

PRACTICAL REALIZATION OF THE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR THE PUBLIC AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS: CASE-STUDY OF THE ROSTOV REGION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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ABSTRACT

Distance learning methods based on technological developments play an important role in activities of the public and municipal structures, contribute to the competence development of officials in the continuously changing space, organization of scientific-research projects and promotion of public and municipal services, through improving the quality of their provision, due to the timely training of employees in provision of these services.

Activities of the public and municipal officials is based on application of competencies to be constantly improved. For that there is the permanent education of officials, including through on-line programs. The interviews among public and municipal officials have identified the gaps in knowledge, competences and skills of the public and municipal officials in such areas as follows: the work of officials with the regulatory and reference information; legal knowledge and knowledge of legislation changes concerning their direct responsibilities; maintenance of the service correspondence; execution of regulatory-administrative and financial documentation, etc. Implementation of the own on-line programs in regions and municipalities requires from the officials working in this area, to have the qualitative knowledge of economy, information competence, legal knowledge, the ability to solve problematic issues.

KEYWORDS: *public officials, municipal officials, distance learning, regional and municipal online programs.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern practical activities of the public and municipal structures has identified one of the major tasks to improve effectiveness of all governmental branches - the ability to solve competently and comprehensively the set tasks of realizing the main activity directions. And what is more important, or rather the most necessary resource to achieve the targets is widely regarded to be the human resource and formation of the required competence, skills and abilities for the public and municipal officials. In turn, the education and training system of the public and municipal officials demands for the distance learning the development of programs corresponding to a set of positions, activity directions and contributing to solution of practical problems in activities of the public and municipal structures (Vasilov & Ananchenkova, 2012).

For that it is needed to research available online programs to determine their advantages and shortages. It is important to research the programs which are developed and realized directly in the regions and municipal entities, as directions of the additional education in the system adapted to conditions and factors of the specific region or municipality aimed at solving the problems and operative acquisition of these or those demanded competencies by the officials.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The problems of providing development of the human capital, professionalism, formation of competencies, training, retraining and qualification improvement of public and municipal administration officials are disclosed in works of many Russian and foreign researchers.

Among Russian scientists it is worth mentioning Polyinin A.V., Greychin V.V., Mikhalev I.B. [2015; 2016], Shakhovoi V.A. [2017], Tonkonog V.V. [2015], Ananchenkova P.I. [2012; 2013] and others. Works of the stated authors reveal some aspects of the competence-based approach, formation of professionalism and professional - relevant competencies (including governmental officials of public service authorities). Despite a wide list of works devoted to the problems of managing competencies and professionalism of the public and municipal service officials, the issues of using online technologies as the tool for teaching public and municipal officials are insufficiently developed. Though at the level of individual regions in the Russian Federation there is the active implementation and use of different e-learning technologies, in the Russian scientific literature there are no many works reflecting the e-learning specifics for exactly such a category of trainees as public and municipal officials.

3. PRACTICAL REALIZATION OF THE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS (BY EXAMPLE OF THE ROSTOV REGION)

When implementing online programs in the own activities the regional and local structures of executive authorities encounter a number of problems. Such as: duplication of the federal programs, insufficiently saturated case-study, business games and practical tasks and situations, which are technically difficult to be realized, etc (Vasilov, Ananchenkova, 2013).

