

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL COMPETENCES OF MANAGERIAL STAFF IN THE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR THE POPULATION

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Abstract: Social work is a profession of a special kind, which requires special personal qualities, empathy, communication, creativity and ability for self-development. The study of the level of these qualities is carried out on the example of the managers of social service organizations in Russia in 2017-2018. Research methods: testing, expert survey, interviewing, focus groups. The results of the study allowed forming conclusions about the importance of professional and personal competencies of managerial personnel in social services. The results are important for understanding the institutionalization of social work as a profession, the formation of professional moral competencies of specialists and managers of social service organizations, designing educational programmes.

Keywords: social work, professional competences, personal competences, social service organizations, training for social work, manager of the social service organization.

1 Introduction

Social work as a profession was formed on the basis of social assistance activities in the form of care mainly for the poor. Initially, it was permeated with motives of Christian love for one's neighbour and understood as a charitable activity on a voluntary basis. In this regard, for many years there has been a discussion about the competencies that need to be formed by the specialists who provide social services and social protection of citizens. Extreme positions are observed: On the one hand, there are proponents of equating the activity of a social worker with voluntary charitable activity, when the main instrument is sympathy and empathy (Spolander et al., 2014). On the other hand, most researchers and practitioners believe that in modern conditions social work should have a highly professional basis, because experts invade the complex world of human relations and difficult life situations and should find a way out of them.

The truth lies in the space of harmonious unification of high professionalism and moral and ethical foundations of the profession. Solving these problems will allow forming training programmes, to determine the conditions of personal certification of personnel, licensing of their activities and career advancement of personnel.

The objective of the research: to study personal and professional-value attitudes in the implementation of managerial activities of the managers of the social service organization (SSO).

Research objectives: identification of a set of values in the professional activity of managers, the study of the level of their professional and personal competencies, as well as comparison of the results with the requests of employers in different spheres of life.

2 Literature Review

In the English language literature, profession and professionalization is understood as an increase in status through the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills (Evetts, 2003). There are differences in methodological approaches: there are Neo-Weberian (Saks, 2010) or constructivist approaches (Stoof et al., 2004). Scientists study the relationship between the activities of social workers and political and social realities (Segal, 2008; Sizikova et al., 2016). The greatest differences are observed in the study of the importance of different competencies, such as leadership and strategic decision-making skills (Thompson & Cole, 2004; Khaleelee & Woolf, 2004) and the qualities of a manager (Weinbach, 2003). It is these qualities of the manager of a social service organization that are considered dominant in the scientific literature. Big questions are observed in the study of the ratio of practical skills and theoretical knowledge (Sargeant, 2000; Dent & Whitehead, 2002). The search for new approaches resulted in theoretical work on encyclopedias and dictionaries, among which there is the Barker dictionary, which has withstood numerous reissues and which is known in many countries of the world, had received international recognition (Barker, 2008).

However, over time, there has been an increase in the requests for new empathic attitude to the profession, communication skills and soft professional skills in the profession – Soft Skills (Forrester, et al., 2008; Gerdes et al., 2011). The issues of training and social education (Kupriyanov et al., 2015), including the historical context (Marchenko et al., 2017) became a separate topic of the research.

In the Russian literature, the problems of standardization of professional and educational activities (Sizikova et al., 2015), the formation of value attitude to the profession and the personal qualities of specialists (Ivanov et al., 2018) are studied. Traditionally, the focus of Russian scientists is on the ethical issues of the profession (Medvedeva G.P., 2017; Medvedeva & Isaicheva, 2018). The reform of the social education draws attention in the context of understanding the national traditions and values in social service (Karpunina, 2016; Starovoytova, 2017), as well as to the problems of individualization of the process of professional training (Sorikhina & Fomina, 2018; Mityaeva et al., 2018; Fomina et al., 2018).

The analysis of these works revealed the most important issues: how do professional training and the formation of an ethical (empathic) attitude to the profession and to the citizens seeking social assistance correlate? What are the ways of forming the ethical and moral competence of professional's personality? What are the criteria of the level and demand for professional and personal competencies, especially of the managers of organizations in the system of social services and social protection of the population?

3 Research Methods

In carrying out this kind of research, the following theoretical methods are needed: comparative-historical analysis, systematic approach and comprehensive study of the essence of the profession "social work"; identification of basic theoretical approaches to the institutionalization of the profession. The methods that were used semi-formalized expert survey (N-24), interviewing and testing by the method "The Diagnostics of the Level of Partial Readiness for Professional and Pedagogical Activities. The Assessment Map of the Readiness for Self-Educational Activities" (Fetiskin, 2002) and the methods of diagnostics of propensity for a certain style of management (Ilyin, 2002) (managers of the social service organization (N-48), the method of focus groups (N-24).

The object of the research: managers of social service organizations for population, because according to the opinion of the authors, it is the managers, their professional and personal qualities that set the tone in the activity of organizations, in improving the effectiveness of their work, in creating the social environment of organizations. Being guided by the managers, the employees develop their professional and personal qualities, and the work itself is being filled with new content.

