

DISTANCE LEARNING OF PUBLIC AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

The highest level of professional training for public and municipal officials - is a pressing need to settle the critical social problems. The professional training through online programs allow learning new knowledge, skills and challenges to ensure the high quality education. The article provides an overview of the distance education and training programs for the public and municipal officials and their most relevant directions. In the constituent entities of the Russian Federation new systems of municipal authorities are formed, which are mostly focused on the real and sustained growth in living standards, enhancing its social activity. The need to form a qualitatively new staff structure of the public and municipal service requires constant improvement of professional skill for mastering new competences by the employees already working within the structure of the public and municipal authorities and the students, trained in the profile of the "Public and municipal administration".

KEYWORDS: *public administration, municipal administration, training, municipal officials, distance learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

The highest level of professional training for the public and municipal officials - is a pressing need to settle critical social problems. The professional training through online programs allow learning new knowledge, skills and challenges to ensure the high quality education.

Training and retraining of the public and municipal officials requires continuous improvement of the existing educational programs, including the online format. The process of forming and developing the municipal education in modern conditions causes the need for solving completely new challenges by the local self-government authorities. Now there are different objectives, tasks, powers and functions of the public officials. It makes educational organizations engaged in the training of specialists under the program of "Public and municipal administration" to develop specializations and use innovative forms and training methods, among which e-learning technologies take the first place.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM FOR THE PUBLIC AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Municipalities in most regions of the Russian Federation have an extremely strong need for the qualified staff of municipal officials. The statistics show that 71.5% municipal officials have the higher education diploma, 24.8% have the secondary special education and 3.7% - the total

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secondary education. By the end of November 2008 totally in the Russian Federation only 39.8 thousand municipal and public employees (12.1% from the total number of public and municipal officials) have been retrained and also more than 90 thousand persons on the public and municipal service have not done that at all.

So, in the distance learning process in the sphere of the public and municipal administration such programs and courses are included as follows:

1. Distance learning programs in the sphere of the public and municipal administration are presented in the training courses of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Service under the President of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Social University, the Russian State Humanitarian University, the Finance University, the Moscow financial- juridical university, the Moscow University of S. Y. Witte, the Modern Humanitarian Academy; the Russian Academy of cooperation, etc. [Marchenko, 2017].

2. Some institutes of the advanced training have introduced the distance learning course, for example, distance courses of the public municipal administration in the Institute of professional development and professional retraining of specialists". The course of the "Public and municipal administration" discloses main aspects of the law, economics, political and municipal administration, socio-economic forecasting, personnel policies and much more. Such courses such as "the System of the public and municipal administration"; "Regional economics and management"; "Information management technology"; «Human resource management»; "Development of management solutions"; "Legal basis of the public and municipal management"; "Management sociology"; "Activities of the public authorities and municipal institutions", etc. are mostly demanded [Pilipenko, Suppes, Ustinova, 2017].

3. The programs developed by the public authorities and municipal structures. They are based on the case-study of social problems which are mostly frequent each day in activities of the public and municipal structures.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN THE DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM FOR THE PUBLIC AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

The basic education and professional development of the public and municipal officials in the on-line format is carried out for the following: learning actual changes in specific issued of the professional activities, including the short-term advanced training; complex renewal of knowledge in some matters in the specific professional service activities. Analysis of the dynamics on the increased number of public and municipal officials for the period from 2000 till 2017 [Pilipenko, Suppes, Ustinova, 2017] has highlighted two tendencies: the growing number of public employees for this period and the increasing share of persons annually receiving additional distance education in total (Table 1).

The estimates show that to achieve the stable system of additional distance education in the Russian Federation the number of trainees on the distance programs shall be increased by the level of 2019 for 126 thousand persons per year. Including 64,4 thousand persons - the municipal service staff. According to our research from 415 respondents more than a half - 58% are ready to improve their qualification or to get additional education. From them continuously about once in 1,5-2 years the qualification is improved distantly by 34% respondents. Among the students - graduates after the practice, more than 30% (and that is 31% from the number of interviewed) responded positively to the development and deepening of their competencies.

