Both job seniority in formation and the knowledge test are the recruitment criteria for the last professional training preparing for the position in commissioned officer corps, which was held in the first half of year 2019. Altogether in 2019, 578 Prison Service officers completed a COSSW professional training in Kalisz. Therefore, the qualification process for Prison Service officers professional training, was the first

research area to be approached with the use of the questionnaire directed both to the participants of the training (group I) and the research and didactive staff (group II).

Respondents in group I could point to their preferences on the 5 level evaluation scale, by choosing one of the answers: extremely bad, bad, average, good, extremely good. The analysis of the answers revealed that the most answers, almost 39% of the whole number of interviewees, evaluated the Prison Service officers training qualification process as average. However, the sum of the extremely bad and bad variants shows, that about 30% of the respondents evaluated the process negatively and 31.14% as good or extremely good (Table 4).

Table 4. *The layout of the answers of the professional training participants for the question, how do you evaluate the Prison Service officers professional training qualification process, in which you participate.*

Answers x_i	Number of participants	Structure [%]
extremely bad	48	8.30
bad	125	21.63
average	225	38.93
good	143	24.74
extremely good	37	6.40
Sum	578	100.00

Source: Own study on the basis of empirical research.

The results therefore show, that there is neither unambiguously positive nor negative evaluation of the process. Moreover, the interviewees were asked to justify their answers. Among the comments with the positive assessment of the qualification process, the following were predominant:

- in commissioned officer corps: equal chances for each officer due to the use of the same test for each training candidate, “the emphasis” on appropriate knowledge, that is the initial potential of training participants, clearly formulated, objective criteria in the process of qualifying for the training,
- in warrant corps: improvement in the qualification process was noticed in comparison to previous years,
- in non-commissioned officer corps: the qualification process was conducted according to the information provided by the personnel department, short waiting time.

Whereas within the negative evaluations, following statements were noticeable:

- in commissioned officer corps: first of all, lack of stable qualification rules, long lasting period of waiting for the training, job experience, aptitude for service and outstanding opinion of the superior not being accepted as criterion for qualification, different qualification levels adapted for passing a qualifying test depending on the specialisation, the content that should be

acquired before the training is not developed during the training but only revised,

- in warrant corps: long lasting waiting time, lack of an ultimate date of training delegation, nepotism, unclear qualification criteria.
- in non-commissioned officer corps: job seniority in Prison Service criterion not being accounted for, directing those with shorter job seniority for the training which causes the feeling of injustice, long lasting waiting time, the training should take place in the first year of the service, problem with organising the training.

Applying the statistical analysis allowed to draw the following conclusions. The evaluation of the professional training qualification process of Prison Service officers changes in respect to the personal data criterion. Women perceived the process negatively more often than men. Almost 32% of the researched women pointed to bad or extremely bad answer in comparison to the evaluation made by men where the share of negative answers was about 29% of the total.

Whereas more than 32% men assessed the process as good or extremely good, with 29% of the total women respondents giving the same positive opinion. In conclusion, the professional training qualification process is evaluated a little bit worse by women officers than by men Prison Service officers.

It is important to notice that the respondents in group I with the shortest job seniority (up to 5 years) evaluated the qualification process as *good* or *extremely good*. In that group the answer was pointed by about 40% of the respondents. It has been also stated that people with longer job seniority were choosing a negative answer more often. 42.9% of the interviewees with the longest job seniority (above 15 years) evaluated the process as *bad* or *extremely bad*.

The type of the professional training preparing for a position in a certain personal corps was also a factor differentiating the evaluation of the qualification process for that training. Almost half of the non-commissioned officers pointed to answers *good* or *extremely good*.

