

Labor Potential of the Municipal Civil Service of Saratov Region

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Abstract

The scope of the research is the assessment of labor potential of the municipal civil service of Saratov region. This research methodology combines three methods for different purposes: cost method, quantitative method and the qualitative research. The results showed that the application of the program-target approach provides foundations of formation of the state and municipal initiatives for the education of the municipal civil servants and enhances the comprehensive development of the labor potential of municipal civil service. The approach will stimulate systematic and on-going evolution of labor potential of municipal civil service based on assessing its current state and level of development. The authors conclude that the lack of state and municipal initiatives for vocational training of municipal civil servants (especially retraining and further education programs for them), does not allow for the comprehensive education of municipal civil servants, which may lead to decrease their effectiveness in the future.

Keywords: Labor; Civil service; Saratov; Development.



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1. Introduction

Municipal civil servants have to accomplish difficult tasks; consequently, they face the issue of proficiency improvement. Under such conditions, theoretical, social and practical matters of labor potential of municipal civil servants come to the spotlight (Van Ryzin, 2011). The current state and continuing development of municipal civil servants as well as their effective employment influence the efficiency of the local authorities work (Baranova and Putilov, 2018).

After adoption of the Law "About some matters of municipal civil service of Saratov region" № 157-3CO (About some matters of municipal civil service of Saratov region, 2017). New stage of municipal civil service reforms began.

According to the above mentioned regional act the formation of the staff of highly-qualified and trained municipal civil servants capable to deal with the local issues is paramount both for federal and local authorities of Saratov region (Chotchaev, 2017).

We suppose that application of the program-target approach will help systematical development of the labor potential of the municipal civil service and improvement of its function (Bazhutkina *et al.*, 2018; Borshchevskii, 2017).

2. Literature Review

By the year 2030, about 5 billion people - 60 percent of the world's population - will live in cities and will be the driving force behind the global economic growth (now it's 3.6 billion). But for mayors, these are difficult challenges. Many of the developing countries on an unprecedented scale must face the urbanization process. Developed countries also have a weaker growth prospect, with old infrastructure and limited budget resources. All these countries are endeavoring to ensure their competitiveness and, as a result, the well-being of the city's residents, and they all know that if they cannot find sustainable and richer ways to develop local economies and urban management, they will remain a bad environmental heritage for future citizens (Priyono, 2018).

3. Labor Potential

The performance of a city should be measured in a way that reflects all these concerns, economic power, social and environmental conditions. Various studies have examined these three performance measures together and have ranked cities accordingly. While these studies can help us to understand the factors of a great city, they do not say what the mayors need to do to build such cities. What Manages a City? Therefore, in order to understand urban performance, in addition to current surveys, consideration of the change process is also important. All mayors want their local economies to grow; but economic growth does not automatically increase the quality of life for citizens, and even harm the environment. In fact, many cities are even forced to make costly corrective measures to compensate for the problems created by economic growth. Therefore, we should not think that any growth is good, but we must know how smart growth is. Smart growth depends on a strategic approach that identifies and nourishes the best growth opportunities and ensures that all citizens benefit from urban welfare (Moreno-Freites, 2018).

3.1. Adopt a Strategic Approach

While all mayors are looking for ways to improve the well-being of their city, the most obvious of all is the strategic approach that they are pursuing to achieve the goal. Tax breaks have little effect on deciding without sufficient analysis that the future of the city depends on the latest emerging industries and the use of clean technologies. A more precise approach is needed to understand the best growth prospects. And it does not mean that mayors have to engage in a business, but instead, their approach must be based on an accurate assessment of where the competitive advantage of the city lies. So the first step is to identify the competitive advantages of a city and to demonstrate that active groups in a city have the potential to be strengthened. For example, Southern American cities, including Atlanta, Savannah and Nashville, have succeeded in attracting foreign car companies, or London has succeeded in building a Tech City group called Tech City.

3.2. Investing for Growth

Government-funded investment is needed to attract businesses to cities. In the New York City Sustainability Plan 2011, "Today, human and capital dynamics have created intense competition between cities. We need to compete for the best ideas and workforce. To create economic growth, we need to create a space for talented entrepreneurs." According to the plan, by the end of 2013, 400 targets for the development of public safety, green space, etc. were to be implemented. Such advances require investment at various levels. For example, Dubai has invested heavily in the infrastructure sector to become an economic pole and international tourist center. These activities have contributed 25 percent to Dubai's annual GDP (Esparza, 2018).