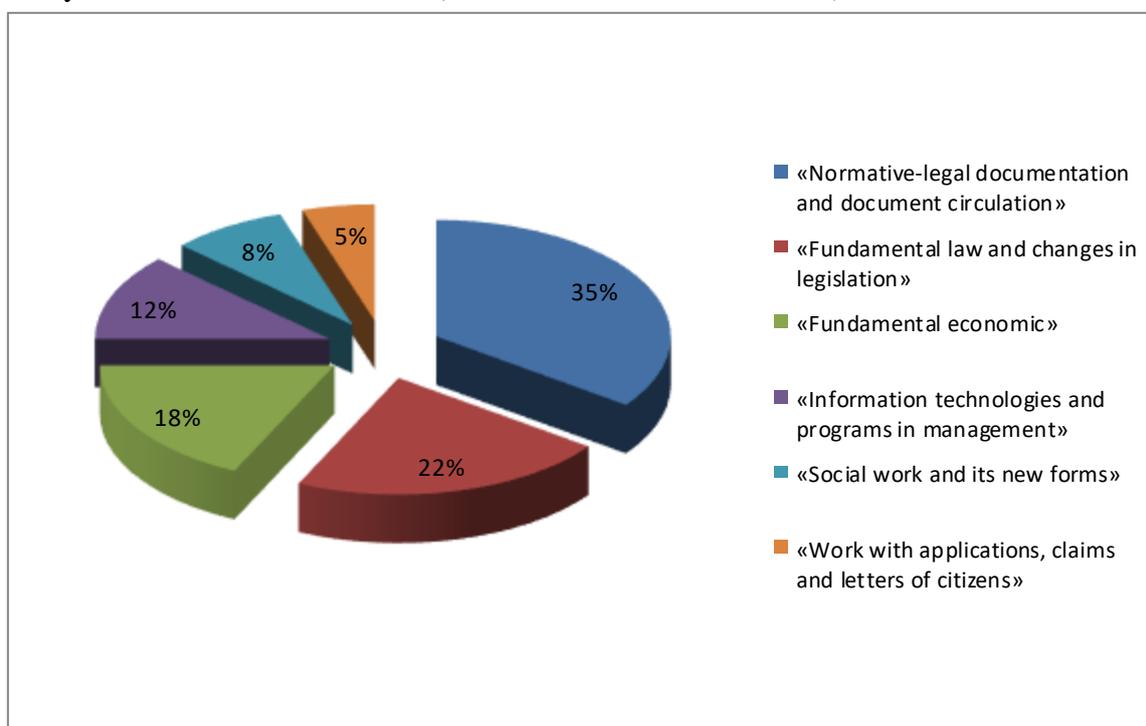


Figure 1. Demand for online learning programs to train public and municipal officials in the Rostov region in 2017

Source: created by authors based on the documentary survey of materials provided by the Administration of the Rostov region

Thus, according to the survey results of officials in the Rostov region, it is important to note, that mostly demanded in this region are such programs as "Normative-legal documentation and document circulation", "Fundamental law and changes in legislation"; "Fundamental economic knowledge"; "Information technologies and programs in management", "Social work and its new forms", "Work with young people", "Work with applications, claims and letters of citizens", "Regional economy and investments", etc. In Figure 1 there is the percentage ratio of the most demanded programs, according to survey data among the public and municipal officials of the Rostov region. In addition within one year the demand of these or those learning programs in the distance direction can be changed due to changes in activities of the public structures and municipal administrations, development or change of their powers, as the need of distance learning courses in municipal structures of the Rostov region within 2017 were distributed as follows only in direction of the normative-legal documentation and electronic document circulation: in 1 quarter 2017 - 10 programs, in 2 quarter - 17, in 3 quarter - 13, in 4 quarter - 4. Administration of the Rostov region has put into operation the information - educational Internet- portal on the platform «Administration». The Internet-portal provides an opportunity of course to improve qualification for the municipal officials in the region distantly with using telecommunication technologies.

Table 1. Internet-portal on the distance learning of municipal officials in the Rostov region

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| Section "Public administration staff" provides: |
| 1) formation, monitoring and control of the state order on professional retraining, professional development and training of the public officials in the region; |
| 2) thematic search of learning programs for the professional development and retraining of the public officials in Russian higher schools; |
| 3) training under the teaching-methodological complexes of the distance learning for the public and municipal officials. |
| Section "Municipal administration staff" provides: |
| 1) thematic search of learning programs for the professional retraining and professional development of the municipal officials in Russian higher schools; |
| 2) training under the teaching-methodological complexes of the distance learning for the public and municipal officials. |
| Section "Selection of learning programs" provides: |
| 1) search of the learning programs developed by Russian higher schools posted information in Internet; |
| 2) an access for the user to the website of the corresponding higher school to study and for the following choice of programs and training plans. |
| Section "Reports and recommendations" provides: |
| 1) accumulated information on testing results of the listeners at the advance training courses; |
| 2) formation of recommendations on further training and career growth of the public and municipal officials. |
| Section "Forum" provides: |
| 1) formation of the feedback between listeners of the advance training courses and teachers; |
| 2) exchange of opinions between the listeners in the learning process. |

Source: created by authors based on the documentary survey of materials provided by the Administration of the Rostov region

Specialists of local administrations without going outside municipalities, through video conference with the regional administration, get all necessary information on problems to organize the distance learning. Then they are within one month independently trained at workplaces with using the

informational-educational Internet-portal. In the learning process municipal officials organize round-table talks through video conference with the regional administration. At the end of training the listeners are tested at the informational-educational Internet-portal and by its results they get certificates on advanced training under the 75-hour program. Above, in the table 1 there is an approximate content of the internet-portal of the administration in the Rostov region on the distance learning. The developed distance learning programs are combined into the corresponding thematic sections allowing to form pointedly the competencies of the public and municipal officials needed by them in a specific situation.

Main advantages of the distance course are not only savings of material and timely costs, but development of autonomy and responsibility especially for young specialists.

It is important to note the level of satisfaction with the training. Thus to the question «how are you satisfied with training under one of online programs?», the officials interviewed during the survey give the following answers (Fig. 2).