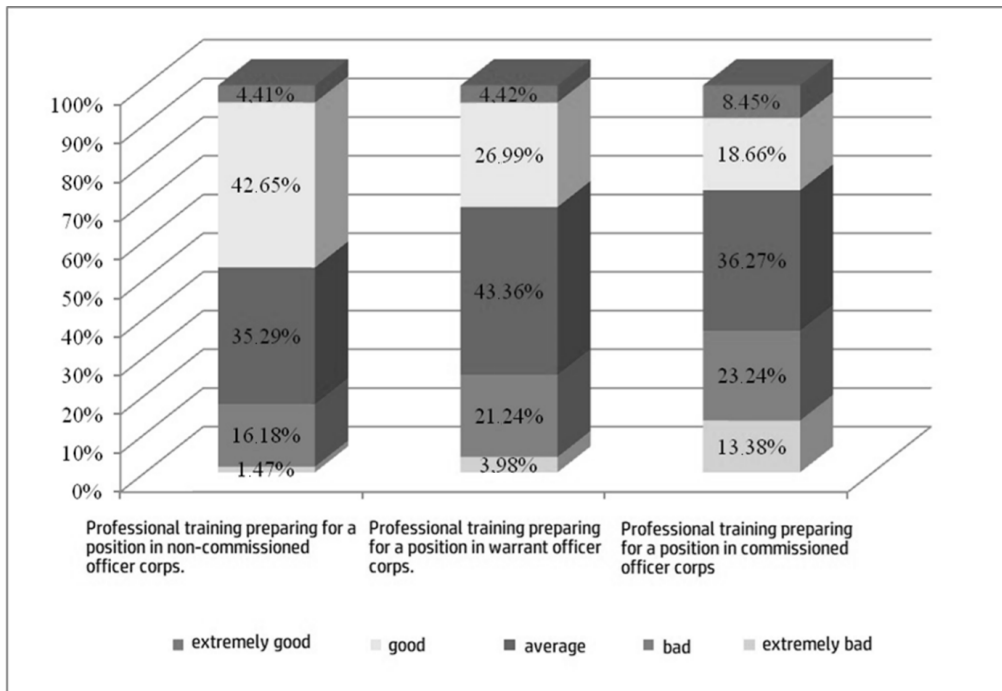
On the other hand, only 27.1% among the commissioned officers chose answer *good* or *very good*. Figure 1 presents different opinions in the evaluation of qualification process for professional training according to the Prison Service personal corps.

The gained results of the research and their analysis allowed to draw the following conclusions:

- women evaluated the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers much worse than men,
- the longer the job seniority of the participants of the professional training, the more negative the evaluation of the process,

- representatives of particular corps evaluated the training qualification process differently.

Figure 1. The layout of the evaluation of the professional training qualification process according to Prison Service personal corps.



Source: Own study on the basis of empirical research.

On the basis of the presented analysis results a verification of accepted hypothesis has been conducted.

Statistical inference allowed to conclude that there is a statistically important correlation between a dependent variable Y, which was the evaluation of the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers and an independent variable X – the type of the training preparing for a position in a given corps of Prison Service. To conduct a test of independent qualitative variables, an assumption has been made:

H_0 : variables X and Y are independent

H_1 : variables X and Y are dependent

and the following summary statistics have been determined: empirical number, theoretical number, X^2 statistics value and p-value. Accounting for an assumption that the expected value in each class should not be lower than 5, certain classes were

merged. With a higher number of classes and an expected value on such a low level, the selected classes can be merged. Such approach will make the raise of the value more likely (Stanisz, 2010; Cieślarczyk, 2003).

The obtained results allowed to draw the following conclusions: at any little (lower than 0.001100) level of salience, there was a significant correlation between the evaluation of the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers and a type of the training preparing for a position in a given Prison Service corps. It points to the level of the V-Cramer's convergence measure at 0.1256645. Still it means a weak correlation.

The correlation statisticly important, however of a weak force, was reflected in the correlation analysis between the researched dependent variable and the job seniority of the respondent. The following results have been obtained: p-value equal 0.033131; the statistics value $X^2 = 13.7033$ and the V-Cramer's convergence measure 0.1088766.

The analysis of the questionnaires filled by the participants, but neglected because of the formal shortcomings (lack of personal data), have given important information. Primarily, future commissioned officers opinions about the qualification process were negative (dominant answers: *extremely bad* and *bad*). The evaluation has been most often justified by an annual change in the rules of qualifying for professional training preparing for a position in the commissioned officers corps and in consequence lack of precise, unified rules of qualifying for the training.