3.3. Planning for Change

Smart growth means planning for the future. The world is filled with examples of cities that have grown rapidly and without any special plans. The result of this lack of planning is, at best, anarchy and disorder, but this often prevents further development and low quality of life for citizens and, of course, the environment. Therefore, mayors should be promising and plan for population growth and demographic change, transport, schools, hospitals and many other aspects of urban life. They should also ensure that these programs will be compatible with the changing needs of the city over time. The most efficient cities adopt a regional perspective and provide a comprehensive planning and flexibility process (González, 2018).

3.4. Regional Perspective

The mayors think good about regional growth, not just the growth of their own city, because with the growth of metropolises, the need for cooperation with mayors of suburban cities and regional services is emerging. Otherwise, local competition will lead to a shortage or surplus of investment in infrastructure, because there is a concern who invests and who benefits from it, and thus creates a disorder for roles and responsibilities. An example of this is the "Pearl River Delta" in China, which is competing in an area of 100 square kilometers of five international airports. The delay in flights, the extra cost of fuel and the concern about flight safety, are the consequences of such a situation (Hood and Dixon, 2015).

3.5. Stay Flexible

Cities increasingly use flexible urban designs that act as a framework for accommodating proposed projects at the local level. These plans are tied to a set of guidelines that help decide on new proposals. As a result, these plans are created by changing the need of cities and ensuring that the city continues the growth path to long-term goals. This kind of flexibility requires a lot of skill, and cities that are leading in urban planning have several regular sections for this planning. The San Francisco Planning Department has this flexible approach. The department, which employs 100 skilled laborers in the fields of urban planning, economy and transportation, has an effective program based on the principles of "maintaining and developing economic, social, cultural and aesthetic values (Borshchevskii, 2017)

3.6. Creating Green Infrastructure

As the urbanization process progresses, the world's cities together, between the years 2010 and 2025, will receive 65 million inhabitants annually (Salgado, 2016). As a result, the demand for infrastructure is set to an extent that, for example, Indian cities, for example, should create urban space equivalent to the entire Chicago residential

and commercial space. China's cities should make 2.5 times that figure. So sustained growth depends on investment in infrastructure, which reduces carbon emissions, waste generation and water consumption. In fact, the way we work to build and rebuild our cities will determine their ecological sustainability over the coming decades (Borshchevskii, 2017).

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Category “Labor Potential”

Russian and foreign researchers (Abuzjarova, 2017). Define the notion “labor potential” in several different ways. There are many explanations of the essence of this scientific category. We systematize different interpretations of the category “labor potential” in alignment with three research approaches.

1. *Resource approach*. The adherents of this approach (K.L. Andreev, V.B. Bychin and others) regard labor potential in connection with the category of human resources or simply use the terms “labor potential” and “human resources” as the synonyms, meaning “the employed population”.

It is evident, that labor potential and human resources are two different notions, because labor potential of any employed person is used only partially, and can be improved under favorable economic conditions of the organizational activity.

2. *Factor approach*. Supporters of the factor approach (B.M. Genkin, R.P. Kolosova, G.E. Slezinger and others) view labor potential as the range of professional and personal abilities to work and the complex of organizational and economic conditions for the performance.

3. *Competency based approach*. The representatives of this trend of science (I.A. Zimniaia, V.A. Medvedev, A.V. Khutorskoi) view labor potential as the equivalent of professional potential. Professional potential is determined by professional qualification, knowledge, abilities, skills and personal characteristics of the employees acquired during life in accordance with functional requirements to the corresponding positions.

Labor potential of the civil servants is their ability to fulfill job responsibilities in alignment with job descriptions. Job descriptions mean general tasks, responsibilities for the civil service positions and standards of their accomplishment by the local authorities.

Current state of the civil servants labor potential is the quality of professional knowledge, abilities and skills reflecting the level of their compliance with regulated qualification requirements to the positions in the municipal civil service.

Development of labor potential of the civil servants means formation and change of knowledge base, abilities and skills of the employees. It is a regulated process aimed at the transformation of the state of the labor potential components in accordance with regulated qualification requirements to the positions in the municipal civil service, assuring that the employees can perform the job tasks correctly, safely and consistently.

