

## **Human Resource Management in Social Welfare System**

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### **Abstract**

The article presents the results of the research of employees' labor motivation, who work in social welfare system. The issues of the existing personnel policy and the degree of its effectiveness are considered in order to attract highly qualified specialists to this particular working area. The study was conducted in 2016 in social service organizations, located in Belgorod region (Russia). At the preparatory stage of the research, the analysis of federal and regional law, as well as the internal documents of social service organizations, regulating the employment issues was carried out, which makes it possible to reveal the declared principles for this employment cluster. At the next stage, a questionnaire was developed to interview employees, working in social service organizations. The sample was based on the proportional selection of respondents by districts, types of organizations, gender and age. As a result, four key clusters of employee motivation were identified: (1) professional career and self-realization (only 20% of respondents have this type of labor motivation, the majority of them are young people with an experience of up to 5 years); (2) the stability of employment and the guarantee of wage (about 50% of respondents, whose professional experience is more than 10 years, work in social welfare system mainly because of low but stable wages and guaranteed social package); (3) motivation of temporary employment (15% of respondents are not focused on long-term employment in social sphere, some of them either use the current job to get the working experience, or the rest of others waits to leave for a new and more desirable place of work); (4) motivation to maintain comfort (this cluster includes about 15% of people who are going to retire soon and prefer comfortable working conditions as well as have the permanent place of work prior the retirement).

**Keywords:** human resources, management, social welfare system, social service organizations, research.

**JEL classification:** I31

### **1. Introduction**

Social management in the sphere of human relations assumes a leading role of information and qualitative changes in modern Russian society under the influence of social disadvantage consequences. These changes are becoming a new challenge in order to convert the social protection system and the management of state social policy. In turn, the priority in the social management system is the "human factor", therefore, an indispensable condition for achieving success becomes professional skills, knowledge and personal qualities of people involved in the social services, providing state social policy.

Society makes demands of adequacy and responsiveness to state social services in order to improve its quality and execution of social guarantees. However, these requirements often contradict to the low level of professionalism of social work employees and aging technologies which are provided by social service organizations to the targeted groups of population. This situation creates new tensions and social distress among people in needs as well as among

social workers themselves. Today, modern social service system in Russia needs high educated personnel and the personnel policy management which will be focused on effective implementation of public social policy programs.

Currently, we can see the forgetfulness of important social innovations of 1990s, when the wide spectrum of academic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in education system was expanded; the new specialty “Social work” was introduced in university and college curriculum; the formation of now known scientific schools of sociology and social work was taken place.

After 2000s we were faced with the problem of preservation and continuation of positive initiatives in the development of the social component of the educational space that had the great value for human progress and modernization.

According to the official statistic data, in 2016 there were 480 thousand people worked in social service organizations in Russia, 200 thousand of them were social workers (Anon, 2012). Today there is a decline in the prestige of professions related to social work and management, which in turn leads to the declining of the prestige of social service organizations and exacerbating the problem of strategic management of educational and personnel policies. As a result of irresponsible decisions, social work profession has lost its attractiveness for students in a number of major regional universities. For example, it happened at Saratov State Technical University, where the platform for social work training had been closed and the University could not keep one of the strongest domestic scientific schools of sociology and social work, which had existed for 25 years. In this case, social workers of the regional social services lost the opportunity for their educational growth to enhance their skills, to expand their knowledge about new technologies, international social work practices as well as for the compliance with the professional requirements which were dictated by the new state social standards.

Reorganization of scientific and educational structures has led to the narrow profile of education that negatively influences on the quality of social work training. Social work training programs for the improvement of professional skill and knowledge become ineffective in practice, especially in the regions where big universities become unattractive for high qualified faculty and downgraded the standard of training and retraining of specialists. So, the further decline in the prestige of social work profession, the reduction the number of budget places for university students, studying social work, could seriously harm the society.

There is a great need in specialists, managers, researchers and experts in social areas, having higher professional education to reform and develop different spheres of national economy. Moreover, the system of labor motivation of graduate students should be built, based on the work’s creative content, as well as on the material and moral factors. Existing programs of human resource development of social services almost do not take into account such an important factor as the level of prestige of social work profession in the society, which influences on the quality of employees, their level of professionalism and general culture.

## **2. Literature review**

Professional education is seen as a contradictory point by scientist, regarding its influence on students’ professional identification during the learning process. Some researches emphasizes the great impact of social work education on professional socialization (Lishman, 2012), students’ attitudes, values and preferences (Sims, 2011; Terum & Heggen, 2016; Thampi, 2017) while others do not (Bogo, Raphael & Roberts, 1993; Weiss, Gal & Cnaan, 2004; Kaufman, Segal-Engelchin & Huss, 2012).

The main reasons for this contradictory result are the following: different research designs, used in studies, that cannot be replicated; limitations of the studies regarding small sample size, single school of social work, taking part at the study; the examining students at a single

point in time, without taking into account the possibility to change their opinions under some circumstances, for example, teachers' or peer's influences; the lack of longitudinal and cross-cultural research data.