Also the research and didactive staff employed in COSSW in Kalisz evaluated the process of qualifying for a professional training for Prison Service officers. The respondents in this group could choose one of six possible answers: *extremely bad*, *bad*, *average*, *good*, *extremely good*, *hard to say*.

Their opinion was noted separately for each Prison Service personal corps. The layout of the answers with a division into groups IIa and IIb, and calculated structure similarity indicators, are presented in chart 5. Indicators w_p , which for the analysed problem stand at 0.67; 0.60; 0.66, show the similarities of the structures.

The numbers indicate their little similarity, which means that research and didactic staff who gave opinion on the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers and did not fill the personal data (group IIb), pointed to different variants than a group of respondents who had revealed their job seniority both in Prison Service as well as on the didactive position.

A comparison of the asnwrs of respondents form group IIa shows that negative evaluations concern predominantly the recruitmant rules for training in the commissioned officer corps.

Table 5. The layout of the answers of the professional training participants for a question, how do you assess the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers in non-commissioned officer, warrant, commissioned officer corps?

xi	Non-commissioned officer corps					Warrant officer corps					Commissioned officer corps				
	Group IIa		Group IIb		wp	Group IIa		Group IIb		wp	Group IIa		Group IIb		wp
	ni	wi	ni	wi		ni	wi	ni	wi		ni	wi	ni	wi	
1	0	0.0	1	9.09	0	2	10.0	0	0.00	0	3	15.0	0	0.00	0
2	1	5.0	0	0	0	1	5.0	0	0.00	0	1	5.0	3	27.27	5.0
3	2	10.0	2	18.18	10.0	2	10.0	3	27.27	10.0	5	25.0	2	18.18	18.18
4	6	30.0	5	45.46	30.0	5	25.0	5	45.46	25.0	3	15.0	3	27.27	15.00
5	5	25.0	1	9.09	9.09	5	25.0	0	0.00	0	4	20.0	2	18.18	18.18
6	6	30.0	2	18.18	18.18	5	25.0	3	27.27	25	4	20.0	1	9.09	9.09
Σ	20	100	11	100	67.27	20	100	11	100	60.0	20	100.0	11	100.0	65.45

Key:

xi – answer variants; *ni* – particular answer variant number; *wi* – structure indicator for a given answer variant [%]; *wp* – structure similarity indicator [%];

1 – extremely bad; 2 – bad; 3 – average; 4 – good; 5 – extremely good; 6 – hard to say.

Source: Own study on the basis of empirical research.

4 people pointed answers *extremely bad* and *bad* which constitutes 20% of the total, that is 15 percent more than in case of evaluating the qualification process for training preparing for a position in non-commissioned officer corps. The sum of the variants *good* and *extremely good* in the non-commissioned officer corps is much higher than in commissioned officers corps (11 answers compared to 7 answers).

The presented hereinabove research results and their analysis allow to draw the following conclusion: the opinions of research and didactive staff in group IIa are concurrent with the opinions of non-commissioned officers, warrants and commissioned officers taking part in the Prison Service professional training.

The most frequent evaluation given by respondents in group IIb both for the training qualification rules in non-commissioned officers corps and warrant corps was variant *good*. The proportion of the answers is significant and for both corps equals 45.5%.

The layout of the answers in the scope of the researched evaluation in the commissioned officer corps had two modes: *bad* and *good*, 3 answers each that is 27.3%. None of the respondents assessed the researched process as *extremely bad* in reference to warrant as well as commissioned officers corps.

The justifications provided by the research and didactive staff were of a negative character. The employees of the school paid attention to the lack of continuity and stability of the recruitment rules, annual change in professional training qualification

rules, the long lasting latency time especially in reference to warrant and commissioned officer corps. In case of the latter, being sent for a training should be of a reward character. A positive opinion also appeared. The respondent mentioned the reliability and professionalism of the staff while conducting the professional training qualification tests, preparing for an officer position.