4.2. Methods of the Labor Potential Assessment

The state of civil servants’ labor potential is the criterion of its quality, and the fluctuation of this criterion demonstrates trends of the development of the quality for a certain period (Chekaldin, 2017). The assessment of both state and development of labor potential are closely interrelated.

There are three methods of assessing the current state and development of the labor potential: cost method, qualitative method and quantitative method.

Cost method is estimation of the costs of development of labor potential at the stage of workforce production. Specific amount of spending on retraining, raising the level of personnel skills and internship of the municipal civil servants can determine government or municipal contractual work and time necessary for municipal civil servants training (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).

Quantitative method (Labor Economics, 2003) of assessing the current state and development of labor potential determines the average number of employees, which have undergone training, retraining or internship.

Qualitative method of assessing the current state and development of labor potential means revelation of the certain range of personal characteristics of the municipal staff. We describe this parameter by means of quality control approach (Krakhmalov, 2012).

Our research combines three methods for different purposes: cost method implies economic analysis, quantitative method deals with statistical data and the qualitative research focus more on understanding the phenomenon of labor potential.

5. Results

5.1. Analysis of Labor Potential of Municipal Civil Servants in Saratov Region

At present, there is no generally accepted methodology for labor potential assessment.

We suggest the variant of assessing the state and development of labor potential of civil service through cost method, quantitative method and instruments of quality control.

5.2. Staffing of the Local Authorities in Saratov Region

We analyzed the survey of Federal State Statistics Service and annual reports about the state of regional government, prepared by the Association “Municipalities Council of Saratov Region”.

According to these sources, in 2015 the number of municipal civil servants accounted for 5664 people. In 2016, this number reduced up to 5503. The drastic reduction of civil service workforce in the local government of Saratov

region was evident from the data of 2017 survey, which demonstrated that the number of civil servants accounted for 5108 people (Table 1).

Table-1. Staffing of the local authorities in Saratov region, 2015-2017.

| Indicator | Unit | Year | Total | Administrative center | Circuits | Municipalities | Urban settlements | Rural settlements |
|-----------|-----------|------|-------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| headcount | employees | 2015 | 5664 | 1315 | 1423 | 2948 | 216 | 1077 |
| | | 2016 | 5503 | 1299 | 1401 | 2904 | 206 | 992 |
| | | 2017 | 5108 | 1285 | 1374 | 2676 | 79 | 979 |

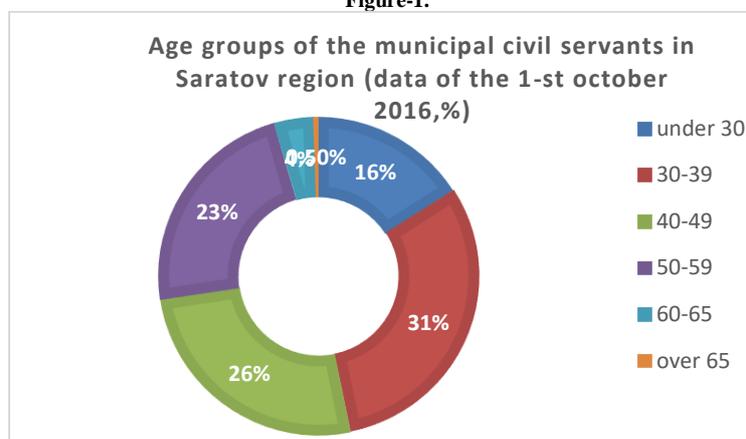
Processes of consolidation of municipalities caused the situation of civil service employee’s cuts. Thus in 2016, 26 settlements of five municipalities of Saratov region were reorganized.

At the same time, if we compare proportion of civil servants to the regional population, (i.e. juxtapose the social load of civil service staff on municipalities), we’ll find the following figures: in 2015, one civil servant was to service 440 citizens, in 2016 – 452 citizens, in 2017 – 485 citizens correspondingly.

5.3. Age Groups of the Municipal Civil Servants

The average age of municipal civil servants within Saratov region is 41 years old (Figure 1). Analyzing age groups of municipal civil servants of Saratov region we came to the conclusion that there is a balance of young and middle-aged categories of staff in the local authorities with prevailing age group from 20 to 39 years old (30,5 %).