The subject of the research: the level of such professional and personal qualities as empathy, communication, creativity, ability for self-development, will and determination, as well as the assessment of their importance for the professional development of the manager, for the development of the profession "social work" as a whole.

4 Findings and Discussion

In 2017-2018 the empirical study was conducted on the basis of social service organizations for the population of Moscow and Voronezh.

Tentatively, the qualities and personal competencies that are most important in modern professional activities in social work, especially in the activities of the manager of the SSO were identified by the method of semi-formalized expert survey.

- love for the profession (value component in the structure of the personal foundations of managerial activity of the manager);
- desire for self-development (motivational component);
- ability to solve professional problems (competence component);
- creativity (creative component);
- ability for contact (communicative component);
- self-control and self-correction (volitional component).

The authors understand personal and professional qualities as the competencies formed in the process of professional education (theoretical level), formation of professional skills (applied level), as well as life experience and personal attitudes of the manager (emotional and moral level). Moreover, the first two components relate to those introduced from the outside (professional education and professional experience), and the third one refers to the personal qualities which are being formed in the process of socialization of the individual, mainly at a young age. Therefore, not every person who decided to receive education in the specialty "social work" can be professionally suitable.

The study of the test results allowed creating the following table based on the identification of three levels of manifestation of certain indicators (high, average and low).

Table 1 The results of the measurement of personality foundations of managerial activity of the SSO managers – the participants of the diagnostic procedure

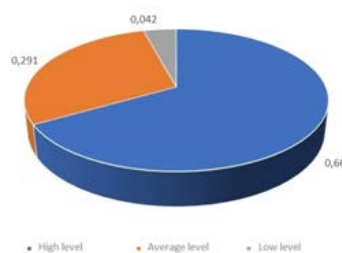
No.	Components	Indicators	Levels of development (%)
1.	Competence	Ability to solve professional problems	66.7% – high level 29.1% – average level 4.2% – low level
2.	Value	Love for the profession, awareness of its humanistic value	43.75% – high level 56.25% – average level low level is absent
3.	Motivational	Desire for self-development	58.3% – high level 37.5% – average level 4.2% – low level
4.	Creative	Creativity	39.6% – high level 43.7% – average level 16.7% – low level
5.	Communicative	Ability for contact	62.5% – high level 31.25% – average level 6.25% – low level

6.	Volitional	Self-control and self-correction	56.25% – high level 37.5% – average level 6.25% – low level
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Source: authors

Competence component "ability to solve professional problems" took the first place. This corresponds to the results of the world Economic Forum "Future of Jobs Survey" (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2018.pdf), which showed that the demand for the ability to quickly solve complex objectives is the highest in all labor markets (40% in the growing demand of promising areas). Such a manager is capable of defining and achieving objectives in management and acts as a subject of professional activity and communication, i.e. shows activity, initiative, responsibility; he is self-efficacious and capable of high achievements in the profession. However, about one-third of the managers assessed the level of this indicator as average. This makes us think about the nature of this phenomenon. Additional research in the form of an expert survey indicated a high level of bureaucratization of social service organizations in Russia, which may have caused some underestimation of the indicator, and the lack of independence of managers in decision-making. This is even more important because 4.2% of the respondents assessed this indicator as low, and therefore they assessed their professional and personal managerial qualities to be low (Fig. 1). This is an explicit request for additional education and gaining professional experience.

Figure 1 The levels of the indicator "ability to solve professional problems"

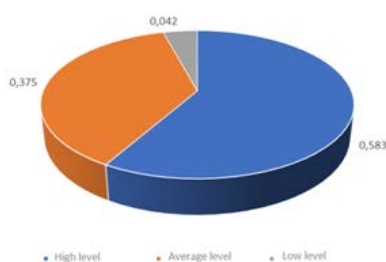


Source: authors

2. The indicator of the value component "love for the profession" in the expert survey was the second, but according to the results of the test, it went to the fifth place out of six. It is obvious that there is some discrepancy between socio-professional expectations and realities in the attitudes of managers. Additional interviewing of the managers showed that high rates are observed mainly among those who have specialized education, professional experience of less than 10 years and managerial experience of no more than 3 years. This distance in assessments makes it possible to assume that managers underestimate the role of emotional-value attitude to their profession. Characteristically, none of the respondents stated the low motivation and lack of love for the profession.

3. Desire for self-development (Fig. 2). Since in the structure of personal foundations the value component gives meaning and importance to managerial activities and largely regulates professional consciousness, behavior and professional achievements of the manager, it is subject to constant enrichment, filling with new meanings and content of the increasingly complex managerial activities. The analysis of the reasons for the low rates allows suggesting that some tested managers are faced with emotional and professional problems that exceed their capabilities. This is a situation of distress or professional unsuitability.