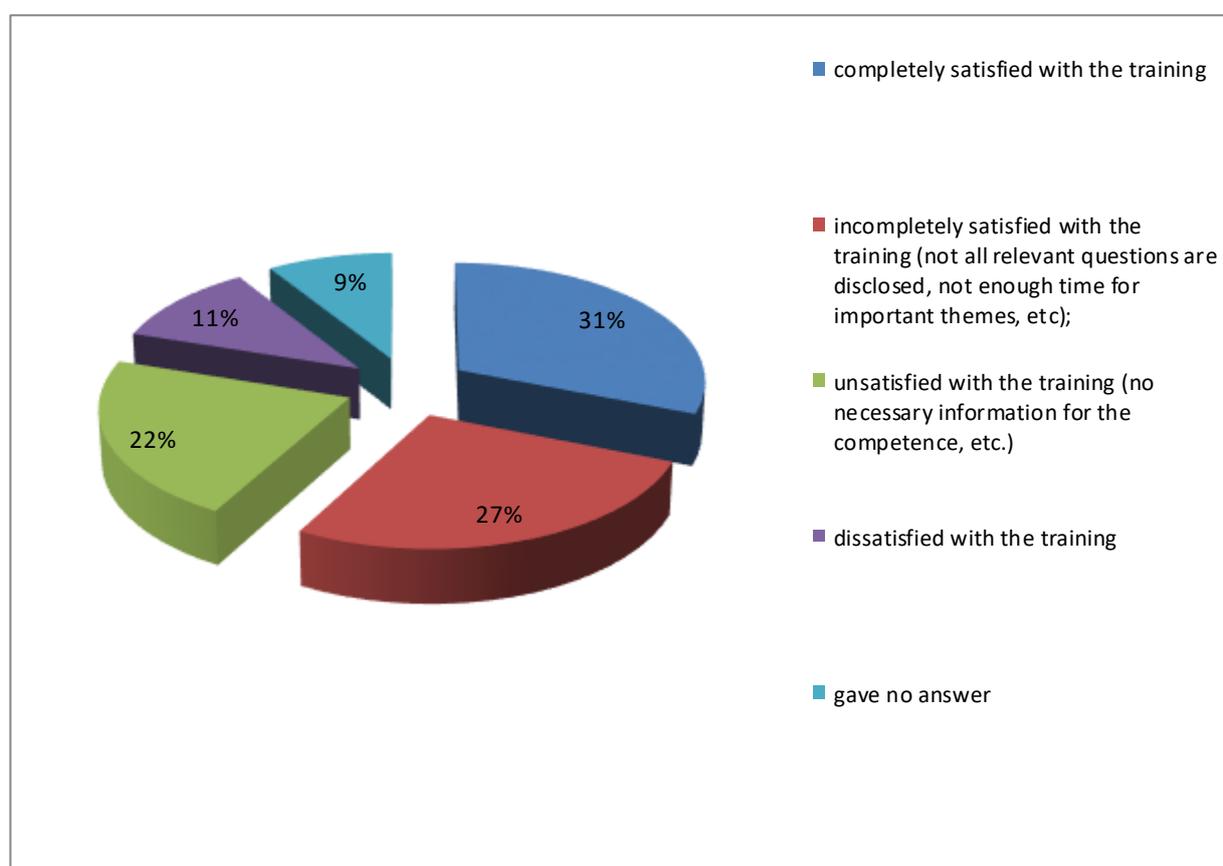


Figure 2. Satisfaction of the public and municipal officials in the Rostov region with the training through distance programs in 2017

Source: created by authors based on the documentary survey of materials provided by the Administration of the Rostov region

Finally we are to note that by the survey results the regional distance learning programs for the public and municipal officials (by example of the distance programs offered by the administration in the Rostov region) contributes to acquisition of the necessary competencies, development of motivation to self-education, as an efficient tool to develop and use of the personal potential and abilities, and also the efficient performance of the own activities. But among shortages it is needed to mark out that some programs are developed untimely and insufficiently detailed form parameters

of the demanded competencies, i.e. there are insufficiently developed case-studies, practical tasks and business games, etc.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the made research and its analysis we have determined the importance, need and consistency of the distance learning for the public and municipal officials and formation of the own online programs by the administration of the regions and municipalities which are most accurately, fully and precisely forms the demand of administrations to form specific competencies and to acquire the certain knowledge by officials, in this research - officials of the Rostov region.

There is an urgent need for organizing the continuous training, through distance learning programs, and create a database of such programs, forming a portfolio of the most popular directions and identifying an opportunity to apply these programs in those regions where there are much demanded.

Thus, it is possible to make some conclusions reflecting the prospects to implement the distance educational technologies in the process of improving qualification of public and municipal officials:

- It is needed in the near future to consider standardization and unification of such programs to form faster and more efficiently a complex of competencies for the public and municipal officials adapted to the local and regional factors.
- It is needed to form the base of educational materials unified for all regions.
- To provide available learning materials for listeners from different regions.
- To form a unified educational space promoting the variability of programs under private needs of the listeners and under the order of individual authorities.
- To develop and support quality standardization of educational programs for public and municipal officials.

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