Figure-1.

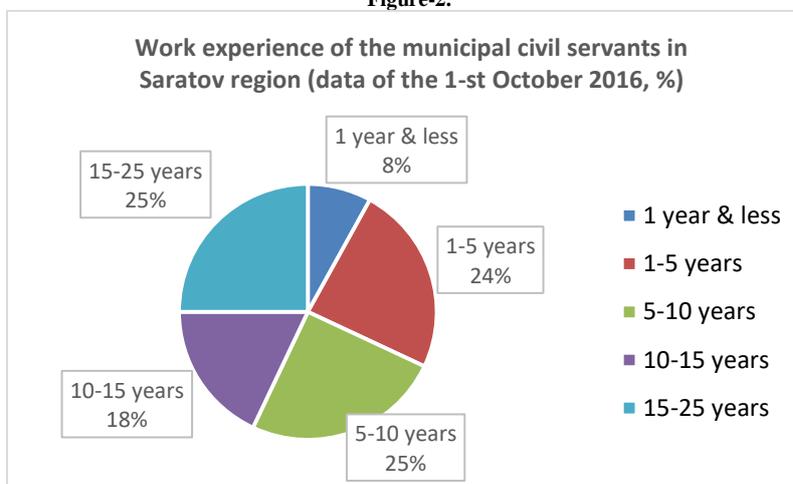


5.4. Work Experience of the Municipal Civil Servants

The length of the work experience of the civil servants manifests stability of the municipal staff (Petukhov, 2015). Analysis of the work experience of the municipal civil servants proves stability of the personnel employment in local government (Figure 2).

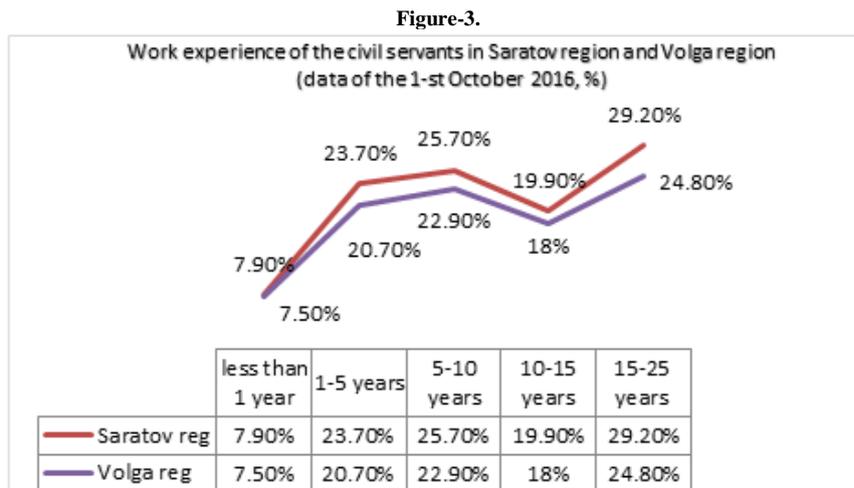
According to the data of 2016, the number of the municipal civil servants having 1-5 years’ work experience was 24 %, 5-10 years’ work-experience - 25 %, 10-15 years’ work experience – 18 %, 15-25 years’ work experience – 25 % of all the municipal civil service personnel.

Figure-2.



Thus, the length of work experience of municipal civil servants in Saratov region is spread proportionally among five variants, and the majority of the civil servants have work experience of 5 years and over. The indicative

analysis proves stability of personnel employment within civil service. It means that municipal civil servants have extensive experience and can solve different issues of the local government agencies efficiently. The data of civil servants employment in Saratov region are similar to those of the Volga federal region as a whole (Figure 3).



5.5. Educational Background of the Municipal Civil Servants

Data of Table 2 represent diversity of educational background of municipal civil servants in Saratov region.