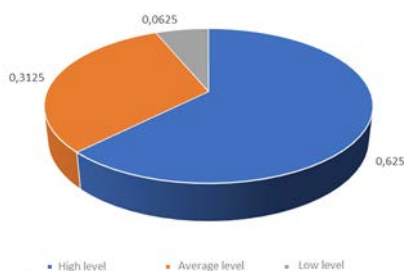
Figure 2 Levels of the indicator "desire for self-development"



Source: authors

4. The indicator "Creativity" refers to the creative component of indicators of personal foundations of managerial activity. Only a minority of the tested managers is able to produce and implement innovative ideas in management; they are ready to take reasonable risks, are capable of restructuring their own activities and making experiments. Probably, this is a wait-and-see position and the managers are waiting for the opportunity to prove themselves, and possibly for a "command from the top", which may indicate the lack of independence of the manager, the dependence on bureaucratic decisions. This indicator provides an understanding of the "growth points" in the professional training and retraining of the SSO managerial personnel.

Figure 3 Levels of formation of the indicator "ability for contact"

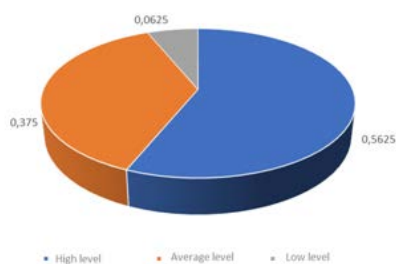


Source: authors

5. The communicative component and the indicator "ability for contact" is generally positive (Fig. 3). It characterizes the ability to establish constructive business and interpersonal relationships and the willingness to cooperate.

6. The volitional component and the indicator "self-control and self-correction" is an indicator of the compliance of management results with the set goals and requirements to the quality of managerial activities (Fig. 4). According to managers, this component is subject to continuous improvement at the level of new technologies of self-regulation and personal and professional growth. The diagnostic results indicate that, in general, the SSO managers are able to adequately assess, plan and adjust their own managerial activities.

Figure 4 Levels of the indicator "self-control and self-correction"



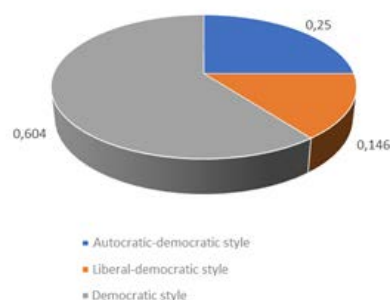
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Thus, the diagnostic of the level of development of professional and personal foundations of managerial activity of the SSO

managers showed that the problem exists, and it requires improvement and correction. The results of the interviews with managers confirmed that many of them were not prepared to improve their competencies more effectively at the levels of operation and assessment.

Further in the logic of the research, the propensity of managers for a certain style of managerial activities was studied. The methodology allowed forming an idea of the propensity of the managers for autocratic, democratic or liberal styles of management. Most of the managers note a tendency for a democratic style. However, the high proportion of managers who gave preference to the autocratic-democratic style is alarming. This style is the least desirable in organizations of the social sphere (Fig. 5).

Figure 5 Preferred styles of management identified in the course of the research



Source: authors

The obtained results suggest that the style of managerial activity of the SSO managers requires active self-educational and professional developmental activities. On average, the level of development of personal foundations of managerial activity which is insufficient for effective professional activity was identified among half of the managers. About 90% of managers believe that continuous self-improvement is necessary, but only half of them are ready for it (for various objective and subjective reasons).

The Russian scientific literature is dominated by applied approaches to understanding the competencies of social professionals, including managers. Since 2013, practical activity is determined by the development and implementation of the standards of professional activity (Sizikova et al., 2015; Sizikova et al., 2016).

At the same time, in the Russian literature more attention is paid to professional and moral conditions and prerequisites of activity and to the correlation with historical traditions of social service (Medvedeva & Isaicheva, 2018; Starovoytova, 2017). These personality traits develop among students during receiving higher education (Mityaeva et al., 2018). To increase the involvement of students in professional activities, individual educational routes are developed (Sorikhina & Fomina, 2018), students are involved in volunteer activities, in the implementation of social projects together with students (Ivanov et al., 2016). Russian social education seeks to integrate with international education, and this expands the professional horizons of Russian students (Kupriyanov et al., 2015). In the process of preparing students for future professional activities, much attention is paid to the competent ratio of traditional and innovative technologies that they will use in their future professional activities.

5 Conclusion

The research showed that the formed professional and moral competencies of the managers of organizations in the social sphere have peculiarities which can help in the development of the profession, but they can also hinder its development. The

peculiarity of professions in the social sphere lies in the combination of emotional-empathic competencies, professional skills and theoretical knowledge about the upcoming activities. In Russian science and practice, no one doubts that social work is a type of professional activity which requires high theoretical training and the ability to adapt professional skills to new conditions of life. The ability to make adequate, professionally competent managerial decisions both at the level of organization and at the level of interpersonal interaction or at the level of self-management of their personal growth are the significant professional and personal competences. They need to be taught at any age in the context of continuing social education.

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