Experts expressed an opinion about the professional training qualification process for Prison Service officers that was in force before the Prison Service University was originated. While formulating it, part of the experts concentrated on the commissioned officers training qualification rules. Expert I noticed, that qualification process for commissioned officers training was too frequently changed and not standardized, which influenced the frustration of the candidates. The opinion was confirmed by expert II, regarding it as unfair.

According to the fourth expert the qualification process for a professional training was clear. Certain legal conditions had to be fulfilled to take part in it (among others attending the preliminary course). In reference to the commissioned officers training, because of the significant number of candidates, the exam had a form of a test. Experts appreciated high professionalism of the didactic tool used for future officers' knowledge verification.

However, to their mind the main problem was: *lack of personnel politics with respect to officer corps management, creating officer positions too freely lead to their excessive number in respect of the needs, officer positions should be assigned to a fixed number of positions in the service department, qualitative aspect of personnel politics was omitted.*

4. Discussion

The management of the organisation should understand that the employees are their most valuable asset (Kulej-Dudek, 2014). Due to this fact the staff should be treated and the fundament of the organisation and the key to its success. These are the staff competences which are responsible for achieving goals a particular organisation was created for. It also concerns the Prison Service.

Features such as skills and experience, strong motivation, ability to adjust to new reality, taking new challenges, readiness for permanent studies, may significantly contribute to the formation functioning. Competent officers perform entrusted duties quicker, understand their essence, show higher level of creativity and self-reliance and reflect strong internal motivation. The preparation level of the staff to realise professional duties to high extent depends on the training process. Its development should lead to achieving the highest possible teaching process skills.

Professional training in Prison Service prepares officers to take positions in non-commissioned, commissioned and warrant corps. Its aim is to: prepare Prison

service staff to perform tasks formulated in the act of law and other provisions regulating this formation functioning; developing general and professional knowledge and taking care physical condition and proper mental state indispensable in the officers' work; demand for professional and personal development of Prison Service staff; shaping appropriate behaviours of officers on the basis of ethics and equity.

Attention should be paid to the fact that, due to specific place of work, such as detention wards or prisons, officers perform their professional duties in specific, often difficult and dangerous conditions (Ciosek, 1995). There are minor criminals, behaving in a correct way, but also mentally disabled and psychos, prisoners addicted to psychoactive substances with depressive and anxiety tendencies, murderers and perpetrators of sexual abuses (Piotrowski, 2017). The work of a Prison Service officer may be the source of intense stress, may be connected with traumatic experiences or contribute to loss of health or life.

Due to specifics of Prison Service officers work and related stress level, the time of waiting for a professional training should be shortened by the means of recruitment limits increase. Equipping officers in skills and indispensable psycho-social competences right after employment in Prison Service seems to be justified since performance of delegated duties will be easier for them. It is probable that such solution would decrease discomfort connected with work in Prison Service.

5. Conclusions

In respect to qualifying Prison Service officers for professional trainings, it is essential to improve these elements which are not effective or cause negative assessment of the process. Evaluation of the current qualification for the training does not aim at its complete discredit. It is noticeable that the institutions responsible for the recruitment have modified and 'tested' different solutions for some years.

Thus, the recruitment criteria are not stable. Every effort should be made to stabilize these rules throughout the years, so that the evaluation process was possible. However, it should be noticed that performing improvement actions may be hampered due to number of barriers.

The following barriers have been included by the experts: staff unwillingness to any changes, limitation or lack of financial resources and lack of proper infrastructure. Implementation of modern solutions may also be hampered by non-substantive conditions influencing the service, for example political impacts.

Approaches referred to as 'pedagogical conservatism' resulting from lack of knowledge or attitude unable to keep up with the challenges of the contemporary world may also constitute significant difficulties.

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Ustawa z 9 kwietnia 2010 r. o Służbie Więziennej (Dz.U. 2021 poz. 1064).

Zarządzenie nr 15/2019 Dyrektora Generalnego Służby Więziennej z dnia 18 marca 2019 r. w sprawie określenia kryteriów naboru na szkolenia zawodowe w roku 2019.