Table 1. The estimated need in additional education of the public and municipal officials in the Russian Federation

	Number of employees, thousand persons	Trained additionally, thousand persons, 2017	% from the number of trained in the relevant branch of the authorities	Estimated need at the level of 23%	Potential of the development of the additional education base, thousand
In the Federal public authorities – total	813.3	136.8	16.8	186.9	50.1
At the Federal level - total	48.3	9.2	19.1	11.1	1.9
At the regional level - total	765.0	127.5	16.7		
In public authorities of constituent entities in the Russian Federation - total	262.1	50.2	19.2	60.2	10
In local self-government authorities and municipal election commissions – total	496.7	50.03	10.1	114.5	64.4

Source: created by author

Here and further:

*** - highly significant relationship in 99%

** - significant relationship in 95%

* - tendency to the authentic relationship in 90%

The analysis demonstrated that main consumers of the distance learning programs to improve qualification are the following: managers of the leading group positions, specialists of the leading and senior group positions, technical specialists of the associate group positions. Among the respondents they are as follows: managers of the leading group positions (11%), specialists of the leading and senior group positions (54%), technical specialists of the associate group positions (35%).

It should be noted that in terms selecting the key competencies, which are to be developed, the volume of demanded distance programs for development makes about 350 directions, i.e. the programs which are correspondent and relevant to the increasing and expanding competencies of employees in the public and municipal structures.

At that there are some problems of organizational, economic and other character, hindering the development process of the distance learning for the public and municipal officials (Table 2)

Tables 2. Problems of the distance learning for the public and municipal officials

Problems	Key contradiction	Tasks (condition)	Solutions (need)
Public and municipal officials are not additionally trained in the required volume and needed quality	There is the need in training the officials, but there is not enough financing	23 % officials should be trained additionally each year	To develop the mass distance learning system
Development the mass distance learning system	There is the distance learning technology, no sufficient volume of financial resources	To form the system for financing the mass additional training of public officials	To combine the financial resources of the territorial distributed customers
Combine financial resources of geographically distributed customers	The current system of relations at formation of the order on training contradicts to the idea of concentrating resources	To agree financial flows and financial sources of the educational order at the federal, regional and municipal levels	To form the tools for financing learning projects
Create instruments for financing the training projects	Competition on educational services	To develop the agreed policy at the market of educational services	To make an organizational - economic interaction scheme of the "Customer - contractor"
Create organizational-economic interaction scheme of the "Customer - contractor"	Contradictions between the hierarchy and polycentric administration system	To introduce the organizational technology (technological platform) of interaction	To form an educational consortium with establishing the general base of the distance programs for the public and municipal officials

Source: created by author

Generally the public and municipal officials under the current traditional learning system are not always additionally trained with its competencies, in the required volume and with the relevant quality, and the distance learning directions, operatively responding to the emerging needs in this or that competence of the official, even at short-term courses, use a set of practical forms, for instance, such as case study, practical business games, trainings, on the matters which are mostly common in practice of the public and municipal service, and they make the training closer to the existing demands, complements the chain of continuing education which is so needed in this sphere of activities, with its permanent update of informational resources, used in the work, changes in legislation, etc.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, after researching the distance learning of the public and municipal officials, it is important to determine such methods, forms and themes of the learning programs which are mostly suitable for the educational process in this sphere of activities and become the means to solve problematic situations in the daily work of these structures. It is a great number of different distance programs and courses, aimed at the operative replenishment of knowledge and competence development of the public and municipal officials.

Through the distance learning with using the case study it is possible to acquire individually the necessary knowledge and practical skills.

The distance learning and professional development of the state and municipal officials should become that important interactive ground not only to replenish the knowledge and get necessary and new competencies for the further work, but to exchange experience distantly and ideas of the public importance.

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