However, the strong professional identification as well as professional skills, knowledge and values have a great influence on social worker's motivation and the quality of provided services (Kyvik, 2009; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Mathews & Lough, 2017).

### **3. Research methodology**

In 2016, the study of employees' motivation, working in social service organizations, located in Belgorod region, was carried out. On the first stage of the research we conducted the analysis of modern federal and regional legislation, internal documents of regional social service organizations that allowed revealing the declared principles for this cluster of employment. On the second stage the questionnaire for the survey of employees of social service organizations was developed. The stratified type of sample was used for the research, based on the proportional representation of employees according to districts, profiles, activities, gender, age, and types of organizations. The sample consisted from 50 heads of social service organizations. The purpose of the research was to identify human resource management processes in these social service organizations.

### **4. Findings Empirical results**

The study was able to identify four key cluster of current employees' motivation who was working in social service organizations: 1) professional career and self-realization (only 20% of respondents had this type of motivation; almost all of them were young employees with experience of up to 5 years); 2) the stability of employment and the guarantee of wage (about 50% of respondents, whose professional experience was more than 10 years, worked in social welfare system mainly because of low but stable wages and guaranteed social package); 3) motivation of temporary employment (15% of respondents were not focused on long-term employment in social sphere, some of them either used the current job to get the working experience, or the rest of others waited to leave for a new and more desirable place of work); 4) motivation to maintain comfort (this cluster includes about 15% of people who were going to retire soon and preferred comfortable working conditions as well as had the permanent place of work prior the retirement).

Identified four clusters allow offering approaches in order to mitigate the negative trends in the human resource management of social service organizations. For the employees of the first cluster, focused on the career and self-development it is important to create conditions for their career growth and accumulation of professional competences. Algorithms of human recourse management should be revised in the direction of encouraging the development and innovation of staff's working conditions in social service organizations. The employees of the second cluster feel satisfied working in social service organizations because of the job stability and wage guaranteed social package. However, the efforts are required from all agents (including government social policies) that shape the stability of the employment market for the prevention of social risks of job loss. For the staff from the third cluster in order to overcome the problem of the loss of the employees' efficiency it is important to connect the motivational attitudes of each individual employee with the goals of the organization. The implementation of the assessment of motivation, taking into account individual achievements will significantly reduce the number of people with the motivation of temporary employment. The staff from the fourth cluster that has the motivation of preserving comfort is a stable element of the personnel structure. However, in order to prevent the routinization and stagnation of organization's

professional activity, flexible management technologies should be adopted as well as a motivating system for the staff's evaluation and promotion must be developed.

The obtained results allow to speak about the human resource crisis of organizations, engaged in social protection system, the decline of the prestige of social work profession in the modern Russian society, the lack of professional and progressive-minded graduates from higher educational institutions. In order to make some changes it is necessarily to take action to attract talented young people to social services and to guarantee them the career growth and developing the creative potential.

There are some main causes of the human resource crisis: firstly, the lack effective technologies to attract young professionals in social structures; secondly, the cooperation of social services with universities is limited by the procedure of contracts targeted training and internships; thirdly, low level of wages in social sphere. For example, the average salary of a social worker in Russia at the beginning of 2017 was about \$166 per month, while the average poverty line was \$178 (Anon, 2017). Also it is necessarily to take into account the territory of living. There are seven regions in Russia with the highest wages in social sphere (\$316-366), such as Moscow, Republic of Khakassia, Kamchatka, the Sakhalin, Kaliningrad, Lipetsk, Leningrad region. At the same time, the average salary of a social worker in Rostov region, the Bashkortostan Republic is \$125. In some regions the salary of social workers is even smaller. For example, in Orenburg in the end of 2016 it was \$91.7 per month. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Services, the salary of all social workers in Russia is planning to increase in 2.5 times in 2018 (Anon, 2012).

In comparison with the earnings of social workers, employed in USA their average salary depends on the specificity of clients' needs and social workers' specialization area. Table 1 includes the examples of social workers' median annual earnings in 2015.

2015			
Social worker's specialization	Mental health and substance abuse field	Child, family and school social workers	Healthcare social workers
Median annual earnings	\$42 170	\$42 350	\$52 380

*Table 1. Social worker's median annual earnings*

Source: Social Worker: Education Overview for a Career in Social Work

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion it should be emphasized that one of the key components is the formation and development of personnel potential of organizations implementing the state social policy. The professionalism of employees who work at social service organizations largely contributes the wellbeing of the population and increases the success of the implementation of state social policy strategies for socio-economic development of the country.

Reforming the social protection system has been happening constantly for many years, and includes changing social programs, educational standards, government assurances, and sets of social services for a particular social group of the population. According to the results of the research, the most typical difficulties which social services are faced with are the lack of competent, well-trained, young professionals; unattractiveness of employment in the social sector due to its poor management, the decline the prestige of social work profession as well as the reduction of the educational segment which allows to conduct high-quality training and retraining of staff for social services; in a situation where educational institutions are concerned with training employees on a commercial basis, the employers encourage staff to provide formal indicators of professional development, the losers are people in need who seek

professional and competent social services, at the same time the social protection system becomes ineffective in raising the well-being of society.

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