Table-2. Classification of municipal civil servants in Saratov region according to the level of education (data of 2016 – 2017)

| Year | Post-high school education | | graduates of high schools, % | Employees with a degree level of education | | | |
|------|---|---|------------------------------|--|--|----------------|-----------|
| | graduates of higher educational institutions, % | graduates of vocational educational institutions, % | | double major, % | graduate level education and top level of proficiency, % | Doctoral level | |
| | | | | | | PhD, % | Doctor, % |
| 2016 | 83,0 | 16,3 | 0,7 | 6,1 | 1,5 | 0,8 | 0,0 |
| 2017 | 78,1 | 21,6 | 0,3 | 3,5 | 1,6 | 0,8 | 0,0 |

Consolidation of the municipalities lead to redundancy of the civil servants staff in 2017. The process of employee’s reduction triggered the change of the educational background of the civil service personnel (the number of higher educational institutions’ graduates in local government decreased by 4.9% in comparison with the data of 2016).

The number of municipal civil servants, which graduated from vocational schools, increased by 5.3% in 2017.

On a whole, there is a tendency of slight deterioration of the educational level of the municipal civil service employees.

Education of the municipal civil service staff must correspond to the aims and functions of the civil service.

Though skill sets vary by departments, civil service needs employees who possess combination of practical and technical aptitude, such as being able to master basic software, as well as higher-level cognitive skills, chiefly the ability to write and communicate well and solve problems.

In 2017 majority of the municipal employees in Saratov region (51%) were graduates of the higher educational institutions of a proper profile (this indicator is higher in urban settlements and municipalities of Saratov region).

5.6. Training of the Civil Service Personnel

According to the survey of the Federal State Statistics Service, 10.9 % of municipal civil servants in Saratov region got further education in 2017 (605 employees). Among them 445 employees – 8.5% of the staff were retrained, 160 employees – 2.4% of the municipal staff got occupational retraining.

In 2017 increase of retrained people was 0.2% (in comparison with the data of 2016) and 5.8% (in comparison with the data of 2015).

The occupational retraining dynamics proves that all the municipal employees in Saratov region will be retrained within 10 years period, and such rate is too slow because the education paradigm is changing and knowledge is becoming obsolete.

It is evident that the growth rate of the number of retrained municipal employees is not fast enough.

According to the data of Volga region as a whole, we see that Saratov region is an outsider in this respect because it has been ranked 14-th in retraining the municipal personnel for the recent three years (2015-2017).

The growth rate of the number of those retrained in Saratov region is twice as less than in Volga region as a whole.

6. Discussion

The results of the research reveal sustainable growth of social load on municipalities of Saratov region. The recent reduction of the bloated municipal staff caused this process. At the same time, the regional population decreases, and this makes social load on municipal civil servants less evident.

About 30% of the municipal civil servants in Saratov region are over 50 years old and in case the local government agencies ignore the young professionals recruiting, they will face the issue of personnel ageing.

The quality of municipal employees in Saratov region improved due to hiring large number of experts with higher profile education. Nevertheless, there is still a problem of financing the occupational retraining of the civil service personnel.

There are no measures of supporting municipal programs for civil servants retrainin. There is not any regional program of civil servants professional development in Saratov region.

The efficient tool of formation of the highly qualified municipal personnel is implementation of programs for professional development of civil service. The use of program-target approach is the basis for government and municipal initiatives stimulating professional training of municipal civil servants and supplying the budget for the programs of their reskill and professional development.

Regulations of both federal and regional legislation aimed at civil service improvement substantiate the program-target approach of civil servants' labor potential development. Programs of municipal civil service development must follow certain methodology (combination of cost, qualitative and quantitative methods of assessing the current state and development of municipal labor potential).

7. Conclusions

Municipal civil service is a special scope of activity, and performance assessment within municipal civil service is quite a difficult task (Nemec *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, labor potential of municipal civil service is assessed through several parameters: 1) level of proficiency, i.e. professional knowledge and skill base as well as qualification level; 2) amount of financing and number of the retrained employees influencing the labor potential efficiency.

For increasing labor potential efficiency the Law "About some matters of municipal civil service of Saratov region" № 157-3CO was adopted. The law determines qualification requirements for those who want to hold a managerial position in civil service, and stipulates the possibility of professional development of civil servants through implementation of municipal programs.

However, professional development of municipal civil servants in Saratov region does not presuppose comprehensive government and municipal initiatives for professional training of the employees (i.e. government and municipal contractual work).

The contractual work in Saratov region can rely on the use of program-target approach for professional training of the municipal civil service staff. This tactics can guarantee systematized continuous development of labor potential of municipal civil service with consideration to its current state, goals, objectives, financial resources and requirements of the local government agencies (Hood and Dixon, 2015).

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